



Vaughan Mills Centre Public Realm and Streetscape Plan

Phase 2 – Draft Public Realm Framework Plan and Streetscape Design
What We Heard Summary
Prepared by LURA Consulting



Executive Summary

The following ‘What We Heard Summary’ provides an overview of the feedback received by the City of Vaughan and its consultants on the draft Public Realm Framework and Streetscape Design as part of Phase 2 of the Vaughan Mills Centre Public Realm and Streetscape Plan development.

Community members provided feedback on elements of the draft Public Realm Framework and Streetscape design. Through this process, which is elaborated further in the following pages, the project team heard several key perspectives shared by participants in the virtual public meeting and online survey, including the following:

- Community members were mostly in agreement that the principles guiding the draft Public Realm Framework and Streetscape Design reflect what is important to them.
- The proposed improvements to Vaughan Mills Centre would make it more likely for respondents to walk and cycle in the area.
- Beautifying, animating, and improving connections to public spaces were identified as important qualities to attract pedestrians and cyclists.
- Participants identified the need for more seating options that support individual, small group, and large group gatherings.
- Trees, plants, and other vegetation were identified as important elements to transition the Centre to a more human-scale and friendly setting.
- Participants reaffirmed the importance of safety, and the opportunity for Vaughan Mills Centre to become a great destination for residents and visitors.
- Participants reiterated concerns about traffic circulation and congestion through the Centre, advocating for relief through refinements to the road network and parking lots to improve the flow of vehicles.

This feedback and the additional details provided in this document will help finalize the Public Realm and Streetscape Plan which the City of Vaughan will consult with the public on in Summer 2021.

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Introduction

The City of Vaughan is undertaking a study to develop the Vaughan Mills Centre Public Realm and Streetscape Plan, which will serve as a comprehensive reference guide to promote high-quality public spaces and streetscape development in the Vaughan Mills Centre area. The area around Vaughan Mills Mall, known as the Vaughan Mills Centre, is evolving. As this is a bustling space for people who live, work, and play there, the City is exploring ways to enhance the area and create a safe, accessible and sustainable vision that reflects the needs of the community.

Consultation and Engagement Approach

During this round of engagement for the Public Realm and Streetscape Plan for Vaughan Mills Centre, participants were requested to provide input into the draft Public Realm Framework Plan and Streetscape Design. The purpose of engaging community members Vaughan Mills Centre Public Realm and Streetscape Plan was the following:

- To provide an overview of the draft Public Realm Framework Plan and Streetscape Design;
- To gather public input from the public and stakeholders on proposed features, amenities, and design elements such as the following:
 - Public and private streets
 - Lanes and mews;
 - Public or publicly accessible private owned open spaces;
 - Parks;
 - Plazas and public squares;
 - Sidewalks and cycling lanes;
 - Pedestrian mid-block connections;
 - Landscape and streetscape elements such as trees, plants, benches, streetlights, and paving; and
 - Trails and connections to conservation areas.

Feedback gathered through this engagement will help to inform the final version of the Public Realm Strategy and Streetscape Master Plan.

Due to COVID-19, and following the recommendations of York Region Public Health, community engagement on the Vaughan Mills Centre Public Realm and Streetscape Plan was conducted digitally.

Engagement Methods

The City of Vaughan engaged community members through a virtual public meeting and an online survey.

Virtual Public Meeting

The community meeting was held virtually using Zoom on February 25, 2021, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The event began with a presentation from DTAH (the landscape architecture consultants), followed by a Question and Answer period. Participants could pose their questions by inputting them into the chat (these questions were read aloud by the facilitator) or by unmuting themselves. Questions were answered by the landscape architecture team, and City staff. In total, **27 people attended the virtual public meeting.**

The presentation slides were made available online following the meeting for review. [Access the virtual meeting presentation](#) on the City's webpage.



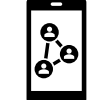
Online Survey

An online survey was posted on the City of Vaughan website on the project page (Vaughan.ca/VaughanMillsPlan) from February 21, 2021 to March 14, 2021. The survey was hosted using the Bang the Table survey platform. In total, **78 people provided feedback through the online survey.**

Communication Methods

The online survey was advertised and promoted using the following methods:

Table 1. Outreach methods used to communicate information about the draft Public Realm Framework and Streetscape Design consultations.

