



Report to: Development Services Committee

Report Date: October 23, 2012

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION REPORT
Land Use Planning Report: The Thornhill Innovation Centre
(City of Markham) (formerly: Thornhill Area Revitalization
Study)
File PR 11 127722

PREPARED BY: Ron Blake, Development Manager, West District

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report entitled: "Recommendation Report: Land Use Planning Report: The Thornhill Innovation Centre (City of Markham) (formerly: Thornhill Area Revitalization Study) File PR 11 127722", be received;
- 2) That a public information meeting be scheduled, to present the recommendations of the Land Use Planning Report: The Thornhill Innovation Centre (City of Markham);
- 3) And That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to summarize the Consultant's recommendations contained in the report "Land Use Planning Study: The Thornhill Innovation Centre (City of Markham)", prepared by Meridian Planning Consultants Inc. (the Study), and to recommend that a public information meeting be held in regard to the study.

BACKGROUND:

Study Area and Surrounding Context

The Thornhill Innovation Centre (the study area) is bounded by two CN Rail lines on the west and south and the Aileen-Willowbrook neighbourhood to the north and east (see Figure 1). It is an older, mixed employment area comprised of industrial, service, retail and commercial uses including several auto body repair shops. Raywal Kitchens, a kitchen cabinet manufacturer and the former Canac Kitchens site, now vacant, are located in the area.

Recent and Ongoing Studies

The Study Area has been the subject of several planning initiatives in recent years, including:

- Thornhill Employment Area Land Use study, initiated by Council in 2008. This study was undertaken to examine options for updated Official Plan and Zoning By-law provisions to promote higher order employment uses in the study area and to address issues of compatibility between employment and residential uses. The work done on the study area in 2008 and 2009 has been incorporated into the Consultant's current report and recommendations.

- The City of Markham's Employment Lands Strategy, initiated in 2009, projects City-wide employment land needs over the next twenty years, in light of Regional employment forecasts, Provincial and Regional land use policies, and the City's emerging employment policy framework. The recommendations of the Employment Lands Strategy will be incorporated into the Official Plan Review.
- A 2009 amendment to the Thornhill Secondary Plan (OPA 1) to permit office buildings throughout the Study area, whereas previously they were only permitted on properties fronting Green Land and John Street. This amendment was approved concurrently with a proposal to develop an office building on a vacant site on Harlech Court at the north end of the Study area.
- An Interim Control By-law, applying to the study area, enacted in March 2012.
- The Official Plan Review (ongoing), which sets out updated land use policies on a City-wide basis, in conformity with new Provincial, Regional and local land use policies and plans. A draft new Official Plan was received by Development Services Committee on September 25, 2012, and released for public comment.

Thornhill Working Group Established

In February 2011, Council endorsed terms of reference for a Working Group, consisting of residents and members of the local business community; Mayor Scarpitti; Councillor Shore (Chair); and members of the Thornhill Subcommittee. The Working Group's mandate is to:

- Consider the policy context affecting the study area and implications of recent Provincial, Regional and City policy changes;
- Review the land use options identified to date in the Thornhill Employment Area Land Use Study and to consider other possible options for the evolution of land uses in the area;
- Review opportunities to enhance the interface between residential and employment uses to reduce land use conflicts; and
- Disseminate this information back to the larger community.

Seven Working Group meetings were held between October 2011 and May 2012. Topics addressed include:

- Emerging Provincial, Regional and City land use policies;
- Current land uses and compatibility issues;
- Transportation and servicing matters;
- Land use options and revitalization scenarios for the future;
- Assessment and discussion of the options (2 meetings).

In addition, Town Hall meetings (Public Information Meetings) were held in June 2011 and April 2012. These meetings introduced the revitalization study to the broader community and provided an opportunity for members of the public to comment on the study area and potential land use options and revitalization strategies.

DISCUSSION:

Working Group members hold competing views on the future of the study area

Based on Working Group discussions and comments received at the Town Hall meetings, members of the public have strong views on how the study area should evolve in the

future. Some residents are of the opinion that employment uses should no longer be permitted in the Study Area and that the area should be encouraged to redevelop for other uses such as residential.

Other residents, both working group members and from the surrounding neighbourhood, recognize that the study area contains many viable businesses and plays an important role in the City's employment base. They acknowledge that many of the businesses in the area produce no negative impacts on surrounding residential uses, but they have expressed concerns about auto repair and body shops in particular that have outdoor storage or produce emissions and are also concerned about the compatibility of future development with existing residential areas, particularly on the former Canac Kitchens site.

Working Group members generally agreed that pedestrian linkages throughout the study area, and between the study area and adjacent residential and commercial areas are poor. Lack of sidewalks on Guardsman Road and Harlech Court; no pedestrian connections between these streets and adjacent residential areas; and the north/south railway corridor create barriers between residential areas to the north and east and the Thornhill Square/Thornhill Community Centre complex to the west. As well, the general aesthetics and property maintenance within the study area are considered poor. The Working Group acknowledged that emphasis needs to be placed on improving the maintenance and visual quality of existing buildings and properties. The Working Group did not support expansion of heavy or dirty industry in the area; high-rise residential development; or additional automobile related uses.

The business operators who attended the working group meetings have been operating in the area for many years and have made significant investments over the years to upgrade and operate their businesses. Generally, they expressed a commitment to remain in the area for the foreseeable future, and they recognized that they have the right to do so, provided they comply with applicable laws.

Public information meeting recommended

While the Working Group members and Ward Councillor have been directly involved in the Study throughout the process, staff recommend that a further public information meeting be held during a scheduled public meeting, to provide an opportunity for the wider community and members of Development Services Committee to be apprised of the Consultant's study process, research and land use recommendations for the Study Area. Following the public information meeting, once direction on future land use policies in the study area is provided by Development Services Committee, such direction can form the basis for new Official Plan policies to be incorporated into the Official Plan Review.

