

Questions to be addressed during the Official Plan Work

What implementation tools can better involve the public in the planning of their communities?

How can we integrate all of our needs into a community food production, community services, affordable housing opportunities, places to live, work and play?

How can we better support the expression of diverse cultures?

How can we encourage and support more Public Art? Should Vaughan have a central or main park space?

Where should it be located? Is the former Keele landfill an appropriate location?

How can we look at "place" from a variety of perspectives? How can we address sometimes competing visions of what place is, what types of amenities are required to make place for a variety of cultural backgrounds, abilities and needs?

Should a Design Review Panel be established for the City that requires all major developments to undergo a peer review process prior to final approval?



City Building & Placemaking



The new Vaughan Official Plan will emphasize placemaking in the city-building process, over the next 25 years. The term placemaking has been around for several decades and has become more generally accepted in recent years as a critical component of good city planning and the development of sustainable cities. Great cities have vibrant streets, parks and squares that invite you to gather and socialize; great architecture and design that inspires you and creates a positive image; unique public art that delights and captures the soul of a City; natural landscapes that make you feel connected to the environment; and beautiful buildings – old and new – that create unique neighbourhoods and a sense of place.

The current state of places in Vaughan

During the Winter and Spring of 2008, Vaughan's residents were asked to identify places that they liked and didn't like through a series of public consultation events held in each of the five communities.

Places that people like people have a strong connection to the natural heritage of Vaughan especially the Humber River, Don River, and protected woodlots. In particular, points of access to these natural features, such as the McMichael Gallery, the Kortright Centre and the Humber River Trail in Woodbridge. The historic villages of Woodbridge, Kleinburg and Thornhill were also identified as great places for the range of shops, historic architecture, sense of community, and proximity to city-wide and regional destinations.

Places that people dislike are intersections along Highway 7 characterized by single purpose, large retail stores (Highway 400 and Jane Street), Vaughan Mills Mall, and Colossus Movie theatre. This doesn't mean that people don't enjoy shopping or taking in a movie, but rather it highlights the importance of how these places are designed. Placemaking is as much about uses as it is about the beauty or aesthetics of a place. All of these places have a number of common elements: they are not safe or accessible for pedestrians, clearly dominated by automobiles and the environment lacks general good design and beauty.

Placemaking Principles

How do we build on the assets and places in Vaughan that are so cherished by residents and how do we repair the places that are not working well? There is no set formula. Rather, there are a set of interconnected elements that must be explored and understood within Vaughan's local context. The following eight components are some of the key interrelated ingredients to creating great places.

DENSITY Higher densities, if designed well, create increased opportunities for interaction and the development of social and community networks and support a higher level of public service – public transit is the most obvious example but this also applies to the use and programming of public space.

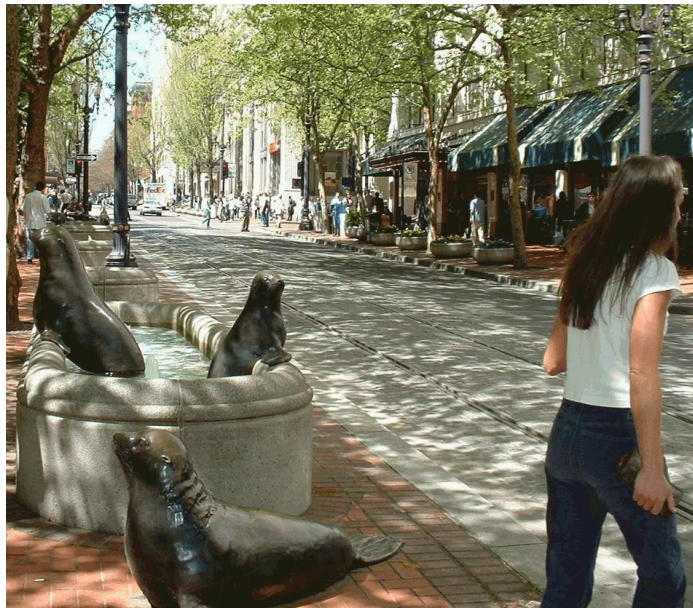
MIX OF USES One of the key attributes of a great place is the ability to have a variety of places to live, work, and play in close proximity to each other that enables people to fulfill most of their needs in one area. This creates a more interesting environment by establishing diversity within the urban landscape.

GREAT STREETS Streets are central to placemaking because of the critical role they play in creating a unique community identity, healthy business environment and public space for citizens to use and enjoy. Great streets are a rare commodity in Vaughan and in most suburban municipalities. Good street design has been trumped by the demands of the automobile. Once the center of public life, streets have been planned and developed as unceremonious pieces of infrastructure meant to carry traffic to specific points as quickly as possible.



CIVIC SPACES Civic spaces are an extension of a City and its various communities – they serve as a stage for public life and interaction. These public places draw people together, creating strong social bonds at the neighbourhood and City-wide level. They convey a city's image outward and unite citizens inward. They serve as a venue for festivals and parades as well as for daily casual contact.

ARTISITIC EXPRESSIONS Artistic expressions, both public and private, make walking through a city's streets and open spaces a pleasurable experience. Art – especially when located in the public realm, has broad appeal that can contribute to the identity and character of a city or a neighbourhood and the people who live there. Artistic expressions create landmarks, tells stories, and celebrate the cultural diversity and creativity of a community.



HERITAGE RESOURCES Heritage buildings and districts create a unique sense of place and a rooted sense of local identity. The initial consultation process illustrates that Vaughan's citizens greatly value the City's history and the particular historical elements of their communities. The fact that the communities of Kleinburg, Woodbridge, Maple and Thornhill are well-known places within a very large City and the fact that each of those communities has a visible and identifiable historic core, speaks volumes to the appreciation of heritage resources within Vaughan. The heritage aspects of each of the communities, and smaller ones such as Purpleville, Nashville and Teston help create a strong sense of place within Vaughan and help establish a unique identity for the City.



NATURAL FEATURES AND THE COUNTRYSIDE Great cities understand the importance of natural features such as rivers, valleys and forests and the importance of establishing a sustainable relationship with the rural villages and farms located in the countryside. Many of the world's greatest cities, however, have already been fully built as urban centres and, therefore, rely on regional governments or neighbouring municipalities to create and sustain the natural features and countryside that are so important for both the ecological functioning of the City and placemaking. Vaughan is blessed to not be in this situation. It currently possesses an extremely well preserved natural valley system (the Humber Valley is the most prominent feature of Vaughan's landscape – urban or rural), many maintained and protected woodlots and a substantial Countryside in the north of the City (much of which is protected through the Greenbelt and Oak Rides Moraine Acts).

BEAUTY AND DESIGN Beautiful cities do not happen by accident. They are designed and orchestrated so that public spaces and private buildings work together to create a wonderful urban aesthetic. They happen because citizens and politicians demand that beauty and high-quality design be established as one of the primary objectives for all new developments. They happen because people recognize that beauty is not just an aesthetic overlay, but an essential ingredient of city building and placemaking.