Outreach Method	Outreach Activities
Project Webpage 	A dedicated webpage was developed within the City of Vaughan's website to act as an integrated platform for all project related information. Through the webpage, interested people could also subscribe to receive updates and information about the project.
E-Newsletter 	Local City Councilors were provided with information on the digital engagement for the plan to include in e-newsletters circulated to their constituents.
Social Media 	The City of Vaughan promoted the online survey using its social media accounts from February 21, 2021 to March 14, 2021. LURA Consulting and DTAH reshared posts advertising the survey.

What We Heard

The following section provides a summary of the key themes from feedback received through the virtual public meeting and the online survey.

Vaughan Mills Centre

Nearly all participants identified that the principles being considered in the draft Public Realm Framework and Streetscape Design are very important or important for the future of Vaughan Mills Centre (Figure 1).

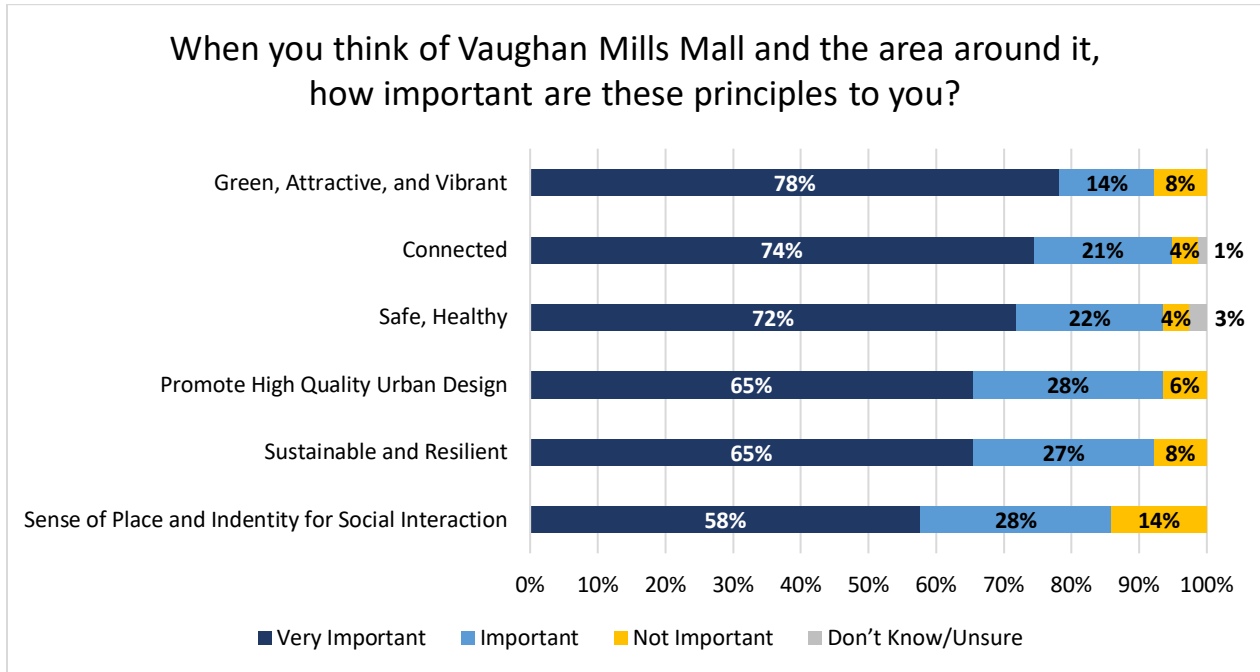


Figure 1. Chart showing how important principles found in the draft Public Realm Framework and Streetscape Design are to survey respondents (n=78).