Study area important to City's employment lands base

Provincial policy, as set out in the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and Provincial Growth Plan, establishes that sufficient lands must be provided over the long term to support economic growth and that existing employment areas must be preserved and

protected in the future. Under Provincial policy, conversion of employment uses to non-employment requires a Municipal Comprehensive Review. The new Region of York Official Plan contains similar policies. Markham's 2009 Employment Lands Strategy also concluded that there is a need to protect and preserve the City's existing employment areas, due to a Region and City-wide shortage of employment land. The Study recommends that the study area continue to be identified as an employment area, and converting all or some of it to non-employment uses would not be consistent with the PPS nor in conformity with the Growth Plan or Region of York Official Plan policies.

Land uses in the study area are evolving

The study area began in the 1960's as a rural industrial district, which attracted a wide range of employment uses. Some of these uses pre-date existing zoning, and those that comply with the zoning that is currently or in effect when they were established are allowed to continue in their current form as legal non-conforming uses, regardless of any later amendments to zoning provisions. In the 1970's and 1980's, residential development occurred to the north and east. Over the years, some land use conflicts arose between the study area's employment uses and surrounding residential development, in particular between the former Canac Kitchens operation and adjacent residential properties. Since the 1990's the study area has attracted a wider range of uses, including institutional uses (a place of worship and a cultural centre) and a variety of commercial uses. In 2009 Council approved zoning and site plan applications for an office building at the north end of Harlech Court. At the same time, a City-initiated amendment to the Thornhill Secondary Plan was approved to permit business offices throughout the study area, whereas previously they had been permitted only on properties fronting Green Lane or John Street. While the potential for the study area to attract free-standing office buildings is considered to be relatively low, the approval of this development may act as a precedent attracting similar types of development in the future, and the high design and landscape standards typically associated with office buildings are expected to positively impact other properties in the Study Area.

Opportunity for Study Area to attract compatible employment uses

Building on recent trends, the Study identifies opportunities for the study area to attract a wider range of new employment uses, including start-ups and technology-related uses that would be compatible with adjacent residential uses. Examples identified include computer system design; research and development; medical and diagnostic laboratories; engineering services; book, periodical and newspaper distributors; sound recording and musical instrument wholesalers/distributors; professional offices; and finance and insurance services including retail banking. In this regard, the Study recommends that the City work with local property and building owners to attract uses that are in keeping with the Markham 2020 Economic Competitiveness Strategy.

Revised land use policies for Thornhill area must address incompatibilities with residential uses

The Study proposes that the Study Area remain as an employment area and be designated under area-specific official plan policies that recognize and address its unique attributes and constraints, including proximity to sensitive residential areas. The land use strategy

proposed in the Study recognizes and builds on the emerging service nature of the study area, catering to population-related employment rather than traditional manufacturing uses. The study recommends establishing a category of uses permitted as of right; and a second category of uses that would only be permitted subject to rezoning (and therefore public review) and meeting key criteria to be identified in the area-specific Official Plan policies, including compatibility and impacts on surrounding uses; access, circulation and provision of on-site parking; provision of high-quality building design; and provision of adequate buffering and setbacks with adjacent uses, particularly residential.

Proposed uses in the “as of right” category would include service uses; manufacturing, processing and warehousing with no outdoor storage; offices; financial institutions; individual retail uses (excluding “major retail) and comprising no more than 50% of total floor area of a building; retail uses accessory to a manufacturing use; trade schools or commercial schools and hotels. Proposed uses that would be only be permitted subject to rezoning and conformity to the development criteria noted above would include new manufacturing, processing, warehousing and self-storage uses; restaurants, banquet halls and private clubs; day care centres; hotel and convention centres; automobile related uses such as service stations, car washes, or motor vehicle auto-body shops and repair garages, (with no outdoor storage or display); and motor vehicle sales and rental with limited outdoor display.

An excerpt from the Consultant’s study listing proposed “as of right” uses, uses permitted only subject to a zoning by-law amendment, and additional policy recommendations for the study area is attached as Appendix B to this report.

Former Canac Kitchens site presents a key opportunity

The redevelopment of the former Canac site, one of the largest sites in the study area and currently vacant and listed for sale, has the opportunity to dramatically impact the look and feel of the study area. The Study recommends that future development on this site must involve only compatible uses and provide a transition between existing businesses in the area and adjacent residential uses. Within the context of retaining employment uses on the site in the future, there are a number of land use strategies that could promote a natural transition between residential to the east of the site and existing employment uses in the study area. One option would be to provide for uses such as professional offices or small-scale retail or commercial uses that would have minimal impacts on adjacent residential properties. Specific uses that are typically incompatible with nearby residential, such as manufacturing or auto-body paint and repair and other motor vehicle related uses, could be specifically prohibited on this site. In addition, urban design guidelines; requirements for greater setbacks from existing residential uses (through updated zoning standards); and site plan considerations such as lighting systems that reduce off-site impacts, landscape buffering and enhanced streetscape treatments along the John Street and Green Lane frontages of the site, would have a significant impact on the attractiveness and desirability of the area, and enhance compatibility with adjacent residential uses. Due to its redevelopment opportunities and location adjacent to residential properties, the Study recommends that special site-specific provisions be adopted on the former Canac property.

