



**TO:** Mayor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Jim Baird, Commissioner of Development Services  
Valerie Shuttleworth, Director of Planning and Urban Design

**PREPARED BY:** Ron Blake, West District Manager  
Doris Cheng, West District Planner

**DATE:** May 29, 2007

**RE:** Yonge Street Corridor Study Coordination

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### **Recommendation**

That the staff memo entitled "Yonge Street Corridor Study Coordination", be received;

And that Markham staff be authorized to coordinate with the City of Vaughan on Yonge Street Corridor detailed planning/urban design studies as outlined in the memo;

And further that the Region of York be requested to coordinate an inter-municipal review of basic land use (population and employment) targets along the Yonge Street Corridor, in support of the ongoing consideration of transit options.

### **Background**

At the May 22, 2007 Council meeting, Deputy Mayor Jones advised that the City of Vaughan has initiated a study for the entire Yonge St Corridor in Vaughan from Steeles to Highway 7, and requested that Town of Markham planning staff coordinate with Vaughan. The following memo is to update and advise Council of the direction the Town of Markham staff propose to undertake in coordination with the City of Vaughan (see attached map).

### **Proposed Study Areas**

In November 2006, Markham Council authorized staff to undertake a planning and urban design study of the Yonge Steeles Corridor between Steeles Avenue and the properties immediately south of the Farmer's Market property at Elgin Street (the southern boundary of the earlier Thornhill Yonge Street study).

In early May, City of Vaughan planning staff advised that Vaughan Council had directed them to proceed with a Yonge – Steeles Corridor study in concert with the Town of Markham's planning studies currently underway. In a concerted effort to promote a coordinated study approach, Vaughan staff modeled their terms of reference very closely to Markham's Yonge-Steeles Study, making only minor changes. Vaughan's intention is to divide their study into two phases. The first phase, to be undertaken in 2007, will focus on the Yonge Steeles Corridor up to the southern boundary of the Thornhill Yonge Street Study area (i.e. the Farmer's Market property in Markham, located south of Elgin Street and the Arnold Street Public School on the south side of Arnold Street in Vaughan). The second phase of the Vaughan study will involve the portion

north of the Thornhill Yonge Street Study boundary (north of the Toronto Ladies Golf Club and Thornhill Country Club) and will be undertaken in 2008.

Markham Planning staff will consider the merit of a land use/urban design study for the east side of Yonge Street, from the valley to Langstaff in the context of the 2008 Capital Budget.

### **Characteristics of the Study Areas**

While both Vaughan and Markham intend to work closely together on their studies, there are some notable differences between the characteristics of the two sides of Yonge Street. Unlike in Markham, where the Steeles Avenue corridor is characterized by low density residential development, fragmented ownership patterns, and limited redevelopment potential, the Steeles frontage in Vaughan is characterized by big box retail and strip malls on very large parcels, which may have significant redevelopment potential. As a result, Vaughan intends to focus a significant amount of their study efforts on the properties fronting Steeles Avenue between Yonge and Hilda (approximately 1 km west of Yonge Steeles Avenue) in addition to the Yonge Street frontages.

Along the southern part of the Yonge Street corridor, there are also differences between the Vaughan and Markham sides of the Yonge Street Corridor, in terms of lot sizes, access and land uses. Generally, with the exception of a few notable sites, ownership patterns in Markham are much more fragmented than in Vaughan, lot sizes are much smaller, and single family neighbourhoods are located much closer to the Yonge Street frontages.

In the Phase II study area (i.e. the Yonge Street Corridor north of the golf courses), Staff again anticipates there may be more redevelopment potential on the Vaughan side of Yonge Street. Many of the properties on the Markham side are already developed with high rise condominiums dating from the 1970's, and there are fewer commercial/retail properties fronting Yonge Street in Markham than in Vaughan. While the Vaughan Study will extend north to Highway 407, the Markham study would end at the southern boundary of the Holy Cross Cemetery, since there is no redevelopment potential on the cemetery lands and the Langstaff lands are subject to an ongoing land use study related to the current development applications in this area.

### **Coordination efforts to date**

Town of Markham planning staff have been working with City of Vaughan planning staff with regard to our Yonge-Steeles Corridor Study for the past several months. In January, Town Staff met with Vaughan Staff to advise them of the upcoming Yonge Steeles Study, and review the terms of reference. Vaughan Staff are taking an active role in Markham's Yonge Steeles Corridor Study, and will attend all Steering Committee meetings, will be invited to public meetings, and will be asked to provide input into all material and reports prepared by Markham's consultant team.

In early May, Markham staff provided the City of Vaughan with a copy of the terms of reference for the Yonge-Steeles Corridor Study. Further telephone conversations with their policy department encouraged Vaughan to undertake a companion study in which Markham staff would also participate. However, Vaughan staff are still in the early stages of formulating their work program, and have not yet selected a consultant. It was therefore agreed by both Markham and Vaughan staff that due to the Town's timing and tight schedule for the Yonge-Steeles Corridor Study (anticipated to be completed by November 2007), and the later starting date for the Vaughan study, that a joint study is not be feasible this time.

At the same time, City of Vaughan staff are committed to ensuring coordination between the Markham and Vaughan studies, and will continue to actively engage Town of Markham staff in their study process. Staff will keep Council advised of the progress of the Vaughan Study, as appropriate.

**Region of York role**

Given the redevelopment and intensification potential along the Yonge Street Corridor, and the objective of advancing rapid transit options, the Region of York should be requested to coordinate an inter-municipal review of basic land use (population and employment) targets in support of public rapid transit. This should include consultation with Markham, Vaughan, Richmond Hill and potentially other York Region local municipalities along the Yonge Street Corridor.

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# YONGE STREET CORRIDOR STUDIES

