

DATE: OCTOBER 11, 2012
TO: HONOURABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL
FROM: JOHN MACKENZIE, COMMISSIONER OF PLANNING
RE: COMMUNICATION – ITEM #26
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – OCTOBER 16, 2012

C 8 COMMUNICATION CW - <u>Oct 16/12</u> ITEM - <u>26</u>

**PLANNING COMMISSION RESPONSE ON THE ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE'S REQUEST TO REVIEW COMMERCIAL, RETAIL, AND LIVE/WORK
SITE PLANS
ALL WARDS – CITY WIDE**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

1. THAT the recommendation of the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee at its meeting of September 11, 2012, be revised to read as follows:

"That Council direct Planning Staff to provide the Accessibility Advisory Committee with an Accessibility Design Standards Checklist for review at a future meeting of the Committee"; and,

"That Building Standards Staff provide the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee with a copy of Section 3.8 of the Ontario Building Code titled 'Barrier Free Design'."

Purpose

To respond to the following recommendation (in part) of the City of Vaughan's Accessibility Advisory Committee of March 27, 2012:

"That Council direct staff to seek comments from the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee on site plans relating to commercial, retail, and live/work units as part of the development application process"; and,

The following resolution of Vaughan Council of May 8, 2012 (in part):

"That this matter be referred to staff for a report to a future Committee of the Whole meeting, in accordance with Communication C6, memorandum from the Commissioner of Planning, dated April 19, 2012"; and,

The following recommendation (in part) of the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee of September 11, 2012:

"That Council direct relevant Planning and Building Standards staff to provide the Accessibility Advisory Committee with an Accessibility Design Standards Checklist for review at a future meeting of the Committee."

Background

The Accessibility Advisory Committee provides valuable benefits to the City of Vaughan and an important role in implementing accessibility requirements in the City. As noted above, on March 27, 2012, the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) recommended that Council direct staff to seek comments from the Vaughan Accessibility Advisory Committee on site plans relating to commercial, retail, and live/work units as part of the development application process.

The Committee of the Whole on April 24, 2012, considered Communication C6 from the Commissioner of Planning that provided an overview of matters pertaining to the VAAC's motion as it relates to authority under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the Planning Act and the Building Code Act. The Communication advised that the Development Planning, Building Standards, Engineering and Cultural Services Departments already proactively review Site Development Applications with respect to implementing design that facilitates barrier free accessibility in new development projects. The report also identified the potential workload and processing issues should commercial, retail and live/work Site Development Applications be forwarded to the VAAC for review. Specifically, as the VAAC meets only 5 times a year, it may impact on the timely consideration of Site Development Applications by Vaughan Council, as well as, the Applicant's construction and occupancy schedule. Accordingly, the Commissioner of Planning recommended that the VAAC's recommendation be referred to staff for a report to a future Committee of the Whole Meeting. The recommendation was approved by the Committee of the Whole and subsequently adopted by Vaughan Council on May 8, 2012.

On September 11, 2012, staff from the Development Planning Department attended a VAAC Meeting. Development Planning Staff outlined the current site plan review process for the VAAC members and options were discussed to respond to the Committee's request to review specific Site Development Applications. In addition, Development Planning Staff provided information to the VAAC in regards to how other Accessibility Advisory Committees in fifteen surrounding municipalities review site plans for accessibility. Through discussion at the meeting, it was concluded that the creation of an accessibility design standards checklist would be a positive step towards achieving the mandate of the VAAC, and the Committee adopted the following recommendation for Vaughan Council's consideration:

- "1) That the presentation entitled "Review of Commercial, Retail and Live/Work Site Plans" by Grant Uyeyama, Director of Development Planning, dated September 11, 2012, be received; and
- 2) That Council direct relevant Planning and Building Standards staff to provide the Accessibility Advisory Committee with an Accessibility Design Standards Checklist for review at a future meeting of the Committee."

Vaughan Development Planning Department

The Development Planning Department is supportive of the recommendation of the VAAC with respect to the creation of an Accessibility Design Standards Checklist, which must be submitted by the applicant with their site plan application and indicate if an accessibility feature has been implemented into the site design, and if not, an explanation as to why not, for review by City Staff. An accessibility site plan checklist that is reviewed and endorsed by the VAAC will provide the development community and City staff with a proactive and systematic approach to the review of Site Development Applications in order to ensure that the built environment represents barrier-free design that implements the goals and objectives of the VAAC. In addition, a checklist will standardize the review of Site Development Applications with specific criteria that promotes universal design for new developments, and will assist in providing an equitable, flexible and intuitive built form. Finally, a checklist will promote the education and awareness to the development community about the importance and potential economic benefit of constructing accessible, universally-designed developments. Examples of specific criteria to be reviewed as part of the accessibility site plan checklist include:

- ensuring appropriate grades for barrier-free access to buildings;
- the provision of appropriate handrails, ramps, walkways and curb cuts to facilitate barrier-free access;
- the installation of tactile strips or change of surface materials in locations where a barrier-free access traverses a driveway, fire route or parking aisle;
- identifying a minimum number of barrier-free entrances; and,
- ensuring that building and route signage is provided in large, high contrast lettering.

The VAAC was advised that through the site plan process, the Development Planning Department reviews the layout and materials external to a building, whereas the Building Standards Department reviews the internal design and construction of a building in accordance with the Ontario Building Code.

Building Standards Department

The Building Standards Department has indicated that it is regulated by the Ontario Building Code and as such undertakes review for compliance during the Building Permit process. While the Department does not have an accessibility checklist for review, the requirements for accessibility are clearly set out under Section 3.8 of the Ontario Building Code titled "Barrier Free Design". The Building Standards Department has indicated that in lieu of creating a checklist, it will provide a copy of this section of the Ontario Building Code to the VAAC.

Projected Timeline of Checklist

The projected timeline for the creation of an Accessibility Design Standards Checklist is approximately 2 to 3 months. The Development Planning Department, in consultation with its Urban Design Division will create a draft copy of the Accessibility Design Standards Checklist. The Development Planning Department will bring forward this draft copy to the next available VAAC Meeting for Committee Members to review and provide comments and input into the document. Once a final checklist is complete, the Development Planning Department will forward the draft document and a recommendation to approve the checklist to a future meeting of the Committee of the Whole, to be ratified by Vaughan Council.

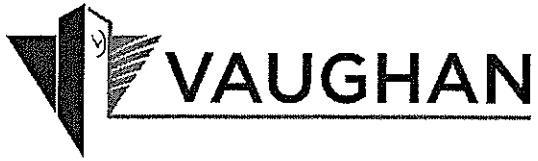
Conclusion

Through consultation with the VAAC at its meeting on September 11, 2012, the Development Planning Department supports the recommendation brought forward to Vaughan Council by the VAAC to create an Accessibility Design Standards Checklist for the appropriate review of Site Development Applications as it relates to universal, barrier-free design under the Planning Act.

The Building Standards Department is regulated under the Ontario Building Code (under Section 3.8 "Barrier Free Design") and undertakes review for compliance during the Building Permit process. In lieu of creating a checklist respecting the internal design/construction of a building, this Department will provide a copy of Section 3.8 of the Ontario Building Code to the VAAC. The recommendation of the VAAC will need to be amended to reflect this change.

Prepared by:

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memorandum

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN MACKENZIE
Commissioner of Planning

Copy to: Clayton Harris, City Manager
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