Enhanced property maintenance and enhancements to the physical environment will play a key role in successful revitalization

Working Group members and residents in general noted that there is a need to improve the aesthetics of the study area including eliminating outdoor storage; reusing vacant buildings; maintaining and improving building facades; establishing consistent urban design guidelines; and generally cleaning up the area. Other suggestions included improved pedestrian linkages between the study area and nearby residential neighbourhoods; improvements to the quality of streetscapes in the Study Area, including the addition of sidewalks, improved landscaping along boulevards, and the provision of distinct signage and street lighting for the area. The Study proposes the use of Community Improvement policies and implementation of a Community Improvement Plan for the area as well as its possible designation as a Business Improvement Area (BIA) as tools to encourage these improvements.

Policy changes proposed to be incorporated into the Official Plan Review

The City is currently at the public consultation phase of the new Official Plan review. Should the Committee concur with the recommendation of the Study, the proposed policy directions set out in the Study could be incorporated into the Official Plan Review.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)

Not applicable at this time.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable at this time.

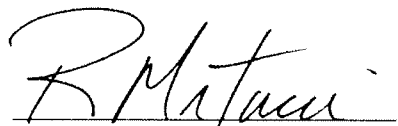
ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

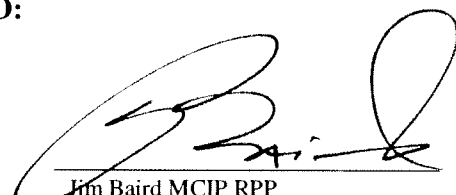
The recommendations in this report would promote the reuse, revitalization and intensification of an existing employment area in keeping with growth management objectives.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDED
BY:**


Rino Mostacci MCIP RPP
Director of Planning and Urban Design


Jim Baird MCIP RPP
Commissioner of Development
Services

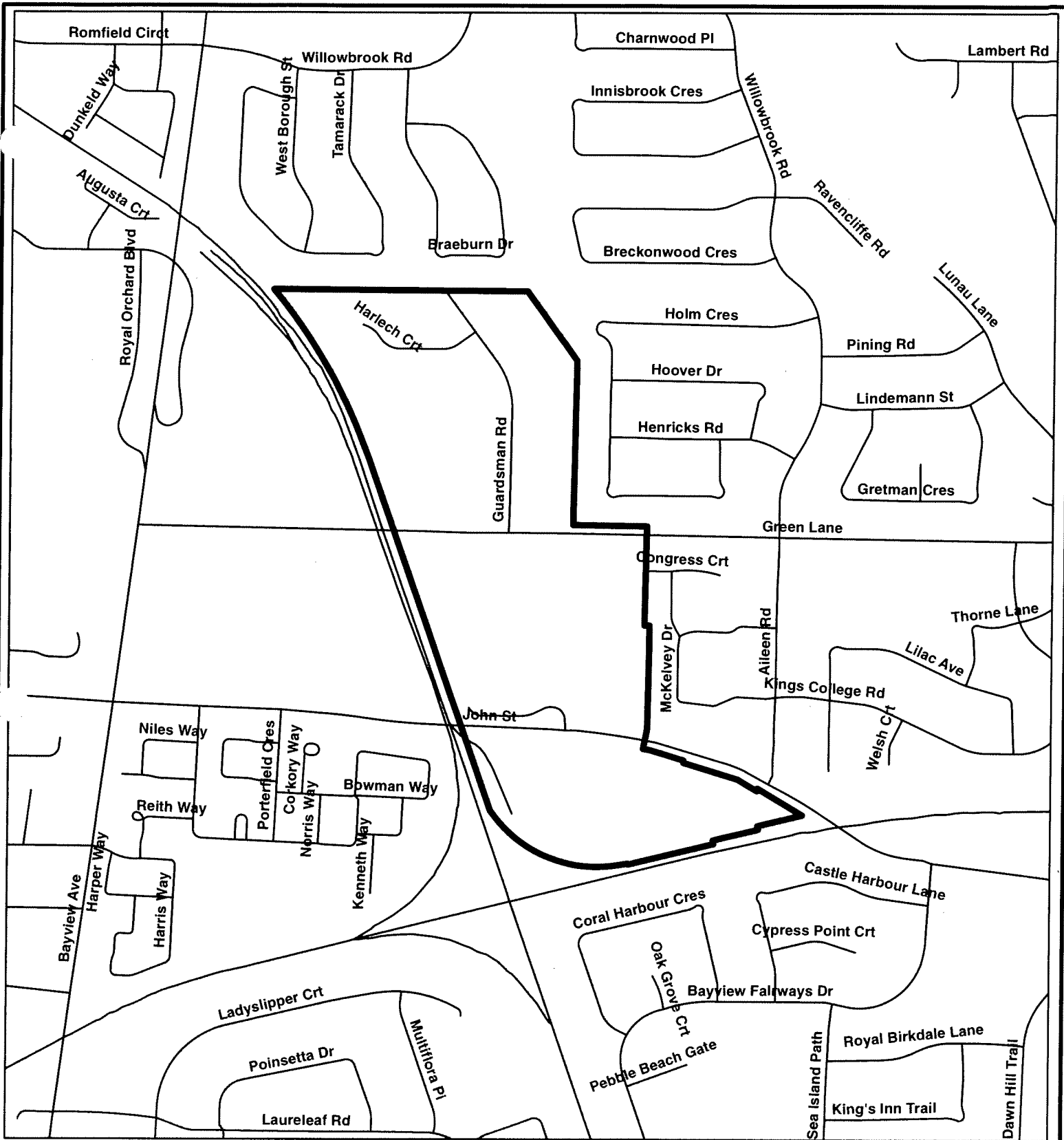
ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1 – Study area

Figure 2 – Air photo

Appendix A – Land Use Planning Report: Executive Summary

Appendix B – Proposed Policy Framework (Excerpt from Consultant’s Report)



STUDY AREA

 SUBJECT LANDS

FILE No. PR.11127722 (RB)


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DATE: 08/30/2012



AIR PHOTO



 SUBJECT LANDS

FILE No. PR.11127722 (RB)

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DATE: 08/30/2012

APPENDIX A –

LAND USE PLANNING REPORT:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREPARED BY NICK McDONALD

MERIDIAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS INC.



