

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE ACTIVE TOGETHER MASTER PLAN

Parks, recreation, and libraries are essential to the individual wellbeing of the City's residents and the cohesive development of Vaughan's communities. They are fundamental building blocks in advancing the overall quality of life in Vaughan and their maintenance, improvement, and enhancement is a primary objective of the City's long-range planning.

In November 2008, the City of Vaughan approved the Active Together Master Plan (ATMP), the goal of which was to *"provide an action plan that leads to the development of future municipal parks, facilities and services in a responsible manner."* The 2008 ATMP was designed to be a living document that would be able to adapt to changes within the dynamic City of Vaughan. Although the Plan contained a long-term projection of needs, it was recommended that it be reviewed every five years and updated as necessary. Due to the significant growth in Vaughan, changes in planning and land use policies, the City's progress in the development of new facilities, and shifts in community needs, the time has come to review and update the 2008 ATMP.

The primary objective of this Active Together Master Plan Review & Update is to reassess and make recommendations on facility and park requirements for the next eight to ten years, taking into account the changes that have occurred in Vaughan since the approval of the 2008 Plan. However, this is not simply an administrative task – this Plan does not just look at what has been done in the past and build upon existing standards of provision, it recognizes the ways that Vaughan is evolving and, where necessary, makes adjustments to respond to changing needs within a sustainable framework. In this regard, the 2013 ATMP builds upon Vaughan's guiding documents, including Vaughan Vision 2020, Green Directions Vaughan, and the City's new Official Plan.

The 2008 Active Together Master Plan has served the community well; however, much has changed in the time since the Plan was approved, including (but not limited to):

- continued growth and development – the City remains one of the fastest growing communities in Canada;
- approval of a new Official Plan and new directions for growth; for example, the City is planning for several higher density development areas (e.g., Vaughan Metropolitan Centre), which is exerting pressure on existing and proposed parkland and recreational amenities;
- changing demographics, particularly related to ethnicity, socio-economics, and aging;
- the preparation of the Creative Together Cultural Plan for Vaughan;
- the development of a new community centre (North Thornhill) and expansion of several fitness centres, along with the planning for new libraries; despite the City's success with its multi-use facility model, there is increasing interest in neighbourhood-level facilities;
- significant land acquisitions, such as North Maple Regional Park and MacMillan Farm;
- reconsideration of the Library's Facilities Development Plan and the impact of technology;

- continued expansion of recreation and library programs and services, as well as increasing expectations from residents in terms of quality customer service;
- emerging interest in activities such as off-leash dog walking, indoor tennis, rugby, football, picnic areas, etc., as well as an increasing emphasis on health, wellness and active living; and
- there is also an ever-pressing need for “sustainable” plans with planning strategies that seek a balance between budget resources and service provision, recognizing that parks, recreation and libraries cannot and should not operate at full cost recovery levels.

## 1.2 LOCAL CONTEXT

The City of Vaughan is a cosmopolitan urban centre located in the Region of York, centrally placed within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The City is bounded by the City of Brampton and Town of Caledon to the west, the Township of King to the north, the Towns of Markham and Richmond Hill to the east, and the City of Toronto to the south. Provincial Highways 400, 407, and 427 – as well as several regional roads and public transit – connect Vaughan to the rest of the GTA and other major urban centres across Ontario. The City is firmly establishing itself as the gateway for economic activity in the Greater Toronto Area.

In the past 20 years, Vaughan has experienced unprecedented growth in its residential, industrial, and commercial sectors. Much of its appeal is due to low taxes, a readily available labour force, and access to major transportation routes. In fact, among municipalities with over 100,000 residents, Vaughan was the second fastest growing Canadian city between 2006 and 2011<sup>1</sup>. For the purposes of this ATMP, the current (as of December 31, 2012) population is estimated at 311,200<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 1: The City of Vaughan in the Region of York**



Given the City's impressive and continued growth, there is an urgency to define infrastructure requirements in intensifying and emerging communities to ensure that sufficient land is set aside, funding is allocated, and that partnerships can be established.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. 2012. Population and dwelling counts, for Canada and census subdivisions (municipalities) with 5,000-plus population, 2011 and 2006 censuses (table). Population and Dwelling Count Highlight Tables. 2011 Census.

<sup>2</sup> York Region Population Estimate. York Region Office of the CAO, Long Range Planning Branch. December 31, 2012.

