

# Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan Update

Phase 1 Public Engagement Summary

April 2021



DOWNTOWN

**vaughan**

METROPOLITAN CENTRE

# Overview

## VMC SECONDARY PLAN UPDATE

The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) is the City of **Vaughan’s downtown core**, transforming into a transit-oriented community with unique residential, office, and mixed use areas, linked by a network of parks, public squares, open spaces, and a street grid for all types of transportation, including walking, driving, and cycling.

Due to rapid growth in the VMC and recent changes to municipal and regional legislation, the City initiated an update to the existing VMC Secondary Plan last fall and retained a multi-disciplinary team led by Gladki Planning Associates, supported by DTAH, Greenberg Consultants, and urbanMetrics.

Work is being aligned and coordinated in conjunction with parallel studies being undertaken in the VMC, City of Vaughan, and York Region. Ultimately, this update will result in a revised secondary plan that supports the City’s downtown as a **complete community** to 2051 and beyond.

## PROJECT PHASES AND CONSULTATION

The VMC Secondary Plan Update is a multi-year project with five phases:

1. Background and Issues
2. Options
3. Recommendations
4. Draft Secondary Plan
5. Final Implementation

A Public and Stakeholder Engagement Plan is guiding consultation to ensure diverse groups are involved throughout the project. Dedicated touchpoints at regular intervals will ensure work is continuously informed by their important perspectives. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online tools are being used to carry out activities remotely. In-person activities (adopting physical distancing measures) will resume when it is safe to do so, based on the guidance of public health authorities.

Phase 1 focused on reviewing existing policies, initiatives, developments, and studies and developing an understanding of current conditions and the opportunities and challenges facing the VMC. A Background Study Report was completed.

The objectives for this phase of engagement were to:

- introduce the project to stakeholders and the public: purpose, process, timeline, and potential impacts;
- build capacity of stakeholders and the public to participate in planning discussions;
- gain local knowledge and technical information on existing conditions, issues, strengths, opportunities, and constraints;
- collect feedback on a renewed vision and guiding principles; and,
- generate new ideas.

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

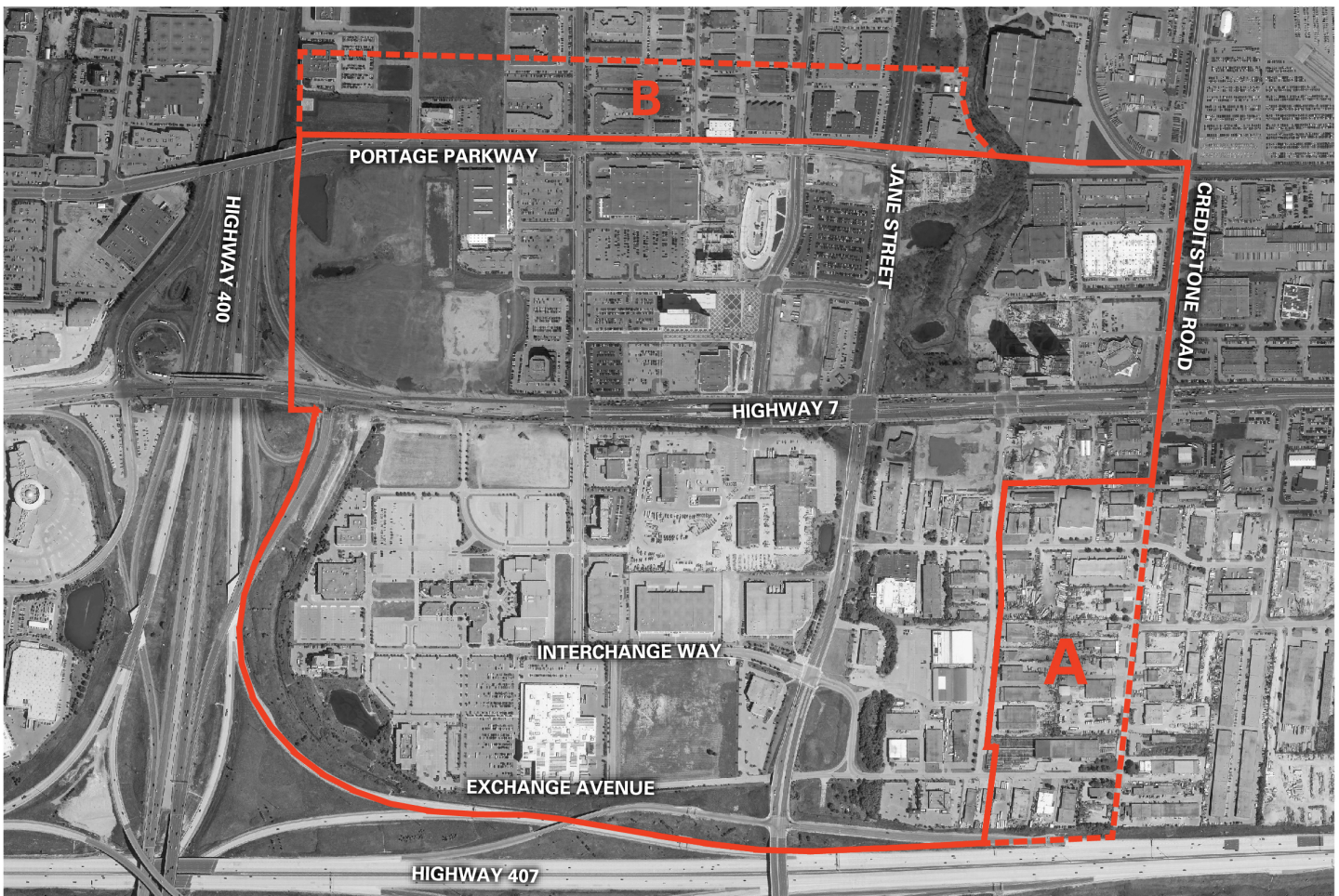
Public consultation activities in Phase 1 included an online **public survey** and a month-long virtual **Public Open House**. Collectively, the feedback will inform the next phase of work, which will explore different ideas for the future of the VMC and prepare a strategy for provision of community services and facilities.