**Land Use Planning Report:
The Thornhill Innovation Centre
(City of Markham)**

Prepared by: Nick McDonald

October 5, 2012



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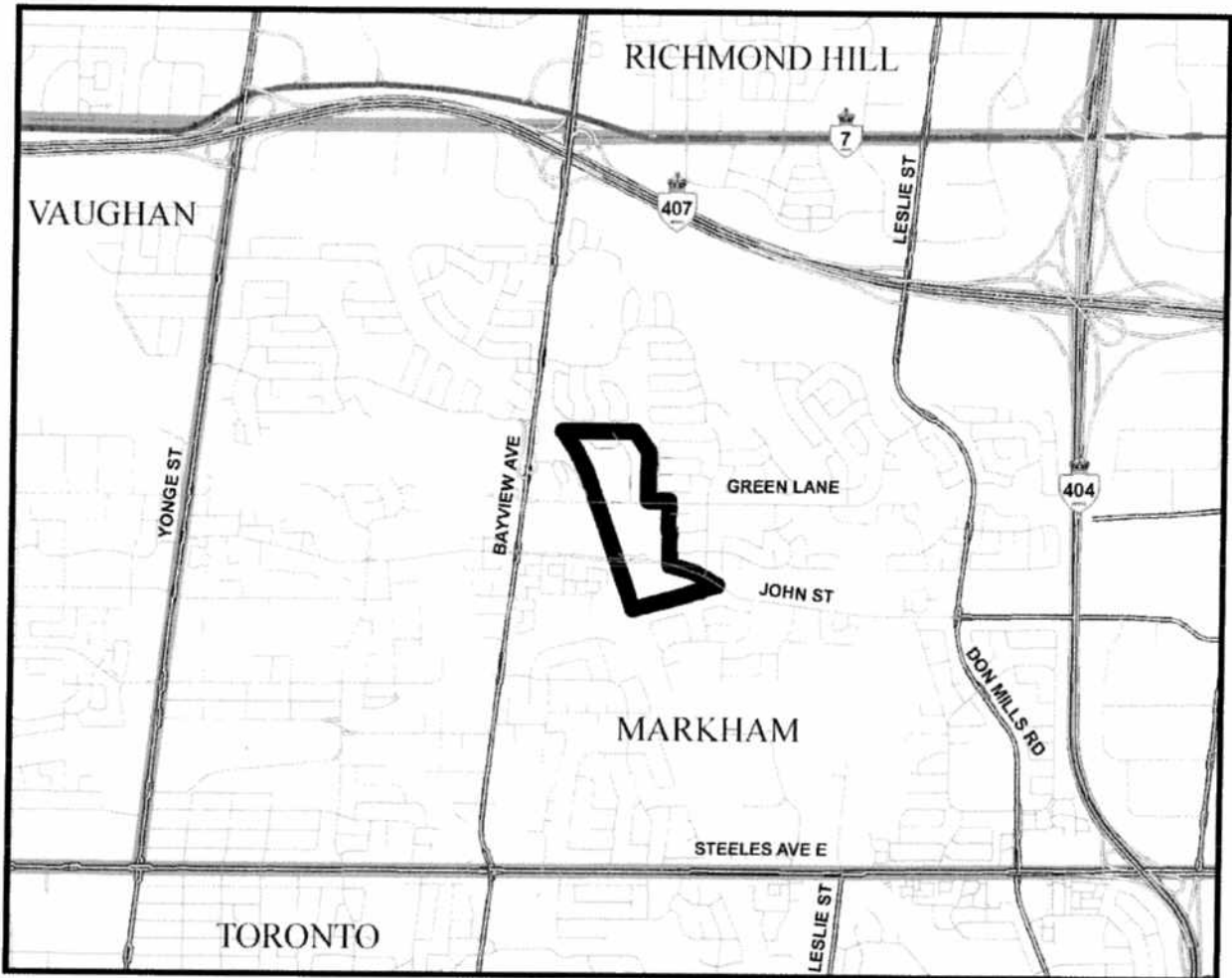
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE PROCESS TO DATE

The area subject to this report has an area of about 35 hectares and is located to the east of a north-south CN rail line that runs parallel to Bayview Avenue ('the Study Area') as shown on **Map A** below.



Map A: Location of Study Area
Source: Online Mapping

Portions of John Street and Green Lane and all of Guardsman Road and Harlech Court are within the Study Area. Industrial uses began developing in the area in 1968 and since that time all of the lands within the Study Area have been developed in accordance with the industrial zoning that was applied in the early 1970's. Single detached homes were introduced into the area to the north and east in the late 1970's and into the 1980's, with many of these homes backing onto the Study Area.

At the present time there are 114 businesses in the Study Area in 53 buildings. These buildings have a floor area of about 64,500 square metres (695,000 square feet). The lands in the Study Area are fully subdivided into 47 parcels of land, of which only two are vacant. It is estimated that the businesses employ about 1,000 people in the Study Area. It is also estimated that the Study Area could support up to 1,950 employees, based on Markham's average employment density. While there are a number of light industrial uses in the area, the majority of the businesses are motor vehicle repair related.

Figure 1 shows the nature of the auto-related uses on Harlech Court.



