

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MARKETING UPDATE FOR THE VAUGHAN METROPOLITAN CENTRE**Recommendation**

The Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management and the Senior Manager of Economic Development, in consultation with the Chief Corporate Initiatives and Intergovernmental Relations and VMC Project Management Team recommend:

1. That this report be received.

Contribution to Sustainability

Green Directions Vaughan embraces a Sustainability First principle and states that sustainability means we make decisions and take actions that ensure a healthy environment, vibrant communities and economic vitality for current and future generations. Under this definition, activities related to economic development and business attraction for the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) contribute to the sustainability of the City.

Economic Impact

There are no economic impacts associated with the receipt of this report. The marketing initiatives discussed in this report are part of the \$101K allocated to VMC Marketing and are funded from Economic Development and Culture Services' 2016 operating budget.

Communications Plan

Copies of this presentation will be available on the City's website. Staff will also undertake to provide information on the public engagement events for inclusion in Council newsletters, City e-newsletters, *VMC Moving Forward* newsletter, and other communication vehicles.

Purpose

In May of 2016, staff provided a report to VMC Sub-Committee outlining the tactics that would be implemented during the calendar year through the VMC Community Engagement and Marketing Plan. This report serves as an update to VMC Sub-Committee on the year-to-date results of the community engagement and marketing plan, as well as a briefing on VMC marketing efforts that have taken place and will continue to year end 2016. While feedback and the suggestions from committee and stakeholders is welcome, this report and the accompanying presentation is for information purposes only.

Background - Analysis and Options

The VMC Development Facilitator, LiveWorkLearnPlay (LWLP) having completed its VMC Implementation Plan in May 2016, recommended four key projects that should be prioritized with the goal of seeing development implementation of the VMC happen at an expedited pace. Community Engagement is one of those key projects. In order for the VMC to truly become the Downtown for the residents of Vaughan, it needs to be known, understood and accepted as their civic and cultural gathering place. LWLP residents of Vaughan, new and old, identifying with and accepting the VMC as their downtown to successfully achieve the City's ultimate vision. Restated, community engagement is necessary to generate community and private sector buy-in as a precursor to investment interest and broader office development attraction that is a key part of the vision for the VMC.

Awareness and Community Outreach and Metrics, 2016

Staff has begun the implementation of the *2016-2017 VMC Community Engagement Plan*, focusing on building awareness and community support, credibility, and understanding for the VMC. Staff presented an *Update on the VMC Community Engagement and Marketing Plan* at the VMC Sub-Committee on May 18, 2016 (Item 2, Report No. 2).

For 2016, the Economic Development and Culture Services Department, in collaboration with other City Departments, have scheduled more than 40 outreach events and activities to deliver critical messaging to residents and businesses about the vision and progress being made to develop the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. Outreach activities involved the following marketing tactics: VMC-branded exhibit and media booth, video demo, branded promotional giveaways, and the distribution of VMC marketing collateral materials.

Summarized below are the participation metrics for the 2016 outreach schedule, inclusive of the eight month period from January to September:

- Community outreach conducted by City staff totalled 21 activities
- Direct marketing outreach of 19,340 participants (Concerts in the Park 10,000 visitors, Concerts in the Park 9,000 visitors, and Canada Day 8,000 visitors)
- Online content reach and print media impressions estimated at more than 250,000
- Social media:
 - Facebook: 105 followers with 2,900 post engagements and 5,000+ page engagements
 - Twitter: 164 followers; 381 'likes' and 787+ 'retweets' or 'mentions'
 - Instagram: 199 followers and 529 'likes'
- Promotional giveaways of more than 3,000 units

Through these activities, staff has been able to speak directly with residents and businesses to communicate the City's downtown plans for the VMC, as well as to update them on major development projects currently underway.