This document **summarizes public feedback received during Phase 1**.

## STUDY AREA

The VMC has a total area of 190 hectares, bounded by Highway 407 to the south, Highway 400 to the west, Portage Parkway to the north, and Creditstone and Maplecrete Roads to the east. This project will also review and analyze **potential expansions to the study area**, considering

employment and commercial lands to the north of Portage Parkway and east of Maplecrete Road to Creditstone Road. The current Secondary Plan boundaries and possible expansion areas are shown in Figure 1.



### LEGEND

- VMC Boundary
- - - Potential Boundary Expansion Areas

Figure 1 Vaughan Metropolitan Centre study area and potential expansion areas

# Public Survey

**NOVEMBER 18, 2020 - JANUARY 22, 2021**

An online survey was launched on the City of Vaughan website for citizens to share their thoughts and experiences within the VMC and provide ideas about the area’s future, including travel patterns to and from the VMC and uses for the places and spaces within the downtown core.

**Over 350** community members shared feedback through this survey. Participants indicated they interact with the VMC in multiple ways:

- 21% live in the VMC, while 60% live elsewhere in Vaughan and 19% live outside of Vaughan
- 19% ride public transit in or through the VMC
- 19% shop, hang out, or visit family/friends in the VMC
- 12% work in or near the VMC, 5% own a business in or near the VMC, and 2% go to school in or near the VMC

Survey respondents said the **top 3 issues** to building a successful downtown core are:

1. developing **more parks and open spaces** (selected by 54%);
2. improving **community services and facilities** (selected by 41%); and,
3. ensuring **sufficient parking** (selected by 41%).

Thinking about what makes the VMC a **desirable** place to live, most survey respondents said:

1. **proximity to public transit** (selected by 87%); and,
2. **proximity to major highways** (selected by 75%).

The community is **concerned about traffic congestion** (selected by 64% of survey respondents) and **not enough parks and open spaces** in the VMC (selected by 46%) affecting the desirability of living in the VMC.

The aggregate survey results are attached in an Appendix.

“Create more retail space and entertainment in walking distance”

“Ensure the flow of traffic moves easily and quickly”

“A Culture/ Performing Arts venue is much needed in Vaughan”

“Add more community services to fit all ages”

“Less high-rise construction and more family-friendly spaces”



Survey participants shared challenges and opportunities for the VMC. A high-level summary of responses is provided, followed by a selection of direct quotes.

## Entertainment and events

The VMC needs activities and public art that will attract residents and visitors. Community members feel a culture/music/performing arts venue is much needed in Vaughan.

## Affordability

Numerous survey participants believe that housing in the VMC is expensive and a barrier to the creation of a complete community. The availability and cost of parking in the VMC was also voiced repeatedly, particularly for visitors to existing residential buildings.

## Built form character and design

Buildings in the VMC should be unique and have character. Members of the public would like to see less high-rise construction. Human-scaled architecture with a variety of size, colour, and materials can minimize uniformity and make the area vibrant.

## Traffic flow

Many respondents expressed concern about road congestion in the VMC and stressed that traffic flow be improved to move vehicles more quickly and easily. It was suggested that traffic lights be synchronized, traffic calming strategies be re-evaluated, and alternatives be explored for re-directing high truck traffic on Highway 7.

## Community spaces

The VMC needs to be “more than a bedroom/investment area.” It should be a safe place for all ages and abilities and contain community services such as clinics, daycares, post offices, and schools. Respondents would like to see retail and dining options as well as outdoor spaces to socialize.

## Safe active transportation facilities

Although some do not support cycling infrastructure, respondents stated that bike lanes and walking paths must be safely separated from motorists. Some respondents said that more secure lock-up options and weather-protected parking/storage are needed to support cycling. A fine-grained street pattern will promote active transportation.

## Transit integration and frequency

People are open to taking transit more often if frequency of service was increased and fares were integrated. Direct bus routes from surrounding suburbs and amenities were suggested.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES THE VMC AN UNDESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE?

- “There seems to be a **lack of variety in architecture**, there is too much bland glass condos that look all the same, do something different for Vaughan, don’t copy Toronto’s glass trend and incorporate colour.”
- “The **public transit options** from the surrounding areas (especially Maple, Patterson) are exceptionally poor in the direction of VMC.”
- “**Tall building jungle** - huge wind tunnels.”
- “**Housing prices** too high.”
- “You need a car to move around in Vaughan. **Nothing is walking distance.**”
- “**Lack of separated sidewalks and cycle tracks**” . . .  
“**Hard to access nearby amenities by bike** due to lack of safe lock-up options and areas.”
- “**Too industrial** with lot of trucks 24/7.”
- “**Parking too expensive.**”
- “**Lack of food variety.**”

## THE VMC HAS EVOLVED QUITE A BIT IN THE LAST FEW YEARS WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEVERAL RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS, RETAIL, AND PUBLIC SPACES. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE MOST CRITICAL ISSUES TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF BUILDING VAUGHAN'S DOWNTOWN?

- “The roads are already crowded with cars and trucks. **Focus on the smooth safe flow of traffic.**”
- **“All towers look the same.”**
- **“More entertainment and fun things to do** please, more events that attract people to live here (ferris wheel in city center for example).”
- “Create more **retail space, dining and entertainment that is in walking distance** from all these condos being built. Right now you have to drive to everything.”
- **“Arts & Culture** is very important to a thriving community. Culture is the reason we visit cities and want to live in cities. Please invest in the arts because events are what makes cities more liveable and gives cities a soul and identity.”
- “Ensure public transit options offer **direct routes from the surrounding suburbs.**”
- “Add more **community services** in the VMC like hospital, clinic, postal services, daycares etc.. to fit in all ages”
- “PLEASE ensure **parking spaces** are sufficient. Many people want to live here because they have family who live in Vaughan, who all have cars. If you're visiting VMC from the NORTH, you need to DRIVE down and park somewhere!”
- “Find alternatives for **very high truck traffic** on Hwy 7.”

## DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS OR CLARIFICATION YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

- “The larger issue is **connectivity**. I live not far from the VMC but there are very limited or dangerous ways for me to get to the VMC that isn't in a car or public transit. It would be great if there were dedicated right-of-way (whether that's on-road or off-road) active transportation options that connect the rest of the city to the VMC. If this is supposed to be a downtown for all, **I'd like to be able to get downtown in another way than car or public transit.**”
- “One reason people don't like using buses, especially outside of TTC bus network, is the **low frequency of service**. After the pandemic, if I were getting drinks with colleagues after work around Vaughan, I absolutely would like to use buses both to get to work and come back from drinking if I didn't have to wait 30 minutes for the bus.”
- “We need **places to socialize**, and more coffee shops, bakeries and smaller restaurants with outdoor social spaces where people can walk from condos like Expo City as it's still a bit far removed on foot from the main VMC. A way to connect the two with **more walking paths, eateries and open spaces/benches** would be great.”
- “For current residents who live just outside the VMC area the level of **roadway congestion** is already at unbearable levels.”
- “Very pleased with current development. **We are moving in the right direction.**”
- “Pedestrian and bike lanes are completely exposed to the elements with no option to seek shelter in a storm” . . . “More space for pedestrians and people riding bikes in the boulevard **separated from motorists.**”
- **“Traffic lights** need to be **synchronized** well.”

# Public Open House

**FEBRUARY 25 - MARCH 25, 2021**

A virtual Public Open House was launched on the City of Vaughan’s online engagement platform ([haveyoursay.vaughan.ca](http://haveyoursay.vaughan.ca)) to seek input from citizens and stakeholders about the issues, strengths, and opportunities in the VMC. A **series of three short videos** were posted to share more about the project and its purpose, process, timeline, and context and together received nearly **300 views**.

Community members were encouraged to use the digital engagement tools provided to share ideas, join the discussion, ask questions, and subscribe for project updates. The following questions were asked:

- How would you like to describe your downtown in the next 10-20 years? What do you think is missing from the VMC vision and principles?
- What features and/or amenities would make the VMC a great downtown?
- What do you like about the VMC today? Which amenities do you enjoy?
- What are the VMC’s challenges? What ideas do you have for improving them?

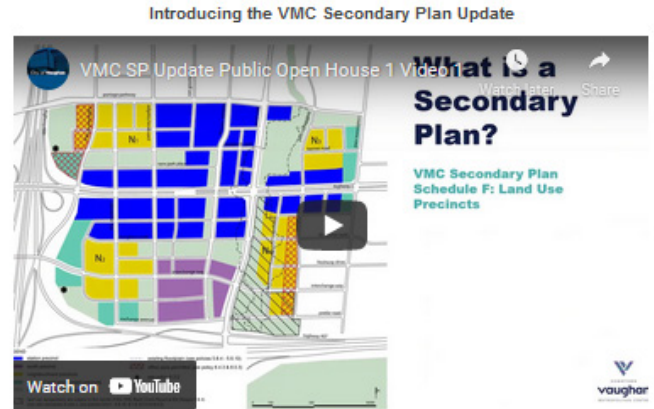
**Over 350** members of the public explored the engagement page and 53 people contributed ideas and suggestions through the engagement tools. A high-level summary of responses is provided, followed by a selection of direct quotes.

## Housing variety

The VMC needs housing options that are accessible to multiple demographics. Rental properties and below-market affordable housing will balance existing residential options to ensure a diversity of residents and families call the area home.

## Local retail and dining

There should be dining options throughout the VMC and at-grade, small-scale retail on downtown streets. The VMC should be a place for locally-owned small businesses.



Educational videos about the VMC Secondary Plan Update are available on the project page at [haveyoursay.vaughan.ca](http://haveyoursay.vaughan.ca) and on the City of Vaughan’s YouTube channel

## Hub for arts, culture, and entertainment

The VMC’s identity should be rooted in arts, culture, and creativity. Downtown Vaughan can be an entertainment hotspot with festivals, food trucks, music venues, and outdoor events. Employment in the VMC can also focus on creative industries including digital media, visual arts, fashion, and music.

## Built form variety and design

Vaughan’s downtown should have a variety of built form types. Community members would like to see more than just high- and low-rise buildings, and believe colourful, attractive architecture and design should push the boundaries and be held to the highest standards.

## A connected transportation network

The VMC should have a fine-grain street network that promotes walkability and lessens dependency on cars. Dedicated YRT bus lines, protected bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly streets will create a multi-modal downtown. There are also opportunities for transit connections to Thornhill Woods, York University, and Kleinburg. Improvements can be made to pickup/dropoff at the VMC Subway Station.

## Public spaces for building community

The VMC should be a safe, clean, vibrant place to interact with others in parks and open spaces. There should be diverse facilities and amenities to promote recreation such as an outdoor ice rink or cricket pitch. Markets, fairs, festivals, and arts and culture venues are important ways to foster community in Vaughan.