Figure 1: Automotive Related Uses Harlech Court
Source: Bing Maps

The largest employer in the area (Canac Kitchens) closed in 2006 and the property was put up for sale. The kitchen production use was considered to be an incompatible use by some in the area, since it was located in very close proximity to residential uses, and generated a number of noise and odour complaints as a consequence. **Figure 2** below shows the large Canac facility in 2008 with residential uses located nearby (the Canac facility has since been demolished).

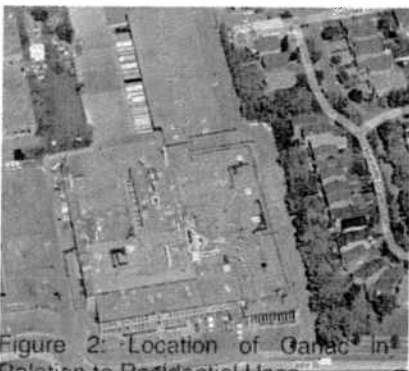


Figure 2: Location of Canac in Relation to Residential Uses
Source: Bing Maps

While the closing of Canac eliminated the impact of that use on the adjacent residential area, there continued to be concerns about the nature of future uses that might locate on the site and the potential impacts these uses may have on adjacent residential areas, particularly a new manufacturing or processing facility. In addition, the City became aware that potential purchasers were considering the development of residential uses on the site, which would have the effect of introducing non-employment uses into the employment area.

It was on this basis that on June 24, 2008, City staff were directed to identify possible options in terms of how the Official Plan, Secondary Plan and Zoning By-law could be updated to promote the transition of the Study Area to a higher order Business Corridor, while addressing issues of land use compatibility between residential and non-residential uses. It was thought at the time that the closure of Canac provided the City with the opportunity to consider other land use options and choices in the Study Area. The study was later initiated in 2008, however a final report was never completed.

While the study was underway, Council approved an application to develop a freestanding office building on Harlech Court, in the north end of the Study Area in June 2009. Council at the same time also approved changes to the Official Plan to permit free standing office buildings throughout the Study Area, which would have the effect of providing for a broader range of uses outside of

the John Street and Green Lane corridors, where such uses were only previously permitted. The effect of these approvals was to increase the potential for the redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized properties and the intensification of other properties in the Study Area. This approval was considered by many to be very positive in the Study Area since it potentially signalled that the Study Area was indeed transitioning towards a different future, and the type of future that was desired by Council.

On March 1, 2011, Terms of Reference were endorsed by Council to establish the Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group. As a consequence, work on the land use study was re-started, with the product of that work being this report.

Through a number of scheduled meetings, the Working Group met to discuss the existing policy context and implications of policy changes in the Study Area and examine opportunities to enhance the interface between new/existing employment uses and adjacent residential uses, in order to reduce land use conflicts. Specifically, the Working Group considered the following at their meetings:

- **Meeting 1:** The existing policy context and implications of policy changes (October 26, 2011 meeting);
- **Meeting 2:** Walking Tour of the area (November 14, 2011)
- **Meeting 3:** Transportation and servicing matters (December 14, 2011)
- **Meeting 4:** The options set out in the Policy Options Report prepared in 2009 (February 8, 2012);
- **Meeting 5:** Review of the Policy Options Report and discussion of other possible options for the evolution of the area (March 7 2012), including possible mixed use and the promotion of less noxious (cleaner) uses by building on Markham's Green Print Strategy, green building standards, and green community standards; and,
- **Meeting 6:** Continued discussion of policy options including matters associated with enhancing the interface between new/existing employment uses and adjacent residential uses, in order to reduce conflicts between these uses, enhance the adjacent residential uses and enhance the viability of the employment lands and, future redevelopment within the John Street/Green Lane Corridor (March 28, 2012).

On April 25, 2012, a Public Information Meeting that was intended to obtain the public's comments on the study was held at the Thornhill Community Centre.

The Working Group included Councillor Shore (Chair), Mayor Scarpitti, members of the surrounding residential and local business community and members of the Thornhill Subcommittee. Staff from the Planning and Urban Design department, Transportation department, and Engineering department as well as members of the consulting team provided support to the Working Group during the various meetings.

Members of the Working Group were appointed for a one-year period, beginning in the first quarter of 2011. The Working Group meetings were intended to provide a forum for more in-depth and focussed discussion. The Working Group also contributed by relaying information on the progress of the Study back to the larger community.

In March 2012, Council approved Interim Controlled By-law ("the ICBL") 2012-61, which applied to all properties within the Study Area. The purpose of the by-law was to prohibit the development

of new buildings on vacant lots and the expansion of any building by more than 10% in the Study Area. All uses permitted by the zoning by-law in effect continue to be permitted within existing buildings by the ICBL. The intent of the passage of the ICBL was to enable the City to complete this study.

COMPETING VIEWS

Given the Study Area's location in Thornhill, there has been a considerable amount of sustained pressure to develop new uses and redevelop existing uses and buildings in the past number of years. However, much of this pressure has been speculative and while some development has occurred in the Study Area in the last 10 to 15 years, much of what exists in the Study Area has been there for quite some time. This sustained pressure is expected to continue, particularly since the population of the City of Markham will continue to increase at an accelerated rate in accordance with Provincial policy. **Figures 3 and 4** show how the area to the west, north and east of the Study Area has developed with higher density residential uses.