Impressions garnered from these activities include:

- Fair amount of excitement about the development of the downtown.
- Questions and interest around parking plans related to transit use.
- Good awareness level about the subway arrival although this varies with the geography of residents, i.e. those living in Thornhill have more association and interest in the possibility of a Yonge subway.
- Awareness of exact location of transit facilities is low, although overall awareness of the transit services is high.
- Positive reception to concept of an integrated public transit network which includes subway, vivaNext and the regional bus terminal.
- Keen interest in time horizons for the completion of construction projects along Highway 7, as well as the build-out of the VMC. Less skepticism in the date of the subway arrival experienced than experienced in previous years. Many people sought reassurance that the subway project would be delivered on time.
- Condo development in the VMC is well received by adult groups. Interest for future downsizing.
- Business community interest in the VMC is primarily from the standpoint of the potential increase in level of economic activity that it could bring, more so than it as potential business location for themselves.

Investment Attraction and Marketing

The Community Engagement work program will continue in the latter part of 2016, and also 2017. However in 2017, there will be more emphasis placed on investment attraction and marketing. Differing from community awareness, it is about raising more targeted investor interest. With the development activity taking place in the VMC, staff has embraced the notion that it is important to ensure marketing, investment attraction and placemaking campaigns are introduced and implemented with the correct messaging at the right time.

It is also important the City's efforts are aligned and leveraging those of York Region's Economic Strategy Office, who have also initiated a marketing strategy for the broader Centres and Corridors under its "York Link – Where Talent and Opportunity Intersect" branding. Both the City and Region's marketing and branding efforts are premised on concept of attracting talent to our downtowns will draw office tenancies, particularly in the knowledge-based and innovation-intensive sectors.

Marketing Plan Update and Metrics

A phased marketing campaign was implemented starting in 2015 to the target horizon of 2017. Summarized below is the three-year marketing campaign milestones for 2015, 2016 and 2017:

- Momentum and Awareness Focus Campaign Plan, 2015
- Implementation of Community and Business Outreach Activities, 2016
- Benchmark Outreach Results, 2016
- Building a Competitive Differentiator Plan, 2016
- Implementation of Investment Attraction Strategy, 2017
- Monitoring Investment Attraction Successes, 2017

With City staff actively implementing the above economic development and marketing activities, metrics are recorded for VMC Community Engagement and Business Development benchmark analysis and to identify resource requirements to fulfill the in 2017 marketing program.

Initiatives have been focused on creating awareness amongst the real estate brokerage community, as well as businesses within Vaughan and across the GTA. During 2016, staff actively implemented outreach activities at business events with the VMC exhibit booth as well as marketing collateral distribution at the following signature events and by-invitation-only business gatherings: Vaughan Business Expo, Mayor's Annual Luncheon hosted by Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, LandPro Conference, Vaughan Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement Awards, the Economic Club of Canada: *Investing in the 905*, the real estate broker event for Liberty Development's Cosmos launch, and the Mayor's Charity Golf Classic.

These events provided an opportunity to directly engage business leaders and update them on current VMC projects as well as to educate them about the value proposition for office/employment users. In addition to the various business outreach events, staff have continued to promote the VMC to local businesses through the Corporate Calling Program and business presentations, to create awareness of the opportunities that exist within their community. Summarized below are the results of the business development metrics for 2016 Year-to-Date.

- Business outreach conducted by City staff totalled 11 events
- Direct business outreach of more than 5,000 participants
- Corporate calls and business presentations totalled 88 businesses
- Online content reach and print media impressions estimated at more than 250,000
- Promotional giveaways of more than 2,000 units

- Newsletter circulation to more than 9,000 business readers
- Cosmos Brokers Launch attended by more than 700 residential brokers

In addition to the business development activities underway, staff has actively engaged with VMC landowners and stakeholders to support their marketing efforts for various commercial and residential projects. These include sharing resources such as cross-marketing activities, promotional collateral materials, online content, onsite branding, temporary art installations and community activations.

The marketing for the VMC includes both paid, earned, shared or owned media channels. The media coverage received includes local, provincial and national media – print, radio, television and website - and story content range from subway progress reports, to condo developments and broader downtown master-planning. Most notable amongst the coverage were the Globe and Mail article: *Vaughan Rising – Master-Planning a Downtown from Scratch* (print reach: 1 million, and website reach: 6 million), and the Mayor's interview on Bloomberg's *The Daily Brief* (website reach: 1.3 million). According to the metrics collected by the Office of Corporate Communications, 46 stories appeared in 2016, having an audience reach of 22.5 million. Overall the Media Rating Points (MRP) Quality Score was 75.65 percent – an indication of media reach based on extent of company/brand mentions, key messages, target audience reach, photo/logo inclusion, spokesperson quotation and receptivity (tone).

