

## Where is Vaughan's City Centre?



The Vaughan Corporate Centre (VCC) has long been planned to become a major mixed-used center with a concentration of high-density employment and housing. The development that has occurred there to date has consisted of mostly low-density retail, entertainment, hotel and industrial uses. Recognizing its location along the Highway 7 rapid transit corridor and at the terminus of the planned Spadina Subway Line extension, the Province has identified the VCC Node as an Urban Growth Centre and assigned it a density target of 200 people and jobs per hectare. The VCC is poised to become the highest density node within the city, but can it become the city centre, Vaughan's downtown—a thriving mixed-use community, a focus for social and cultural activities, a place that gives the city a recognizable identity?

## Key Questions for the Official Plan

**How can Vaughan's urban structure facilitate and promote walking, cycling and transit use while still accommodating private vehicles?**

- Does Vaughan need a broader hierarchy of employment areas to distinguish different types and encourage a greater variety of employment uses across the city?
- Should future office buildings be strategically located in nodes and corridors?
- How can social and commercial hubs be reinforced and better connected to neighbourhoods?
- Where are the best locations for high density housing, and how can it be integrated into existing and new communities?
- Should conservation lands and other natural heritage be made more accessible and visible to enhance the identity of communities and benefit all residents?
- What is the potential of Vaughan's commercial nodes and corridors to attract and accommodate new housing and employment uses?
- How should Vaughan's commercial areas evolve to support growth, a mix of uses, community building and placemaking?
- Where should future public transit investments be focused to support growth and reurbanization?
- What is the capacity of the Vaughan Corporate Centre to accommodate population and job growth, and can it evolve to become Vaughan's downtown?
- What are the appropriate environmental and land use roles for Vaughan's "whitebelt" areas?
- How can the presence of the countryside be reinforced within existing and new communities?

## Vaughan Tomorrow

The City of Vaughan is undertaking an ambitious three-year process to create a new Official Plan. The Official Plan is part of Vaughan's integrated Growth Management Strategy. It will address all elements of effective, sustainable and successful city-building while managing projected growth over the next 25 years.

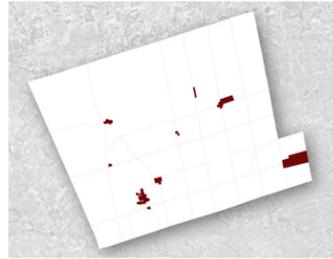


In broad terms, urban structure refers to the way land uses, infrastructure, open spaces and natural features are arranged to create a city. Since city building is a collective undertaking that results in constant change, the sense of an overall urban structure is not always apparent. Nevertheless, how a city is physically organized is fundamental to the quality of life it offers its citizens, the functioning of its economy, the fostering of social cohesion, and the health of the natural environment.

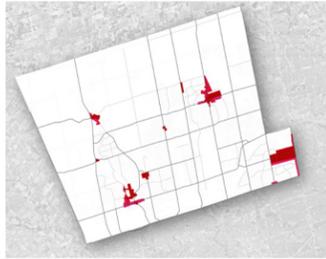
The development of a new Official Plan provides an opportunity for Vaughan to reflect on its urban structure, and to identify its strengths and weaknesses. With the city expected to accommodate significant population and job growth in the coming decades, its urban structure will change. Understanding the structure today is a critical first step to defining an appropriate structure for the future and creating a larger vision to guide the new Official Plan.

# Vaughan's physical evolution

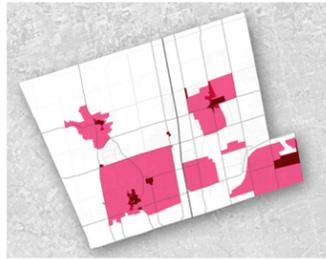
Since European settlement in the 19th century, Vaughan has grown from four villages, to a contiguous city within the countryside.



By 1880, the four villages had been established, Thornhill, which straddled Yonge Street, being the largest. More than 95% of Vaughan's land remained rural.



By 1971, the villages had grown, but more than 90% of the Township of Vaughan was still rural.



With Toronto largely built out and sewers extended into York Region, growth in Vaughan had taken off by 1991. The four villages evolved into suburban communities, together consuming about one third of the city's land.