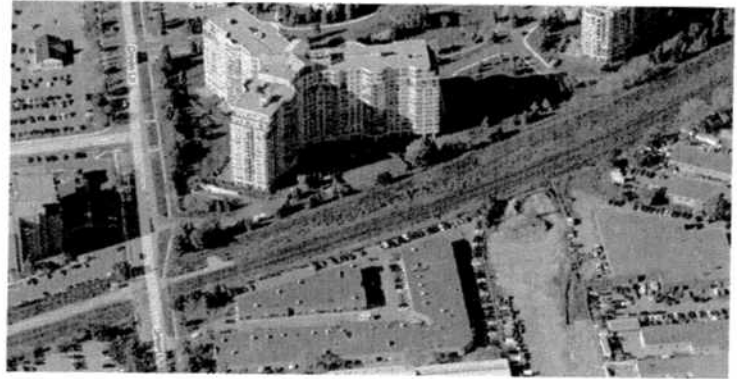


Figure 3: Interface with Residential Uses on Western Edge of Study Area
Source: Bing Maps

It is clear that many members of the public have strong views on what should happen in the Study Area. In this regard, there are two prevailing points of view. One is that of the residents, with many living in the surrounding residential neighbourhood for many years experiencing the impacts of living next to an employment area. Some believe that employment uses should no longer be permitted in the Study Area and that the area should be redeveloped for other uses, such as residential uses. Others recognize that many of the uses in the area do not have direct impacts on them, however they are concerned about future uses, particularly on the former Canac site.

The second point of view is that of the business owners in the Study Area. These business owners have in most cases been in the Study Area for a considerable number of years, have invested money to upgrade and operate their businesses and are committed to staying in the Study Area for the foreseeable future. These business owners also generally recognize that they have the “right” to stay in the Study Area as long as they comply with all applicable laws.

It is no surprise that there are these two competing viewpoints at play in the Study Area. The challenge in moving forward is to somehow recognize both and to develop a policy and regulatory framework that moves both viewpoints closer together.

It is noted that the layout and design of the Study Area and its relationship with adjacent residential areas to the north and to the east happened somewhat organically, without the benefit of any long term planning for the area. This was typical in the 1960's and 1970's and is by no means unique to the City of Markham. In fact, there are numerous examples of these kinds of employment areas being located next to residential areas throughout the Greater Toronto area in areas that were developed at around the same time.

Unfortunately, this pattern cannot be undone since all of the land in the Study Area has been subdivided and is in private ownership and all of the adjacent areas used for residential purposes have also been subdivided and are in private ownership. Essentially, both the business owners in the Study Area and the homeowners in the adjacent areas have rights to use their land accordingly.



Guardsman Road next to Residential Uses
Source: Bing Maps

It is also noted that if the City was starting over, and considering residential development in proximity to employment uses, these residential uses would be significantly set back from the employment area by retail commercial areas, roads, parkland or by natural features. However, creating this kind of separation of uses is not possible today. As a consequence, given that the residential uses are fixed, the only option available is to change the use permissions, setbacks and other standards that apply to the employment uses in the Study Area.

INTENT OF THIS REPORT

It is the intent of this report to provide Council with a recommendation on how the policy and regulatory framework should be updated in the Study Area. In this regard, this report:

- Reviews current land use information to determine the scale, location and type of existing development;
- Reviews and comments on the built form in the Study Area;
- Identifies and comments on the current policy and regulatory framework that currently applies in Study Area and which provides the basis for considering development applications;
- Reviews and provides comments on existing policy and regulatory gaps and the implication of new Provincial policy on land use in the area;
- Identifies potential constraints to development and potential opportunities for development and redevelopment in the area;
- Recommends a long term Vision that is intended to be a picture of the preferred future for an area;
- Identifies a series of goals and objectives that are intended to be broad long term aims that attempt to define how the Vision will be implemented;
- Establishes a series of over-arching urban design principles that set out in broad terms how new development is to be integrated with the existing fabric of the Study Area;
- Identifies what land uses are to be permitted and under what conditions in the Study Area; and,
- Identifies the specific policy and regulatory recommendations that are intended to codify all of the above.

One of the more significant challenges in making decisions on the future planning for the Study Area is the number and variety of Provincial land use planning policies that apply to the Study Area, with each having implications on how development and redevelopment will occur in the future.

In addition to the closure of Canac, this report also takes into account the conclusions and recommendations made in a report dealing with employment area policy in the City of Markham. This report, prepared in June 2009, indicated that the City's supply of employment land will not be sufficient to meet expected demand by as early as 2016. Given this conclusion, it was recommended in the June 2009 Report that additional lands be added to the Urban Area for employment purposes and that existing employment lands be retained as employment lands. The need to expand the urban area to accommodate expected employment has a significant impact on whether the conversion of existing employment areas such as the Study Area to non-employment uses can be justified.

This report reviews these issues and the current and emerging policy framework at the Provincial, Regional and local levels. The intent of this review is essentially to determine how the policy and regulatory framework can be designed to support the transition of the Study Area into a higher order employment area as directed by Council.

WHAT DOES THIS REPORT RECOMMEND?

The Study Area has a unique history that is characteristic of the rapid growth of the Region and the City of Markham itself. Although the Study Area was once surrounded by agricultural uses, the Study Area is now located in a primarily residential area. This contrasting development pattern has resulted in land use compatibility issues and the need to develop a regulatory framework that encourages the transition of the area to permit uses that are more compatible with adjacent residential uses while continuing to support the growth of the area as an Employment Area.

This report demonstrates that there are about 1,000 jobs in the over 110 businesses in the Study Area and that many of these businesses have been in the area for more than a few years. Provincial Policy requires that existing employment areas such as the Study Area be protected and preserved and that their conversion to another use can only be considered at the time of a Municipal Comprehensive Review. The Region of York and the City of Markham have spent the last three years determining how to accommodate the amount of employment growth forecasted to occur in the Region and the City. Based on the results of this analysis, it has been determined that the City of Markham will require additional land to accommodate expected employment growth.