“Pedestrian-oriented streets with rapid BRTs & bike lanes are the way to go”

“Arts/culture/entertainment is vital to creating an attractive place to live & work”

“I hope the VMC has ample greenspace to allow for a better connection with nature”

“Rental properties are necessary in the VMC”

“We need more opportunities and spaces to get to know our neighbours”

“Redefine the suburban community into something urban”



## HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO DESCRIBE YOUR DOWNTOWN IN THE NEXT 10-20 YEARS?

- “Ensure that developers who want to over-build residential units don’t trump the **need for balance** among all components.”
- “Vaughan is an entertainment desert — **Arts/culture/entertainment is vital** to creating an attractive place to live and work.”
- “Students nearby want a closer **place to have fun** and unwind. Not everybody needs to go Downtown Toronto to have fun/experience anything cool. Please ensure **retail is unique and exciting** and be ensure to **invest in culture/arts**: festivals, food trucks, free outdoor/indoor events, music venues.”
- “Beautifully designed spaces/Creative community. Please stop building the same kind of repetitive condo that are seeing downtown. Ensure **designs reflect diversity, are colourful and pluralistic.**”
- “As the GTA will continue to grow, make sure Vaughan has an identity of being **creative and supportive of arts/culture . . . Rental options** that are **priced below market** and deeply affordable will bring a new kind of young community who are highly entrepreneurial and will want to flourish their trade/craft. **Culture and the arts have a way of really building the identity and collective narrative of a city.** Once the artists come, more people will be attracted to this **diversified, fun and entrepreneurial city.**”
- “Fairly **dense town centre**, good **transport links** from the surrounding local area (many more public transport options). **Plenty of green space** and thoughtful & functional **street furniture.**”
- “**Juxtaposition of high/low rise buildings needs to end**, retail+ other spaces need to increase. Overdevelopment of residential units should not occur.”
- “Please do not name the large park ‘Central Park’. This is corny and has already been done in New York (it feels like a copycat name and unoriginal).”

## WHAT FEATURES AND/OR AMENITIES WOULD MAKE THE VMC A GREAT DOWNTOWN?

- “Local non-corporate store: We can go anywhere to a Loblaws, but what about a cheap vegetable or fruit market like they have in Little Portugal, Korea Town or Chinatown? It gives a more authentic downtown life feeling. Not sure how to make that happen but if you create **small** enough **retail spaces** this opportunity can happen with how dense VMC will become.”
- “Improve the **subway pickup and dropoff**: A formal pickup and dropoff area needs to be added to VMC with better traffic flow and proper waiting spots similar to the pickup area for Hwy 407 station. The current situation on New Park Place is a safety hazard!”
- “Make it **walkable!** Having things within walking distance, pedestrian-friendly, and **less dependent on cars!**”
- “Better **sport facilities**: Every park in Vaughan has the same mix of sport fields - soccer and basketball with occasional wastefully-large and unused baseball fields. Let’s finally get a cricket pitch and hopefully a centrepiece **outdoor rink** a la Nathan Phillips Square.”

## WHAT ARE THE VMC’S CHALLENGES? WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR IMPROVING THEM?

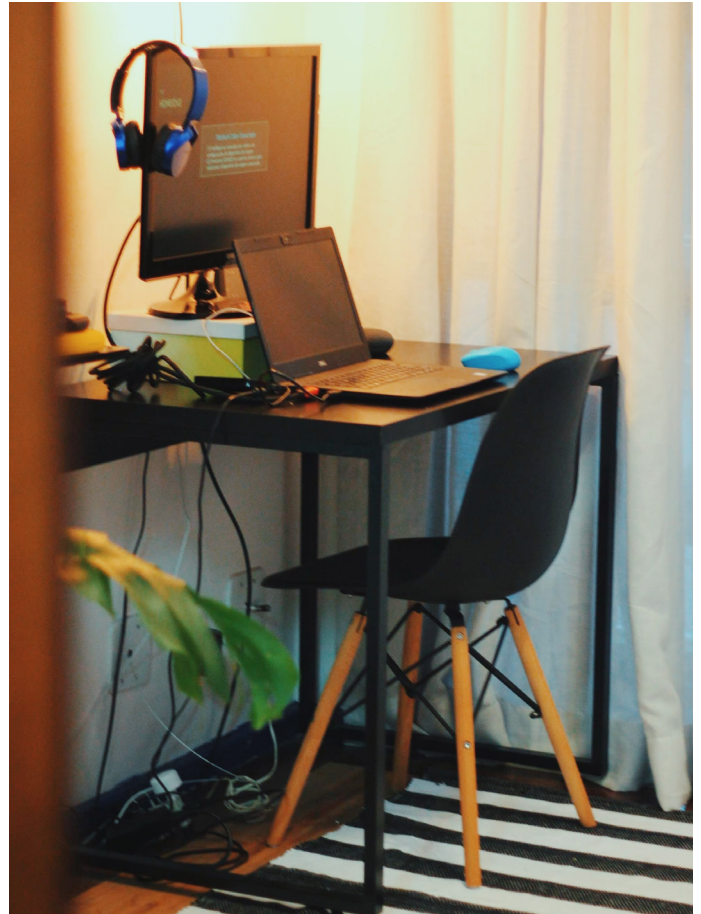
- “**Culture/arts defines a city and defines a complete community.** If Vaughan doesn’t have places to experience/enjoy or to have fun at, it will remain a sterile and suburban place to live. Vaughan needs to establish its own culture and identity and **create a unique experience in Canada/the GTA** to set it apart.”
- “See how Vaughan can attract jobs and **not just be a ‘commuter suburb.’** **Car dependence** is not the right way to look, because when the density of Vaughan’s downtown will keep expanding over the decades new forms of transportation or mobility might take shape. **Be innovative with greenspace and streets. Public transit is vital** and attracts residents.”

## Next Steps

Public and stakeholder feedback is vital to the success of the VMC Secondary Plan Update. The project team will seek input from citizens and stakeholders throughout the multi-year timeline to ensure work is **continuously informed** by the important perspectives of all community members.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **online tools** are being used to carry out activities remotely. In-person activities (adopting physical distancing measures) will resume when it is safe to do so, based on the guidance of public health authorities.