Additionally, participants provided additional comments to elaborate on the principles they selected. These comments are summarized as follows:

- Large parking lot areas are difficult to navigate, and unpleasant to walk through.
- The current design over-prioritizes cars at the expense of all other users.
- More street-oriented developments could help provide attractions for people and a reason to walk rather than drive.
- Vaughan Mills Centre can be a hub for Vaughan where people meet and interact where they live, work, and shop.

Parks and Squares

Participants identified the following qualities and features they are interested in seeing in future parks and squares within the Centre:

- Parks and squares should be activated by nearby shops, outdoor dining, markets, temporary events, and other attractions.
- Increasing the amount of tree cover in the Centre would provide shade, shelter, and improved visual appeal.
- Greenways will encourage walking and cycling.
- Provide a variety of seating options for individuals, and small and large groups to gather.
- Consider an off-leash area as the Centre continues to develop.
- Parks should include playgrounds and recreational amenities that help people stay active.
- Public spaces should be welcoming and can be animated throughout all seasons.
- Ensure necessities are provided such as public washrooms and water fountains/bottle fillers.
- Beautify the Centre by adding more greenery, open grass areas, flowers, and native species.
- Consider interesting landscaping such as small hills, rocks, and woody plants.
- Design elements should be evaluated for inclusion based on how easily and manageable they are to maintain and keep clean.

Street Design

Overall, many participants identified that the proposed changes to the street design in Vaughan Mills Centre would make it very or somewhat more likely for them to walk (Figure 2) and cycle (Figure 3) in this area.

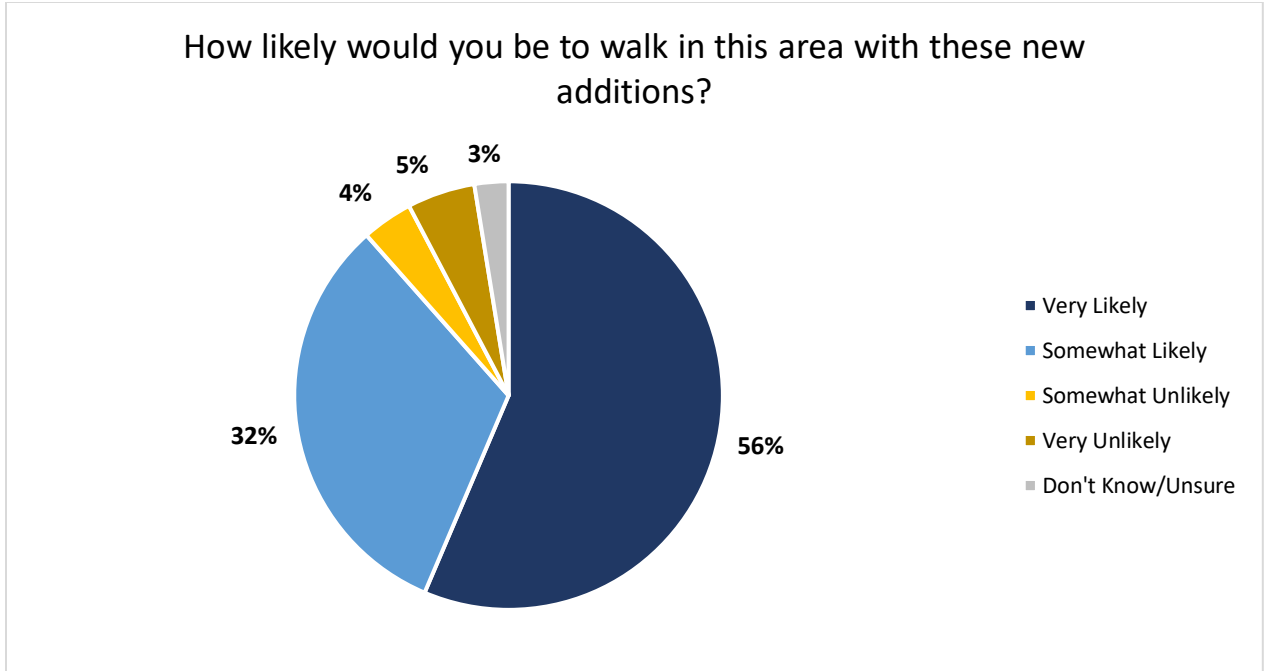


Figure 2. Chart showing the likelihood that survey respondents would walk in Vaughan Mills Centre if the changes to the public realm and streets were applied (n=78).