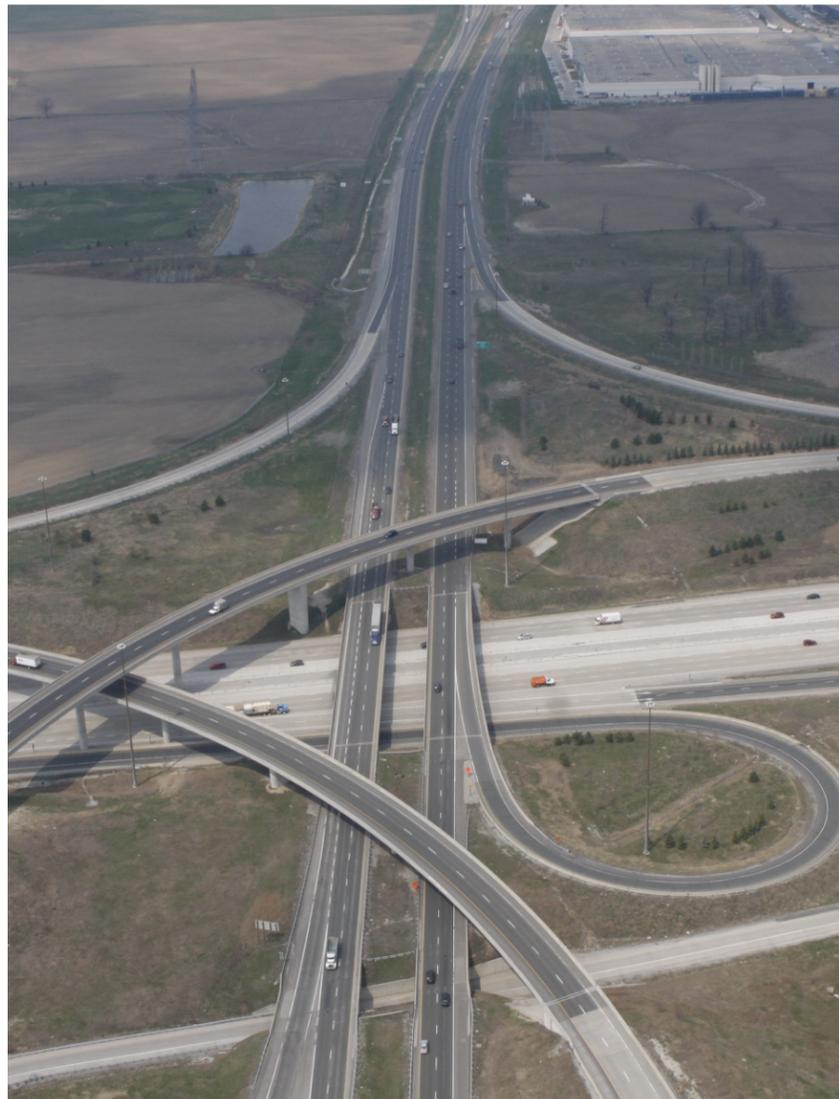
Rapid growth through the 1990s and into the 21st century linked the four village-centred communities with development and resulted in two new communities—Vellore and Carrville.

## A car-oriented structure

Within Vaughan's pattern of low-density development and segregated land uses, highways and major arterial roads play a principal role as the connecting elements. There are a number of consequences to this structure:

- Cars and trucks and parking lots tend to dominate the public realm and the image of the city.
- Neighbourhoods are distanced from the adverse impacts of busy roads and industrial uses.
- Walking and cycling are discouraged.
- Providing most residents and workers with a high level of public transit service is difficult.
- People with disabilities or no access to a car may have trouble accessing jobs, services and amenities.
- The built environment lacks diversity.
- It is challenging to maintain and create distinct communities and places.

The introduction of the VIVA rapid transit system has begun to attract more transit-oriented patterns of development along the Highway 7 corridor, and the extension of Toronto's subway network into Vaughan will have a significant impact on its urban structure.



# Vaughan's countryside

There is increasing awareness about the value of the countryside to cities, for food production, for recreation, for tourism and above all to maintain the health of the environment. The establishment of the Greenbelt and the protective policies that apply to the Oak Ridges Moraine are responses to this awareness. The strong presence of significant natural features and agrarian landscapes in Vaughan creates an opportunity for the city to evolve as a unique urban and rural place. As the Official Plan process addresses the structure of Vaughan's urbanized areas and how it can be enhanced, it will also need to consider how rural areas might evolve.

Outside of the Greenbelt and between it and the moraine are significant pockets of rural land currently outside the city's urban boundary and not covered by the new land use regulations. These so-called "whitebelt" areas have the potential to accommodate future growth. What land uses and densities are appropriate in these areas, and what form should development take? Given the appropriate uses, densities and forms, what is the capacity of these areas to accommodate new residents and new jobs?



## Places to Live: Vaughan's communities

Agricultural land in Vaughan today remains under constant pressure from urban development spurred by population and employment growth. Due to its proximity to the City of Toronto, rates of farm closure and agricultural land loss have been notably higher in Vaughan than in most other municipalities in the GTA. In 1976, the City of Vaughan had a total agricultural land area of 17,344 ha. By 1996, thirty

years later, this number had declined by 46% to 9,340 ha - the second highest rate of agricultural land conversion for any municipality in the GTA. Although these rates have since declined, agricultural land loss continues. The net result is that Vaughan now has less than 20% of the agricultural land that it had 40 years ago. If these rates remain the same, Vaughan will have virtually no agricultural land left within 25 years.

## Places to Work: Vaughan's employment lands

As a result of its success in attracting industrial employment, Vaughan's employment lands occupy a large portion of the city's total land base, approximately 15%. Located in highly visible locations along the 407, 427, 400 and major arterials, they figure prominently in the city's urban structure, reinforcing the division between communities west of the 400 and those to the east.

The proposed employment lands straddling the 400 north of Teston Road would effectively extend Vaughan's spine of highway-related employment northward. On the west

edge of the city, the planned extension of the 427 to Major Mackenzie Road will extend the existing employment corridor in the southwest corner of the city northward (these lands are already in the urban boundary). The conceptual GTA West Highway Corridor being contemplated by the Province, which would terminate at the 400 and likely link to the 427, may create an opportunity to consider the appropriateness of reserving land in the northwest corner of the city (outside of the Greenbelt) for employment in the long-term.

## Places to Shop: Vaughan's commercial areas

Vaughan is well served by a variety of retail destinations, from the "super-regional" Vaughan Mills complex and the Promenade Mall to all manner of large-format retail development to neighbourhood strip plazas to the main street shops in the old villages of Kleinburg, Woodbridge and Thornhill. Beyond the enclosed malls and their immediate surroundings, large retail plazas serving Woodbridge, Vellore

and Carrville can be found all along Highway 7, Weston Road, Major Mackenzie Road and to a lesser extent Dufferin Street. Small neighbourhood plazas are scattered throughout the city, mostly along arterial roads. This pattern of distribution is highly automobile-oriented, the result being that less than half of Vaughan neighbourhoods, as defined by circles with radii of 400 metres, are with a 5-minute walk of a store.