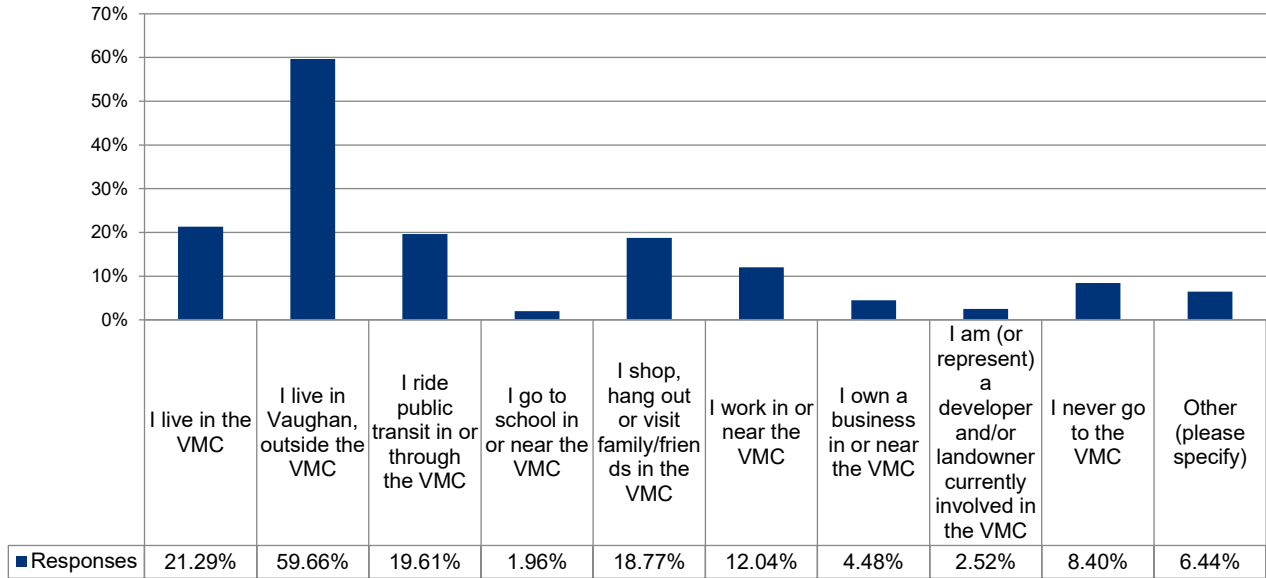
**Phase 2** is the next stage of the project and will **explore different ideas for the future of the VMC**, including mixes and locations of uses, densities, and built form in the context of population and employment growth, parks and open spaces, transportation, and municipal servicing. In addition, a strategy will be prepared for provision of community services and facilities. Engagement with key stakeholders, landowners, and the public will share technical analysis, receive critiques, gather opinions and preferences on the options, and capture interests that may have previously been missed. **Stay tuned!**



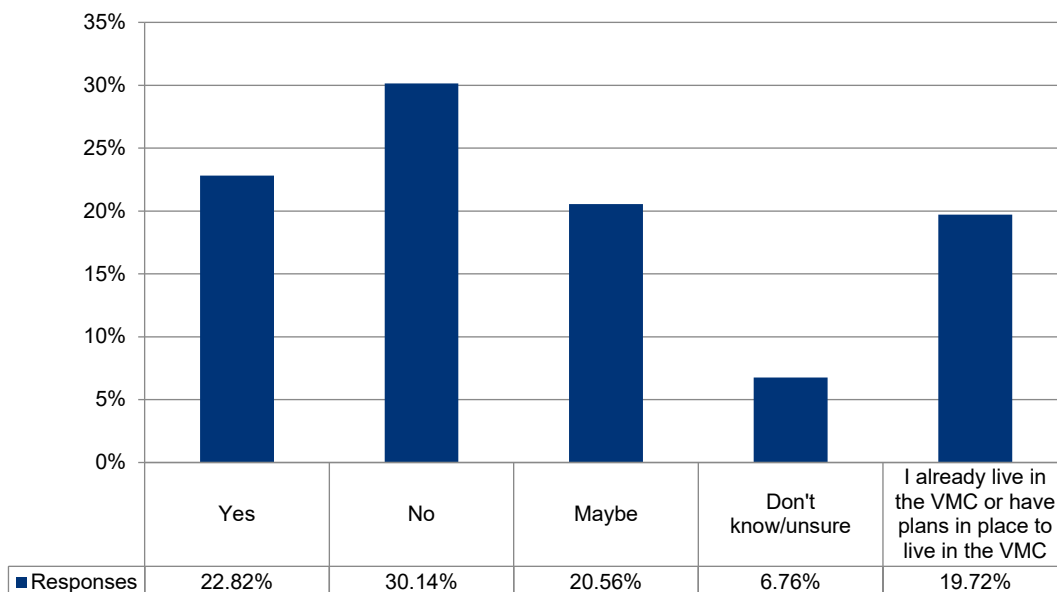
# Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan Update