Uptake on the Community Improvement Plan

In the office market sector, Vaughan is still a relatively new player. The establishment of a competitive differentiator was identified as a necessary element in setting the VMC apart from other GTA office nodes. In November 2015, the City implemented a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to promote office development in VMC and Weston Road & Highway 7 Primary Centre to both landowners and potential office users. Print marketing collateral that highlights the CIP financial incentives has been included in all information packages provided to business and real estate professionals, resulting in total distribution to over 500 stakeholders. Details of the CIP program have also been utilized by VMC landowners in their own marketing collateral aimed at attracting office users. SmartCentres, in particular, has leveraged the CIP to market the financial benefits that will be passed on directly to tenants in the KPMG building.

Currently, staff is reviewing two CIP applications that have been received to date. The two applications currently in staff's workflow account for over 465,000 square feet of new office space in the VMC. It is anticipated that a third application will be submitted for the recently announced PriceWaterhouseCoopers offices within the YMCA mixed-use project.

Creating a Street-Level Experience through Interactive Mapping

Following the completion of the updated VMC Secondary Plan in November 2015, staff began working on creating an animation of the street-level experience at three key locations in the VMC. Working with an external consultant, the developer of the current VMC 3D video animation, walk-through animations are being created through the Mobility Hub (along Millway Avenue); Edgeley Pond and Black Creek Channel; and along Highway 7. The interactive mapping and animations are being built utilizing the digital 3D modelling tools employed by the Development Planning/Urban Design Department. These models are being further enhanced with streetscaping to portray a pedestrian-friendly, transit supportive and lively public realm building on information related to the development projects that are coming to fruition. This work once completed will be featured on the planned VMC micro-site.

Development of a VMC Micro-site

A key marketing initiative in Q4 2016 will be the development of a new micro-site for the VMC, which upon completion; will act as the hub for all VMC digital marketing activity. Work on the project has already begun, with staff and the consultant currently engaged in the content analysis phase. Between August and November 2016, the micro-site project team will focus on content, design and development with a targeted soft launch by end of December, 2016. Staff will report back to VMC Sub-Committee in the late fall of 2016 with an update on the progress of the micro-site, along with visual concepts of the new site design. In advance of the launch of the new VMC micro-site, staff have secured social media accounts to support and drive traffic to the website upon its completion. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram will be leveraged with a focus on building awareness among residents and businesses about development activity occurring in the VMC.

Next Steps

As we move into Q4 2016, staff will continue implementing of the VMC Community Engagement and Marketing Plan with a focus on engaging commercial real estate brokerages throughout the GTA to raise awareness of the VMC's growing office market. Staff will be presenting VMC marketing material directly to key stakeholders by delivering presentations at brokerage offices and engaging sales representatives that provide strategic site selection advice directly to their office user clients. This initiative, branded as the *Realtor Roadshow*, is an opportunity to target larger, multinational commercial real estate brokerages to educate them on the value proposition that the VMC can deliver to businesses.

Relationship to Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map (2014-2018)

This report is consistent with the priorities set on the Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy Map: facilitate the development of the VMC; and attract investment and create jobs.

Regional Implications

The City of Vaughan will continue to work in collaboration with the Region of York to align our efforts with the Region's Office Market Investment Attraction Marketing and Communications Campaign Plan.

Conclusion

This report provides an update on achievements by City staff in executing the VMC Community Engagement and Marketing Plan, as well as efforts to engage the business community to increase awareness about the opportunities in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. The results of the community engagement and marketing plan observed by staff in 2016 will be carefully considered when developing activities and tactics for 2017. The baseline data collected in 2016 will act as the benchmark year for measuring the success of VMC economic development marketing initiatives.

Recognizing the importance of economic growth and job creation, the development and implementation of a strategic economic development marketing campaign plan enable the City to facilitate the vision of a dynamic downtown Vaughan Metropolitan Centre for residents, businesses and visitors. Staff will continue to implement the Plan to achieve Council's objectives for the VMC.

Attachments

None

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