

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2013

Item 9, Report No. 5, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on February 19, 2013.

9

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL PILOT PROJECT

FILE 25.5.1

ALL WARDS

The Committee of the Whole recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Planning, dated February 5, 2013:

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

1. THAT this report on the annual progress and accomplishments of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project be received for information; and,
2. THAT staff report back at the end of the 2 year pilot period with recommendations on the feasibility to incorporate the Design Review Panel into the City's development approvals process on a permanent basis.

Contribution to Sustainability

The Design Review Panel Pilot Project contributes to the goals and objectives within *Green Directions Vaughan*, the City's Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan, specifically:

Goal 1: To significantly reduce our use of natural resources and the amount of waste we generate.

Objective 1.3: "To support enhanced standards of stormwater management at the City and work with others to care for Vaughan's watersheds"

Goal 2: To ensure sustainable development and redevelopment.

Objective 2.2: "To develop Vaughan as a City with maximum greenspace and an urban form that supports our expected population growth"

Objective 2.3: "To create a City with sustainable built form"

Goal 3: To ensure that getting around in Vaughan is easy and has a low environmental impact.

Objective 3.1: "To develop and sustain a network of sidewalks, paths and trails that supports all modes of non-vehicular transportation"

Objective 3.2: "To develop and sustain a network of roads that supports efficient and accessible public and private transit"

Goal 4: To create a vibrant community for citizens, businesses and visitors.

Objective 4.1: "To foster a city with strong social cohesion, an engaging arts scene, and a clear sense of its culture and heritage"

Objective 4.2: "To ensure that the City of Vaughan attracts businesses and investment that will result in well-paying jobs for Vaughan citizens, a sustainable tax base, and continuing prosperity into the 21st century"

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Goal 5: To be a leader on sustainability issues.

Objective 5.1: "To share sustainable best practices and ideas between and among municipal staff and the community"

Objective 5.2: "To continue the City's role in advocacy and information sharing on environmental issues"

Economic Impact

The Design Review Panel jury members provide their time on a volunteer basis, however, funding is necessary for administrative support, materials and travelling expenses of the panel members. The yearly funding associated with the administration of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project is included in the Development Planning Department 2013 Capital Budget pending Council approval. Upon completion of the 2 year pilot trial period, staff will report back on the feasibility to incorporate the Design Review Panel into the City's development approvals process on a permanent basis, which will include an analysis of the staff resources necessary to administer the Design Review Panel.

Communications Plan

A Design Review Panel Pilot Project webpage has been added to the City of Vaughan public web-site, outlining its purpose, meeting protocol, meeting schedule, appointment of members, and meeting minutes. Details of each meeting, including agenda and meeting location, is advertised on the City's web-site in advance of each meeting.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an annual status update on the progress and accomplishments of the City's Design Review Panel Pilot Project.

Background and Analysis

A staff report on "Design Review Panel Pilot Project" was presented to the Committee of the Whole meeting of September 13, 2011 (Item 26, Report No. 40). This report was subsequently adopted by Council on September 27, 2011, thereby providing the following direction to staff:

"That the pilot project run for a period of 2 years, and that the Vaughan Development Planning Department report back to the Committee of the Whole on what has been accomplished on an annual basis."

Accordingly, this report and the Design Review Panel Procedures and Protocol appended to this report as Attachment #1 have been prepared in response to this direction.

The success of the City's Design Review Panel Pilot Project can be determined through an evaluation of the key accomplishments for 2012, and an analysis of some preliminary feedback received by participating stakeholders as follows:

Ensure Building and Public Realm Design Excellence

Of the 21 projects shown on Attachment #2, which have been reviewed since the inception of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project, the jury panel felt that 9 (43%) of these projects were of sufficient quality that they could proceed without major changes being required to them. However, the panel identified areas of concern with the remaining 12 (57%) of the projects, which they felt were significant enough to require a major redesign of the project. These results confirm that the City's Design Review Panel Pilot Project is sending a clear message to the development

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community about the City of Vaughan's commitment for design excellence in the public realm. In addition, staff is of the opinion that the Design Review Panel Pilot Project initiative has been successful in securing the submission of better designs within the City's urban intensification areas.

Supports Creative Design Within the Regulatory Framework

The Design Review Panel Pilot Project has been successful in achieving design creativity, variety and quality within the emerging built form, by stressing the importance of quality construction and finishing materials in addition to creativity when evaluating a development application. This is specifically emphasized when individual development applications are evaluated in accordance with the specific Urban Design policies for the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre and other urban intensification areas such as Steeles Avenue West Corridor, Yonge Street Corridor, Carrville District Centre, Centre Street, Highway 7 Corridor, as well as the City's four designated Heritage Districts.

Develop and Test Procedures and Protocol

Operating the Design Review Panel in a pilot format has provided staff with sufficient flexibility to test a variety of meeting procedures and protocol. The current Design Review Panel Procedures and Protocol shown on Attachment #1 have proven to be generally successful after some minor refinements were made following the first six month review of the pilot period, in response to feedback from stakeholders and staff observations. Staff is confident that the process has been sufficiently tested and refined to the degree that provides more responsive criteria to guide the final stage of the pilot trial period.

Monitoring Program With Stakeholder Evaluation and Consultation

A significant aspect of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project is the continual refinement of the Panel's process and evaluation of its function during the trial period. Accordingly, it will be necessary to monitor the Panel's function by collecting feedback from applicants and design consultants whose projects have been reviewed and to evaluate any necessary changes that may be needed to the procedures.

A comprehensive monitoring program will be initiated as part of the final stage of the pilot trial period to determine how the Design Review Panel is being received by the design and development industry. This process will include a survey questionnaire being conducted with the users of the design review process; to gauge the impact of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project has had on their work. In addition, staff will conduct consultation meetings with the Building Industry and Land Development (BILD) Association, and the Design Professionals Industry, to consider their constructive feedback on the design review process, which is aimed at improving dialogue between jury members of the Design Review Panel, City staff, and the proponent teams for raising standards of design excellence in the City of Vaughan.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities set forth in Vaughan Vision 2020, particularly "Plan and Manage Growth & Economic Well Being".

Regional Implications

N/A

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Conclusion

The Design Review Panel Pilot Project has completed the first half of the 2 year trial period, and staff evaluation of the annual accomplishments of the Pilot Project has shown that it was generally successful in improving the overall design quality within the City of Vaughan. Preliminary consultation with the participating design and development industry over the past year has shown that the Design Review Panel process is seen as being a generally positive addition to the development approval process.

The Design Review Panel will continue to operate on the final year of a 2 year pilot trial period. The Development Planning Department's Urban Design Division, will continue to monitor and conduct comprehensive consultation and evaluation meetings over the next 9 months with the development and design professionals Industry for their feedback on the design review Pilot Project, and report back to City Council on the feasibility to incorporate the Design Review Panel into the City's design review process on a permanent basis.

Attachments

1. Design Review Panel Procedures and Protocol
2. Design Review Panel Projects Reviewed

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(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)