## Online Survey Results

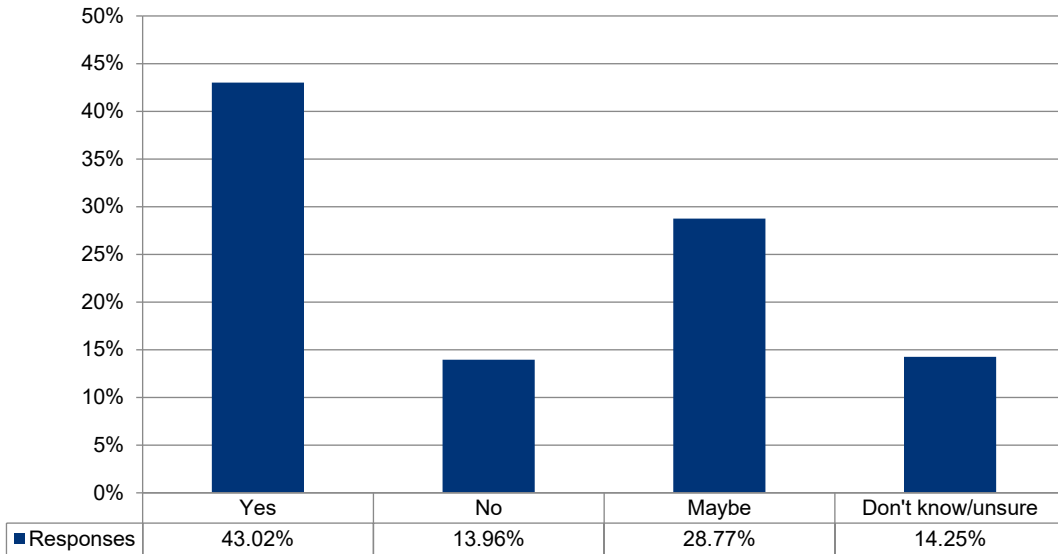
**What brings you to Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC)? For geographical context, a map of the VMC has been provided below. Please select all that apply.**



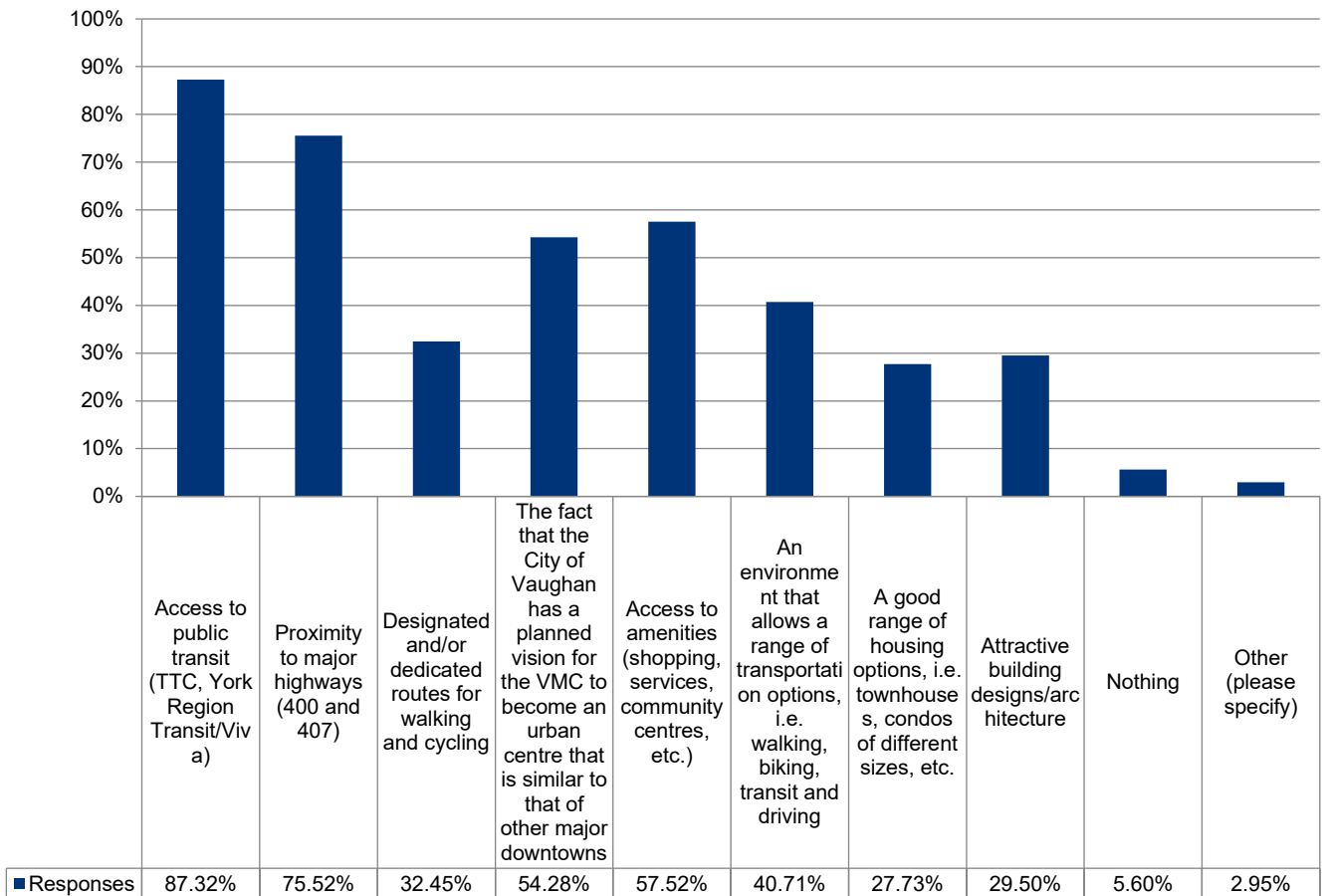
### Would you ever consider living in the VMC?