Given that additional land to accommodate expected job growth is required, the removal of any existing land from an employment area would be very difficult to justify. **As a consequence, the Study Area in our opinion must continue to be considered an employment area in accordance with Provincial policy.**

In addition to the Provincial policy context, there are a number of factors to consider in making policy recommendations for the Study Area. These factors include:

- History of land use incompatibility in the area;
- Potential to attract higher order uses to the Study Area;
- How new development should be planned on the Canac site;
- Increasing number of institutional uses in the area;
- The new office building proposed on Harlech Court;
- The future demand and need for motor vehicle related uses;
- Impacts from the rail line;

- The need to improve the public realm;
- The need for local and community amenities;
- The absence of pedestrian linkages with surrounding neighbourhoods;
- The right of existing uses to continue operating as legal non-conforming uses in the future if the zoning is changed; and,
- The comments of the Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group.

In order to move forward and establish the policy and regulatory basis for making informed land use decisions in the future, this report recommends that:

- A long term Vision that is intended to be a picture of the preferred future of the area be established;
- A series of goals and objectives that are intended to be broad long-term aims that attempt to define how the Vision will be implemented be included within the Official Plan;
- The lands within the Study Area be designated Service Employment in the new Official Plan; and,
- The zoning of the lands in the Study Area be upgraded from the current industrial zoning to a zone that permits a range of service employment uses, such as business offices, retail stores and similar uses.

Changing the City's policy and regulatory framework is only one of a number of actions that can be taken by the City. The City can also improve the streets in the area, enforce existing bylaws to the greatest extent possible, market the area appropriately and develop a Community Improvement Plan that provides the basis for establishing a program for improving private property. All of these actions would be designed to stimulate investment and redevelopment in the Study Area, and these recommendations are also made in this report.

However, the City can only do so much since it does not own any property in the area (other than roads, sidewalks and the boulevards within public road rights of way – the “public realm”) and it will be the property owners themselves who have to make decisions that support the long-term objectives of the City, which are articulated in this study. As a consequence, it is recommended that the City's actions stemming from this report be designed to improve the climate for investment and redevelopment through any means possible, keeping in mind the employment context of the area, as defined by Provincial Policy.

It is our view that the actions of the City are really the first, **necessary step** in a process that will take many years for noticeable changes to take place in the Study Area. The recommendations made in this report are intended to be a blueprint for change in the area. On the basis of the above, below is a recommended Vision Statement for the Study Area:

The Thornhill Innovation Centre is an attractive vibrant area with a mixture of businesses that are compatible with and complement surrounding residential communities. The Thornhill Innovation Centre will continue to evolve into a desirable place where economic opportunities and innovation are encouraged in an attractive physical environment. The Thornhill Innovation Centre's "sense of place" will be strengthened through attractive and safe streetscapes that create a more functional, interconnected and pedestrian-friendly environment and through high-quality architecture, urban design, open spaces and public amenities that define the area's unique look and function.

In order to implement the above Vision, it is recommended that the City of Markham establish a policy and regulatory framework that stimulates investment, promotes the conversion of the area to higher order employment uses, supports and requires improvements to the public realm where necessary and provides strategic direction for development and redevelopment while minimizing the potential of incompatible uses. This can be accomplished by adding policies to the Official Plan through the current Official Plan Review process.

This report is divided into three components. **Part A** describes the Study Area and the policy and regulatory context, **Part B** reviews all of the factors that were considered in preparing this report and **Part C** contains the recommendations on what changes should be made to the policies and regulations that should apply in the Study Area.

APPENDIX B –

**PROPOSED POLICY FRAMEWORK
(EXCERPT FROM CONSULTANT’S REPORT)**

C3 PROPOSED POLICY FRAMEWORK

C3.1 OVERVIEW

As per the recommendations made in the 2009 ELS, it is recommended that a new land use designation be established in the Official Plan to guide development throughout the Study Area, with a unique set of development policies. This new designation would also be applied to other areas in the City that are similar to the Study Area. The new designation can also be used as an economic development tool to target certain sectors such as creative industries and entrepreneurial start-ups who tend to gravitate toward areas with lower cost rents and land prices. This designation would permit a number of office, service and retail uses that are not permitted today.

The new designation would be called 'Service Employment'. Given that the City is currently in the process of preparing a new Official Plan, the opportunity exists to apply this new designation to the Study Area as part of that process. On September 21, 2012, the first draft of the Official Plan was released for public review and the 'Service Employment' designation has been applied to all of the lands in the Study Area.

C3.2 PERMITTED USES IN THE SERVICE EMPLOYMENT DESIGNATION

As per the policies in the draft Official Plan dated September 21, 2012, it is recommended that two categories of use permissions be established in the Study Area. However, it is also recommended that the new Official Plan also include a number of policies that are unique to the Study Area dealing with permitted uses and development standards.

On the basis of the above, it is recommended that the following uses be permitted **as of right** in the Study Area in the zoning by-law that is to be updated, subject to meeting the standards set out in the implementing zoning by-law:

PROPOSED AS OF RIGHT USES

- 1. Service uses;**
- 2. Offices;**
- 3. Financial institutions;**
- 4. Manufacturing, processing and warehousing uses, with no accessory outdoor storage;**
- 5. Retail use provided:**
 - a. the use is not a major retail use; and,**
 - b. the total gross floor area devoted to a retail use in a multiple unit building does not exceed 50% of the total gross floor area of the multiple unit building.**
- 6. Retail and service uses that are accessory to a primary manufacturing, processing or warehousing use and within the same premise as the primary manufacturing, processing or warehousing use;**
- 7. Trade schools;**
- 8. Commercial schools;**
- 9. Commercial parking garage; and,**
- 10. Hotels with no dwelling units**

