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PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The policies of this section build upon those in Sections 7 and 9.1.1 of Volume 1 of the Official Plan.

The development of parks and other open spaces in the VMC will be as important as the development of buildings. They will not only provide places for recreation choices and natural features but will also contribute to the character and identity for the downtown that is more complex and appealing than one comprising only high density buildings. A rich and diverse open space network will be vital to attracting a diverse population and employment to the VMC and making it a civic and tourist destination.

The policies in this section support the objectives set out in Section 3, specifically Objectives 3.1 - 3.3, 3.7 - 3.8 and 3.10. The further general intent of the policies in this section is to:

- Ensure there are parkland and other open spaces adequate for a range of recreational activities and passive enjoyment within walking distance of VMC residents and workers.
- Provide central neighbourhood gathering and recreation spaces.
- Provide civic open spaces capable of accommodating events with city-wide appeal.
- Ensure the VMC develops with a variety of public open spaces, including Neighbourhood Parks and Public Squares, as generally defined in Volume 1 of the Official Plan, as well as parkettes, courtyards, gardens and naturalized spaces.
- Significantly enhance the image of the VMC.
- Integrate natural features and open space with development.
- Enhance the pedestrian network with paths and trails.

6.1 General Policies

6.1.1 Schedule E identifies the major parks to be developed in the VMC. These include Neighbourhood Parks intended primarily for use by local residents and Public Squares intended for use by local residents and workers, all Vaughan citizens and other visitors to the VMC. The Environmental Open Spaces identified on Schedule E are intended to accommodate stormwater management facilities and associated naturalized open space as well as complementary parkland.

6.1.2 It is a goal of this plan to develop a minimum of 20 hectares of parkland in the VMC. The City shall monitor the use and demand for parkland as the VMC develops and may adjust the target without amendment to this plan. To meet or exceed the target, the City may require the dedication of additional parkland to that identified in Schedule E, in accordance with the Planning Act. The additional parkland may constitute additions to the parks in Schedule E or may take the form of a parkette, public square or other usable, accessible open space. Alternatively, or in addition, the City may seek to acquire parkland in areas adjacent to the VMC, accessible to residents.

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schedule E

- 6.1.3 As set out in Section 7.3.3 of Volume 1 of the Official Plan, parkland shall be dedicated on the basis of 5% of the gross land area for residential areas and 2% for commercial and employment areas, or 1.0 hectare for each 300 dwelling units, or a combination thereof, whichever yields the most favourable supply of parkland at the City's discretion, as provided for in Section 42 of the Planning Act. The calculation of gross land area shall include the area for development, public and private streets, public and private open spaces, and public institutions, and shall exclude natural heritage areas. Parkland dedication may also be provided via payment of cash-in-lieu at the discretion of Council. Funds generated from cash-in-lieu contributions shall be used by the municipality to acquire parkland.
- 6.1.4 Generally, parkland shall be secured through the plan of subdivision and site plan processes. An agreement among landowners in the VMC and the City will be required to equitably distribute the cost of all parkland.
- 6.1.5 Residential developments shall include private outdoor amenity space. Outdoor amenity spaces associated with major office or institutional developments generally shall be located and designed to complement the public park system and shall be publicly accessible. Private amenity space shall not count toward parkland dedication.
- 6.1.6 Parks and open spaces provide critical connections within the larger pedestrian and bicycle network. They should be designed with movement desire lines in mind and generally should accommodate pedestrian through-traffic and, where appropriate, cycling.
- 6.1.7 Befitting the desired image and character for the VMC, all parks shall be designed to high standards and built with high quality materials.

6.2 Public Squares and Neighbourhood Parks

- 6.2.1 Sections of Millway Park, which will ultimately stretch from Portage Parkway to Interchange Way on the west side of Millway Avenue, and the associated Public Square north of Highway 7 are expected to be the first parks built in the VMC. The design of these parks should adhere to the following principles:
- a. **Urban Experience.** The parks should enhance the everyday experience of commuters, residents, workers and visitors, providing places to walk, jog, sit, read, use a laptop, drink a coffee, meet friends, eat lunch and people watch.
 - b. **Commercial Amenities.** Places for street vendors should be provided and the potential for seasonal markets should be considered.