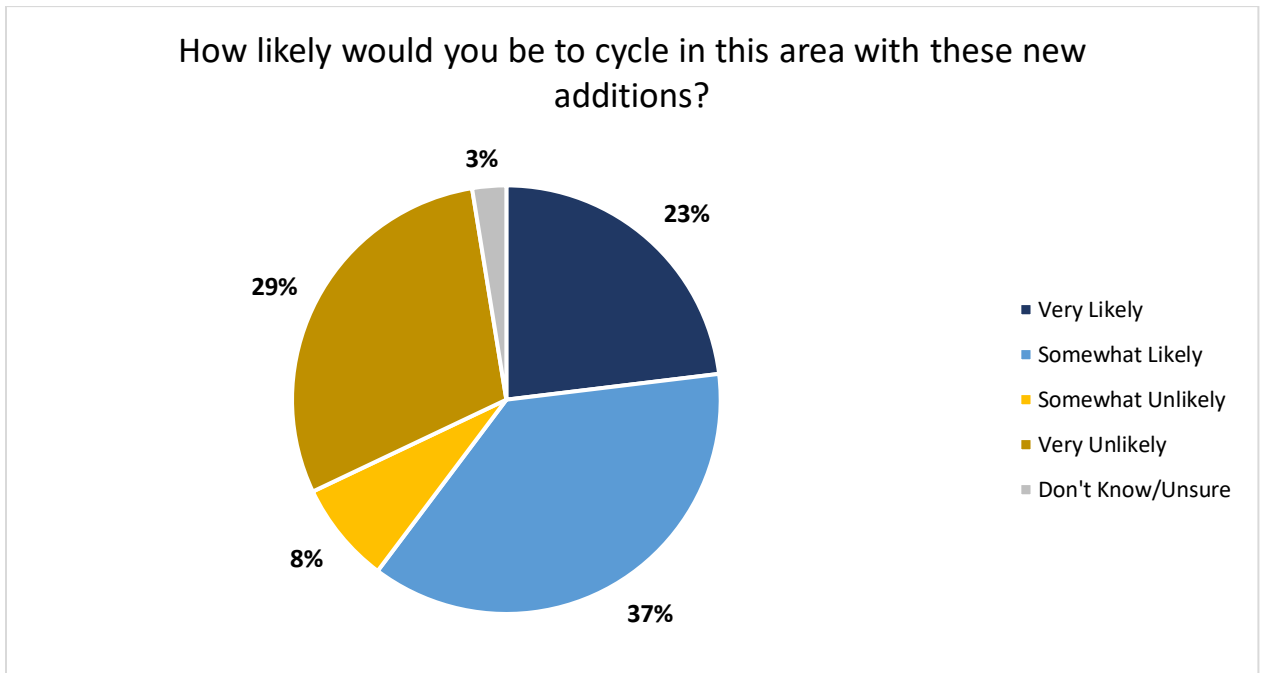


Figure 3. Chart showing the likelihood that survey respondents would cycle in Vaughan Mills Centre if the changes to the public realm and streets were applied (n=78).

Participants expanded upon their feedback on the street design, identifying concerns, and improvements to the street design as follow.

Concerns

- Entry and exit points to the mall are hazardous to cross with aggressive and impatient drivers.
- The presence of traffic on the road makes walking and riding bikes in this area uncomfortable and intimidating.

Possible Improvements

- Trees and greenery will improve the walking and cycling experience by providing shade and nature to enjoy.
- On busy roads, physical separation of the sidewalk and cycling facilities will help make people feel more comfortable walking or riding bikes.
- Public art can provide something to look at/interact with.
- Consider widening sidewalks where possible.
- Consider the inclusion of safe, secure, and weather protected bike parking.
- Pathways should be well-illuminated to provide a sense of security.
- Continue to explore and evaluate traffic calming features as Vaughan Mills Centre continues to evolve.
- Ensure there are destination and street activity for people to interact with as they walk – without destinations, people may be unlikely to walk.
- Ensure Vaughan Mills Centre is well connected to other trails and routes that make it easy and convenient for people to access the Centre without using a car.

