

**EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 22, 2016**

11 VAUGHAN METROPOLITAN CENTRE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES  
WARD 4

## Recommendation

1. THAT the VMC Urban Design Guidelines shown in Attachment #1 and previously approved in principle by Council on December 15, 2015, BE APPROVED with the minor revisions as a result of final comments received by the stakeholders.

Green Directions Vaughan embraces a *Sustainability First* principle and states that sustainability means the City shall make decisions and take actions that ensure a healthy environment, vibrant communities and economic vitality for current and future generations. Placemaking initiatives such as the VMC Urban Design Guidelines ('the Guidelines') contribute to the social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) by providing a built-form framework that promotes design excellence through green building standards, attention to microclimatic design and architectural quality.

The VMC Urban Design Guidelines has no economic impact to the City, as the design and construction of the works described in the document will be implemented by the development community and by transit agencies through the development review process and review of transit infrastructure proposals. The study is within current capital budget DP-9538-14.

An extensive consultation strategy was developed to engage stakeholder groups in the generation of a common vision for place. The Guidelines were developed through a collaborative process that involved landowners, developers, their consultants and designers, City and Regional staff and other relevant stakeholders from the Toronto Transit Commission, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Region of York, York Region Rapid Transit Corporation and York Region District School Boards.

Through the VMC Working Group, a group established to bridge the landowner community and the agencies on all issues related to growth in the downtown, a series of 5 working sessions were scheduled between December 2014 and October 2015 to discuss the overall document approach, maintain a dialogue on design issues, and review in progress contents of the Guidelines. Draft versions of the document were circulated to stakeholders for review in October 2015. Comments received were carefully considered in the revised document brought forward to the VMC Sub-Committee of Council for approval in principle on November 20, 2015.

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Iterative drafts of the VMC Urban Design Guidelines were also presented before the Vaughan Design Review Panel in March and September 2015.

Regular updates about the Guidelines have been posted on the City's website, [www.vaughan.ca/vmc](http://www.vaughan.ca/vmc). City staff will continue to share future updates through a suite of communications tactics including social media, public relations and community engagement events.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to seek final Council approval and endorsement of the VMC Urban Design Guidelines. On December 15, 2015, the VMC Urban Design Guidelines received approval in principle by Council as part of a larger report on the integrated approach to placemaking in the downtown. Since that time, staff have re-circulated the draft version of the Guidelines to stakeholders requesting a second review. Final comments received from stakeholders resulted in minor revisions to the final VMC Urban Design Guidelines attached to this report and accessible at the City's dedicated project webpage:

[http://www.vaughan.ca/services/business/urban\\_design/vmc\\_guidelines/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.vaughan.ca/services/business/urban_design/vmc_guidelines/Pages/default.aspx).

These Guidelines need to receive final approval for staff to use in the review of development applications in the VMC.

#### **Background - Analysis and Options**

##### ***Executive Summary***

The Urban Design Guidelines is, first and foremost, a Placemaking document. It is intended to facilitate the implementation of the VMC by setting a framework for built form excellence. The Guidelines will serve as the 'go-to manual' for urban design issues used by applicants and their designers, as well as City staff responsible for review and approval. By clarifying expectations and setting clear design objectives, the Guidelines are intended to expedite the review process for development applications and facilitate implementation of the VMC vision as transit-oriented, walkable, accessible, diverse, vibrant, green and beautiful.

Careful attention was also paid through the process to ensure alignment with related placemaking documents for the new downtown, including the VMC Streetscape and Open Space Plan and VMC Culture and Public Art Framework. Together, these placemaking plans provide a principle based framework to guide the design and implementation of architecture, streets, parks, pedestrian connections, public art and cultural programs in the VMC. Thoughtful attention to how these elements fit together from the outset is necessary to build a cohesive and sustainable city, to maximize shared investment, and to help coordinate future development with the public realm.

#### **Relationship to the VMC Secondary Plan and Role of the VMC Urban Design Guidelines**

The VMC Secondary Plan establishes the overall vision for creating a vibrant, mixed-use community centred around transit. It provides a policy framework that governs development and growth in the VMC, sets out the street and block network, defines specific targets for heights and density, and establishes parameters for massing and built form. The Guidelines are meant to support these policies and provide the additional guidance necessary to implement successful neighbourhoods that are consistent with the vision of the Secondary Plan.