### Would you recommend the VMC as a place of residence to a family member or friend?

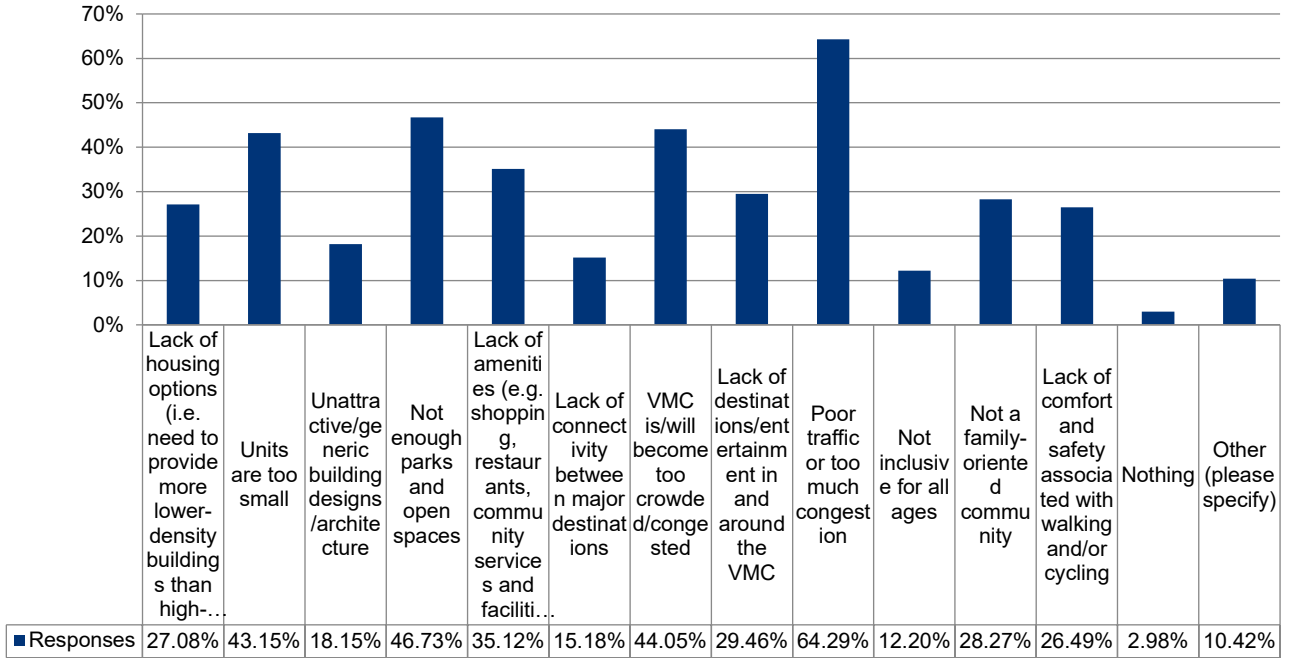


### What do you think makes the VMC a desirable place to live? Please select all that apply.

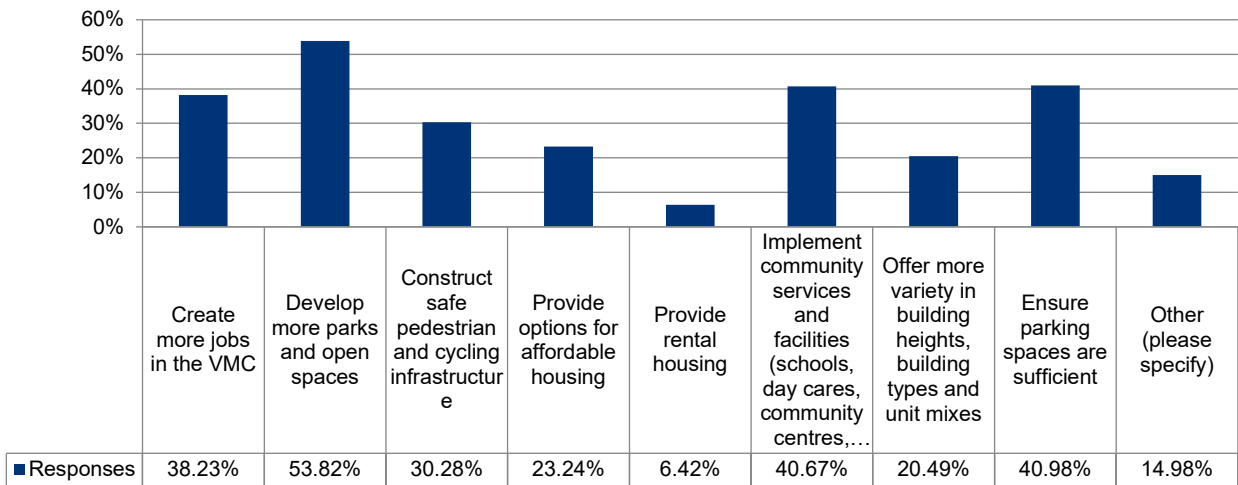




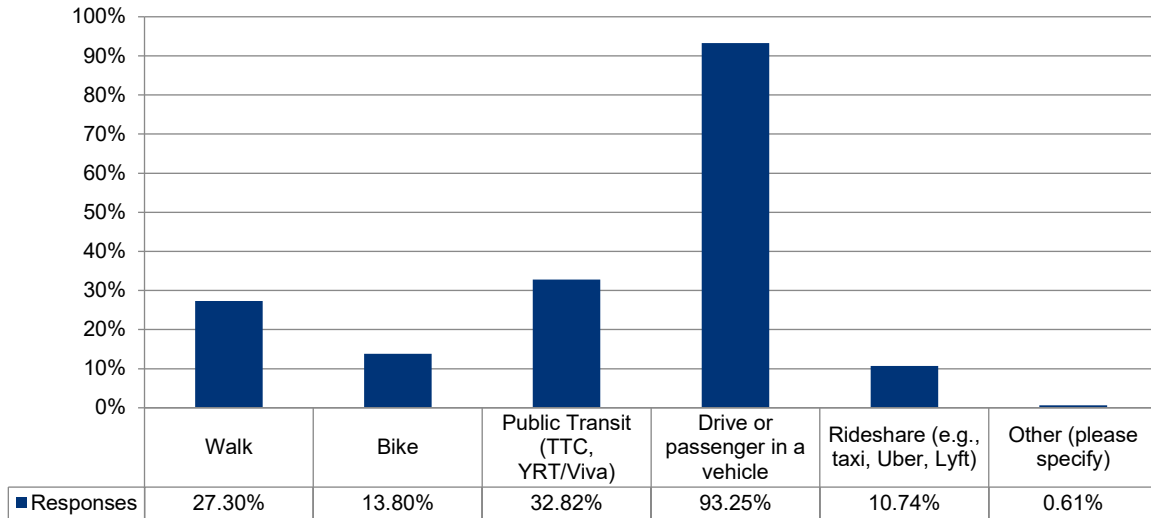
**What do you think makes the VMC an undesirable place to live?  
Please select all that apply.**