Additional Comments Beyond the Project Scope

The following is a summary of additional comments received that are beyond the scope of the Public Realm and Streetscape Plan.

- Participants identified existing problem areas in the road network including:
 - Congestion and crossing dangers at Rutherford Road and Sweet River Boulevard.
 - Near misses and collisions at the entry/exit to Tuscany Plaza parking lot.
 - Difficulty exiting the Montana's plaza due to traffic on Rutherford Road.
 - Fishermens Way is difficult to cross and prone to drivers going too fast.
- Consider the use of roundabouts instead of four-way stops where possible.
- The mall should consider moving towards a hybrid indoor/outdoor model with retail and dining mixed with open spaces.
- Consider ways to encourage small and independent businesses in Vaughan Mills Centre.
- Maintain and mitigate increased vehicle traffic infiltration into neighbouring residential areas.

Questions

The following questions were received through the virtual public meeting and online survey.

Q: What is the target population for Vaughan Mills Centre? How does this impact the flow of people in and out of Vaughan Mills Centre during a normal day and during shopping season?

A: Population projections are based on the [Vaughan Mills Centre Secondary Plan](#). This Secondary Plan also addresses the road network, land uses, heights and densities, and population and employment targets. These have already been identified, the Public Realm and Streetscape Plan is intended to build upon the Secondary Plan to provide further detail on the structure of these public spaces.

The Secondary Plan indicates that the east side of Highway 400 includes a mix of commercial and residential areas activating the area throughout the day. On the west side of Highway 400 there will be employment lands along Weston Road.

Q: Is the proposed pedestrian overpass only for new residents to the area?

A: No – the proposed pedestrian overpass would be accessible to everyone and would provide an additional connection across Highway 400 to shorten the distance a person would need to walk or ride their bike to reach the east or west side of Vaughan Mills Centre.

Q: What is the estimated timeline for the build-out and completion of this plan?

A: The completion of the entire plan as envisioned may be several decades given that this plan is not a single project, but a guiding document that will be used to inform how the City of Vaughan plans the growth of Vaughan Mills Centre as individual development and site plan applications are received. In essence, the plan will build out in small pieces over time, however ultimately the implementation is dictated by the market for redevelopment in this area.

Q: Are parking structures being considered as alternatives to surface parking?

A: Parking structures would be considered on a site-by-site basis through the development and site plan application process.