To do so, the Guidelines include a series of framework plans that outline overall urban design priorities at the scale of the VMC. These framework plans highlight key design principles related to such things as private open space, views and gateways, active frontage, streetwall and setbacks, vehicular access and servicing, and climatic response.

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At the neighbourhood scale, the Guidelines are organized around character areas that share a common built form context and establish clear priorities that require special attention through design. The character areas are based on the land use vision introduced in the VMC Secondary Plan precincts and share common building typologies, interfaces with proposed open spaces and approaches to access and circulation. Each character area is also organized around one of the primary open spaces in the VMC which, along with its land uses, provides the primary structure for the neighbourhood.

The Guidelines also make use of urban typologies at the block scale. Urban typologies refer to discrete design elements within the VMC that support the overall massing as defined in the Secondary Plan. These include privately owned publicly-accessible spaces (POPS), mid-block connections, thresholds and parking. These elements help structure the interface between private development and the public realm, and therefore have the greatest impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience within the VMC.

The Guidelines also include typical blocks or illustrative demonstration plans that are representative of a series of local opportunities and constraints based on location. The typical blocks within each character area exhibit similar design principles for the surrounding blocks and illustrate how the built form might evolve based on the policies prescribed by the Secondary Plan and the design guidelines established in the urban typologies.

The document also contains more general design guidelines related to site elements, architectural features and material definitions, and includes a phasing and implementation section that addresses interim conditions and transitions across blocks.

The Guidelines are intended to serve as a “living” document that will be reviewed every five years in tandem with the Secondary Plan review, and updated as necessary. In the event of conflict, the VMC Secondary Plan policies will prevail over the Guidelines.

**An Evolving Placemaking Framework**

Simultaneously, the VMC Urban Design Guidelines and related placemaking plans meet two objectives: i) provide a placemaking framework to articulate a compelling, shared long-term vision for placemaking, and, ii) be adaptable for the changing development context as it evolves over time, including small-scale, quick improvements that can immediately start to shape a public realm and people’s experience of the VMC.

To balance the push and pull of these objectives, the plans articulate a strong landscape, built form and cultural framework with design priorities, requirements, and performance metrics provided where necessary in order to implement a cohesive and coordinated urban fabric and for clarity to the development community. In other areas, the plans have the flexibility to deal with complexity and change that characterizes contemporary city building and to promote creativity, alternate solutions, and responsive design at the site scale.

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

This report is consistent with the Term of Council Priority to facilitate the development of the VMC and the Term of Council Service Excellence Strategy for Continuous Improvement.

**Regional Implications**

The VMC Urban Design Guidelines supports the Region of York Official Plan vision of building sustainable communities that achieve the highest standard in urban design and green building, particularly the implementation of the following objective:

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5.2.8 To employ the highest standard of urban design, which:

- a. provides pedestrian scale, safety, comfort, accessibility and connectivity;
- b. complements the character of existing areas and fosters each community's unique sense of place;
- c. promotes sustainable and attractive buildings that minimize energy use;
- d. promotes landscaping, public spaces and streetscapes;
- e. ensures compatibility with and transition to surrounding land uses;
- f. emphasizes walkability and accessibility through strategic building placement and orientation;
- g. follows the York Region Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines; and,
- h. creates well-defined, centrally-located urban public spaces.

#### **Conclusion**

The VMC Urban Design Guidelines, along with the other placemaking plans that have been approved by Council, are dynamic roadmaps that will evolve with the City and the downtown. The Guidelines will be a leading and innovative toolkit for the City of Vaughan to shape development in the new downtown, promote high quality design excellence, connectivity and placemaking and support the urban vision for the VMC as outlined in the Secondary Plan. The document was developed through close collaboration with the development community to ensure a shared vision of place. It is a living document that will keep evolving over time in order to capture the lessons being learned in the process and through various development phases of the VMC.

#### **Attachment**

1. Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Urban Design Guidelines – [link to web version](#)  
*A full copy is also available at the City Clerk's Office*

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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.)