It is also recommended that the uses listed below not be permitted as of right in the zoning by-law. However, these uses may be permitted depending on a number of factors, such as the location of the property in relation to residential uses and its compatibility with adjacent land uses, and on this basis, they would be considered **discretionary uses**. This means that such a use can only be permitted subject to a re-zoning application, provided all specified criteria have been met, and following the holding of a public meeting under the Planning Act. The list of discretionary uses is below:

PROPOSED DISCRETIONARY USES

1. **The establishment of new accessory outdoor storage or processing areas in conjunction with an existing or proposed manufacturing, processing or warehouse use;**
2. **The establishment of new motor vehicle body shops and repair garages;**
3. **The expansion of existing motor vehicle body shops and repair garages;**
4. **The establishment of additional outdoor storage areas for existing motor vehicle body shops and repair garages;**
5. **Restaurants;**
6. **Banquet halls;**
7. **Private clubs;**
8. **Commercial fitness centres;**
9. **Daycare centres provided it is located within an office building;**
10. **Commercial self storage establishments;**
11. **Motor vehicle service stations;**
12. **Car washes; and,**
13. **Motor vehicle sales and rental establishments with limited accessory controlled outdoor storage or display of motor vehicles.**

It is noted that many of the uses to be permitted **as of right** are uses that have a low impact on residential uses. The uses identified as **discretionary uses** have the potential to impact on nearby residential uses and/or existing uses in the Study Area, depending on a number of factors.

C3.3 WHAT OTHER POLICIES COULD BE INCLUDED IN THE NEW OFFICIAL PLAN AND APPLIED IN THE STUDY AREA

The intent of the new Service Employment designation is to improve the character and encourage the evolution of the uses and function of these areas. It is appropriate, in our opinion, to provide additional development requirements in the Study Area for both private and public sector developers. This can be accomplished by including site-specific policies for the Study Area in the Official Plan. These development requirements would be designed to address existing accessibility and character concerns, as well as potential future servicing and infrastructure concerns. In this regard any application for a use that requires a re-zoning should be subject to criteria set out in the Official Plan that would require a proponent to demonstrate to the City that:

1. Adequate on-site parking facilities are provided for the use with such parking being provided in locations that are compatible with surrounding land uses;
2. The use will not have a negative impact on the enjoyment and privacy of neighbouring properties;

3. The use will have minimal impacts on adjacent properties in relation to grading, drainage, access and circulation, and privacy;
4. Any loading and storage facilities that are provided are buffered so as to minimize disruption and the enjoyment of neighbouring residential properties;
5. Vehicular access points to multiple uses on the lot are coordinated and consolidated;
6. The road and/or municipal infrastructure is able to provide water and wastewater service, waste management services and fire protection;
7. The lot has sufficient lot frontage, depth and area for the siting of proposed uses;
8. Improvements to the streetscape, such as soft landscaping, lighting fixtures, benches and public art, are part of the overall project design;
9. New buildings are designed to present their principal building facades with an appropriate building design and fenestration to the public road;
10. Roof top mechanical units are organized and screened with complementary materials, colours and finishes as necessary to provide a skyline with desirable visual attributes;
11. New buildings on corner lots are located in close proximity to the public road rights of way and are designed and located to emphasize their important urban presence by employing appropriate strategies for major landscape treatments as well as building massing and articulation that emphasize the corner condition;
12. The majority of the first storey wall of buildings located along public roads where a strong pedestrian environment is encouraged are the site of openings;
13. Barrier free access for persons using walking or mobility aids are provided in all public and publically accessible buildings and facilities and along major pedestrian routes;
14. Display areas are designed to make a positive contribution to the streetscape and the overall site development;
15. All lighting will be internally oriented so as not to cause glare on adjacent properties or public roads;
16. Site and building services and utilities such as waste storage facilities, loading, air handling equipment, hydro and telephone transformers and switching gears and metering equipment, are located and/or screened from public roads and adjacent residential areas or other sensitive land uses, in order to buffer their visual and operational effects;
17. Waste storage areas are integrated into the principal building on the lot and where waste storage areas are external to the principal building, they are enclosed and not face a public road; and,
18. Continuous, highly visible, well-articulated and landscaped connections between building(s) and the public road are provided to establish appropriate pedestrian linkages between the sidewalk and building entrances, and generally improve access for public transit users.

The provision of appropriate landscaping is a key consideration with any proposal. As a general rule, it is also recommended that no less than 20% of a lot be the site of landscaping. In this regard it is also recommended that:

1. Existing mature trees and established vegetation be retained and enhanced where possible to minimize impacts on the enjoyment of adjacent lots;
2. Continuous, highly visible, well-articulated and landscaped connections between building(s) and the public roads are provided to establish appropriate pedestrian linkages between the sidewalk and building entrances, and generally improve access for public transit users;
3. All landscape materials proposed are selected for their aesthetic, ecological, disease-

- tolerance and maintenance characteristics;
4. Hard and soft landscaping be used for the spaces between the street line and buildings to enhance the streetscape, as well as provide a buffering function when on-site parking is placed close to the street or in side yards;
 5. Landscape strips planted with trees and/or shrubs and flowers are used to separate each development and the associated parking areas; and,
 6. Landscaping should offset large expanses of off-street parking.

C3.4 THE CANAC SITE

It is also recommended that special policies dealing with the Canac site also be included within the Official Plan. In this regard, it is recommended that policies that address the relationship between any new development on the Canac site and adjacent residential uses be included within the Official Plan. It is also recommended that new manufacturing, processing or warehousing uses, motor vehicle body shop and repair garages and motor vehicle sales and rental establishments not be permitted as discretionary uses on the Canac site.