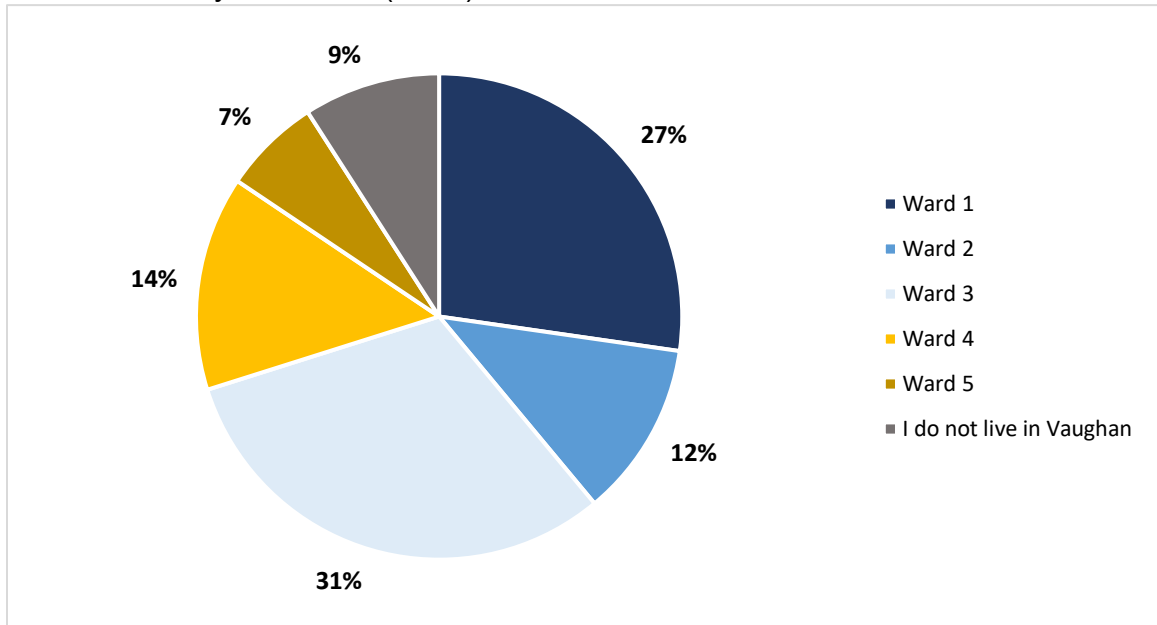
Next Steps

This feedback and the additional details provided in this document will help finalize the Public Realm and Streetscape Plan which the City of Vaughan will consult with the public on in Summer 2021.

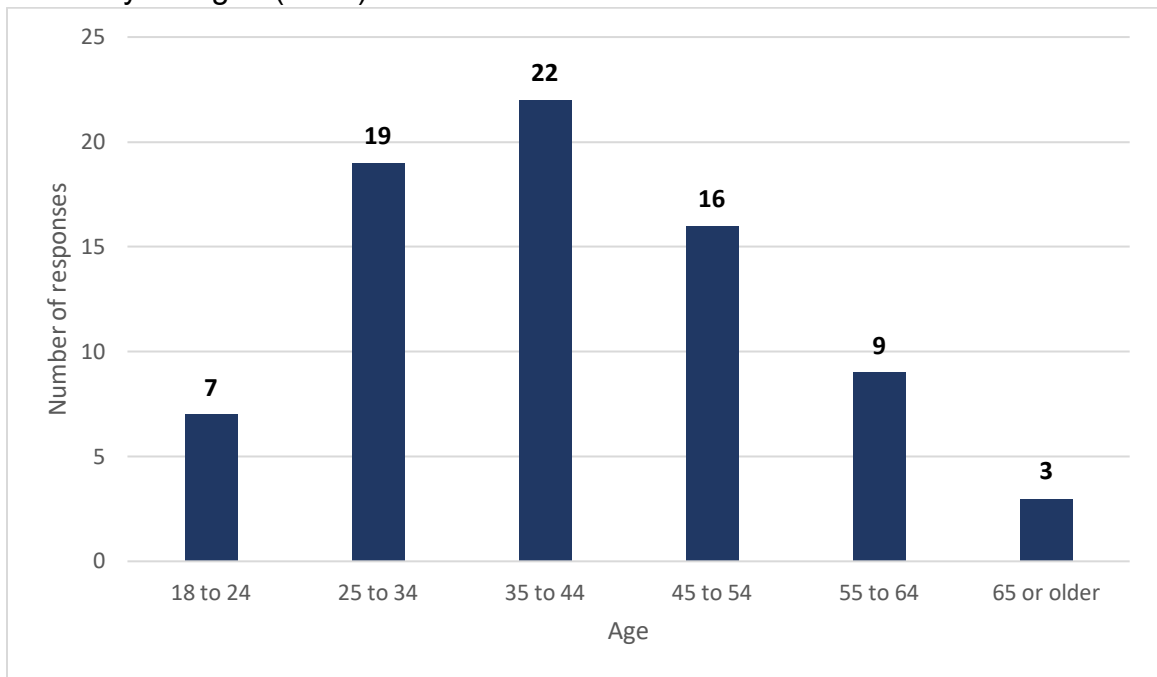
Appendix A – Online Survey Demographics

Participants in the online survey were asked to voluntarily provide information about themselves to help the City of Vaughan understand who they are engaging with, and adjust consultation tactics as needed to

1. What ward do you live in? (n=77)



2. What is your age? (n=78)



3. Which of the following best describes you? (n=78)