- c. Transparency. There should be open sightlines to and from adjacent streets, transit station entrances and waiting/meeting areas. Levels of transparency into the park may vary along its length.
- d. Flexibility. Open spaces should accommodate future changes in activities and programme at strategic locations.
- e. Flows. The parks should accommodate different flows and speeds of pedestrians, cyclists, people walking dogs and pushing strollers through the spaces and at the edges.
- f. Boundaries. Millway Park should read as a continuous space that includes the local intersecting streets. Transit design, street and streetscape design, and park design should be coordinated.
- g. Access. Provide pedestrian access directly from adjacent buildings, subway entrances and streets.
- h. Linearity. Optimize north-south views and visual connections.
- i. Hard and Soft Surfaces. Include soft and hard surfaces for transitions to high use areas and a rich variety of experiences. As a highly visible civic space, the use of high quality materials is important. Paving stones should be large and durable.
- j. Universal Design. The parks should be designed for all ages and abilities.
- k. Safety. The park designs should be in accordance with City of Vaughan's "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design" (CPTED) guidelines.
- l. Sustainability. Low maintenance native and adaptive plants should contribute to biodiversity and create habitats and food sources for indigenous wildlife (birds, pollinators). Pervious surfaces should be maximized to absorb stormwater and encourage natural infiltration. Irrigation systems that capture and reuse rainwater should be developed.
- m. Diverse Planting. Plantings should contribute to a variety of experiences as people move through the parks. There should be large tree canopies and seasonal colour. Only native and adaptive species should be planted.
- n. Pedestrian and Bicycle Amenities. The parks should feature high quality seating, shelter (including large tree canopies), lighting, bike parking, recycling and garbage receptacles, and wayfinding elements.
- o. Lighting. The lighting design of the parks should coordinate with the lighting for adjacent streets and the lighting scheme for the VMC as a whole. Lighting should be designed to help immediately establish these parks as exciting destinations. High quality pedestrian lighting and special, decorative lighting should contribute to the identity and experience of the parks.
- p. Weather. Consideration should be given to the impacts of wind, sun, shade, temperature and microclimates on human comfort.

- q. Public Art. The parks should provide places for permanent or temporary public art installations and the designs should consider opportunities to incorporate public art in landscaping elements (e.g., benches, bicycle parking, paving, lighting, tree guards).

6.2.2 Further to Policy 7.3.1.2(c) of Volume 1 of the Official Plan, Neighbourhood Parks identified in Schedule E should have the following characteristics or features:

- Street frontage on at least three sides
- Convenient pedestrian access points
- An accessible playground
- A splash pad, where warranted
- Open, grassed areas for casual recreation
- Shade trees and other plantings
- A pavilion or shade structure
- Lighted walking and cycling paths
- Site furnishings including benches
- Trash and recycling receptacles
- Intimate hard surface areas for gathering
- Public art
- Outdoor recreation facilities that can be accommodated in the park and meet the needs of area residents, such as a mini soccer pitch, basketball court, skateboarding facility, tennis courts and/or skating rink

6.2.3 Notwithstanding Policy 7.3.1.2(d) of Volume 1 of the Official Plan, the Public Squares identified in Schedule E should be larger than 1.0 hectares. These open spaces will be of city-wide importance and may be the subjects of design competitions, when appropriate.

6.2.4 The planned Public Square on Jane Street, south of Highway 7, is intended to be the main gathering space in the downtown, containing a variety of amenities and attractions within a holistic design. The City shall consider a range of land acquisition strategies to ensure the square is built in a timely fashion.

6.2.5 Parks in the VMC shall not contain parking areas, other than those required for service vehicles. Public Squares and Neighbourhood Parks dedicated as parkland shall not be encumbered in any way, for example, by underground parking, utility easements, or underground or above ground utility structures. Subway station entrances are planned in Millway Park, but the area they occupy, and associated functional areas, shall not count toward parkland dedication.

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6.3 Environmental Open Spaces

6.3.1 The Environmental Open Spaces identified in Schedule E are intended to be developed and managed as naturalized open spaces that perform four primary functions:

- a. To protect existing natural heritage features and functions;
- b. To accommodate additional vegetation and landscaping that supports ecological functions and enhances the setting and image for the VMC;
- c. To accommodate stormwater management facilities;
- d. To accommodate municipal parkland that provides an open space and recreation amenity for residents, workers and visitors in the VMC.

The first three functions above are addressed in Section 5.4 and 5.6 of this plan. Regarding the parkland function, the Northeast and Southwest Environmental Open Spaces identified in Schedule E are intended to each contain a minimum of 1.5 hectares of parkland, as generally identified in Schedule E. The precise area and location for the parkland shall be determined during the plan of subdivision process. In the event the other intended functions for these spaces prevent the accommodation of usable parkland in a suitable location, the City shall require compensating parkland in a location not identified on Schedule E to ensure the target of 20 hectares of parkland for the entire VMC is achieved.

6.3.2 Parkland contained within the environmental open spaces identified in Schedule E generally should have a naturalistic quality and contain trails and benches. Open, grassed areas for casual recreation and playgrounds may also be provided, and other active recreation facilities may be considered. In addition to trails, features such as boardwalks and bridges that provide access to creeks and stormwater management ponds shall be considered for environmental open spaces.

6.3.3 Lands required for stormwater management facilities shall not be considered as parkland for the purposes of calculating the parkland dedication requirement.

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