### 1.3 ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

This Active Together Master Plan addresses short and long-term parks and facility requirements for the City of Vaughan. In doing so, it will help guide the work plans of several municipal departments and Vaughan Public Libraries; a brief description of each is provided below (source: 2011 Department Business Plans & Budget Summaries):

*The Recreation and Culture Department is responsible for the provision of leisure opportunities, offering a full range of recreation services and amenities including, but not limited to, indoor aquatics, arenas, fitness centres, gymnasiums, bocce courts, and activity rooms. Leisure opportunities are also enhanced by a variety of cultural services such as arts and cultural events and exhibitions. The Department provides several engaging recreation and culture programs that are provided by a team of staff, volunteers, and community partners as outlined in the seasonal Vaughan Recreation Guide. Furthermore, the Recreation and Culture Department provides a number of events that celebrates and enhances Vaughan's sense of community, such as Winterfest, Concerts in the Park, and Canada Day, recognize community volunteers through the Volunteer Recognition Awards, and other fundraising events.*

*The Building and Facilities Department oversees the planning, design, and construction, as well as the operation and maintenance of all City of Vaughan owned buildings. This includes community centres, heritage buildings, fire stations, and libraries.*

*The Parks & Forestry Operations Department is committed to providing quality, safe and functional parks, sports fields, playscapes, and open space trail facilities that meet the outdoor recreational needs of the community. This includes but is not limited to grass cutting, maintenance of playscapes, and floral displays throughout the City.*

*The Parks Development Department administers and provides innovative planning, design and construction of all municipal parks, playgrounds and open space systems throughout the City of Vaughan.*

*Vaughan Public Libraries provide a valuable service to the residents of Vaughan, reaching out to people of all ages to promote learning and community education. More importantly, the Libraries are centres of community activity. By participating in a wide variety of innovative programs and services, residents can become more involved in community life and explore the rich cultural and social diversity that makes Vaughan such a great city to live in. Vaughan Public Libraries has kept pace with the changes in Vaughan growing alongside the City, with two resource libraries, five branches and a website equipped to meet the needs of our diverse community.*

### 1.4 METHODOLOGY

The 2013 Active Together Master Plan builds upon the previous plan with a renewed emphasis on the sustainable provision of parks, recreation, and library facilities. Specifically, the following tasks have been completed:

- the per capita facility and park supplies have been updated, along with key population characteristics;

- trends and local participation data have been reviewed within the Vaughan context;
- key municipal reports and planning documents (including the new Official Plan and various secondary plans, Vaughan Vision 2020, Green Directions Vaughan, Long Range Financial Plan, Development Charges Background Study, Creative Together Plan, Accessibility Plan, etc.) have been assessed, as have best practices from other municipalities;
- the facility provision targets from the previous ATMP have been reassessed and adjusted where necessary;
- recommendations from the 2008 Plan have been reviewed and updated to reflect current circumstances and needs, with a focus on new strategies to address emerging issues; and
- user groups, stakeholders, the general public, and municipal officials and staff have been extensively engaged in the identification of issues, community needs, and future strategies.

The following graphic outlines the considerable research, analysis, and engagement undertaken as part of this Active Together Master Plan.

**Figure 2: Planning Process for the ATMP Review & Update**



It bears noting that arts and cultural services and facilities are not directly addressed within this 2013 ATMP as the City prepared a separate *Creative Together Plan* in 2010. Furthermore, the City continues to implement the *Physical Activity Strategy* that was contained in the 2008 ATMP; notwithstanding this 2013 ATMP, the 2008 *Physical Activity Strategy* remains in effect. Similar to the 2008 ATMP, there are instances where the Update contains guidance and/or high level recommendations relating to programming as a result of the inherent relationship with facilities and parks. A detailed review of programming and service delivery is beyond the scope of the ATMP.

## **1.5 REPORT ORGANIZATION**

The 2013 Active Together Master Plan is organized as follows:

- Section 1:     Introduction  
Provides an overview of the purpose and scope of the Active Together Master Plan.
- Section 2:     Background Review  
Identifies foundational reports and documents completed since the 2008 Active Together Master Plan, including a status update of key recommendations from the previous plan.
- Section 3:     Community Profile  
Contains an overview of the City's socio-demographic characteristics, population projections, and their relevance to the Active Together Master Plan.
- Section 4:     Public Engagement  
Examines public and stakeholder input relative to the current state of parks, recreation, and library facilities and services in the City, as well as future needs, opportunities, and challenges.
- Section 5:     Activity Trends and Best Practices  
Identifies major activity, park/facility provision, and service delivery trends for consideration in Vaughan.
- Section 6:     Guiding Principles & Methodology  
Identifies key considerations for the City and Library when designing, funding, constructing, and operating parks, recreation, and library facilities. Also discusses the methodology behind assessing facility and parkland needs, as well as notes about the municipal inventory.
- Section 7:     Parkland Assessment  
Evaluates the municipal parkland system and accompanying policy framework and identifies future requirements based on factors such as public input, provision targets, and geographic distribution.
- Section 8:     Indoor Recreation Facility Assessment  
Examines the current supply of indoor recreation facilities and identifies future requirements based on factors such as public input, provision targets, and geographic distribution.
- Section 9:     Outdoor Recreation Facility Assessment  
Examines the current supply of outdoor recreation facilities and identifies future requirements based on factors such as public input, provision targets, and geographic distribution.
- Section 10:    Library Facility Assessment  
Examines the current supply of public library facilities and identifies future requirements based on factors such as public input, provision targets, and geographic distribution.
- Section 11:    Active Together Master Plan Implementation  
Identifies key resource implications of implementing the Plan, along with a process for monitoring and updating the ATMP.