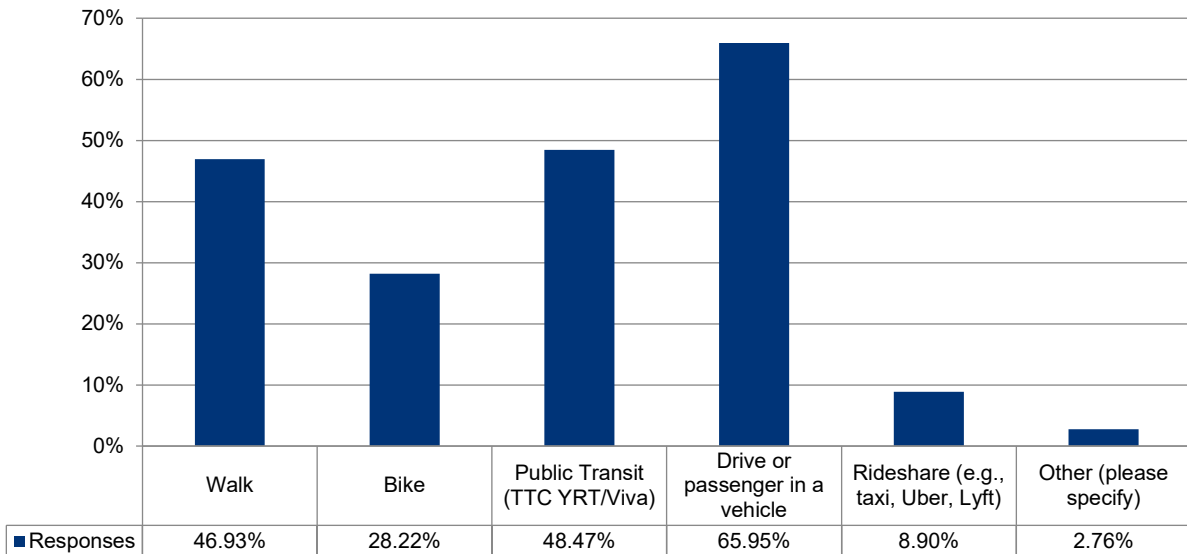
**The VMC has evolved quite a bit in the last few years with the construction of several residential buildings, office buildings, retail and public spaces. What do you think are the most critical issues to ensure the success of building Vaughan's downtown?**



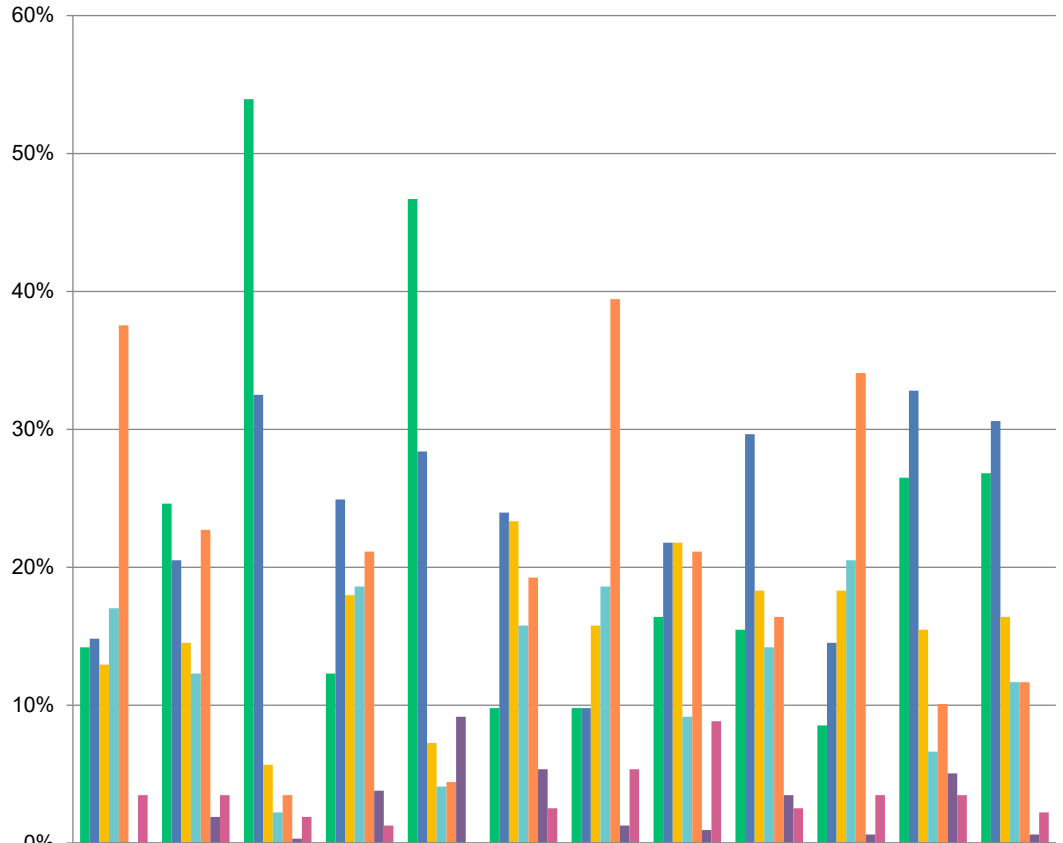
**Currently, when you're generally travelling to a given destination, what are the primary modes of transportation that you use? Please select all the apply.**



**In the future, if you were to travel in, around or through the VMC, how would you prefer to do so? Please select all that apply.**

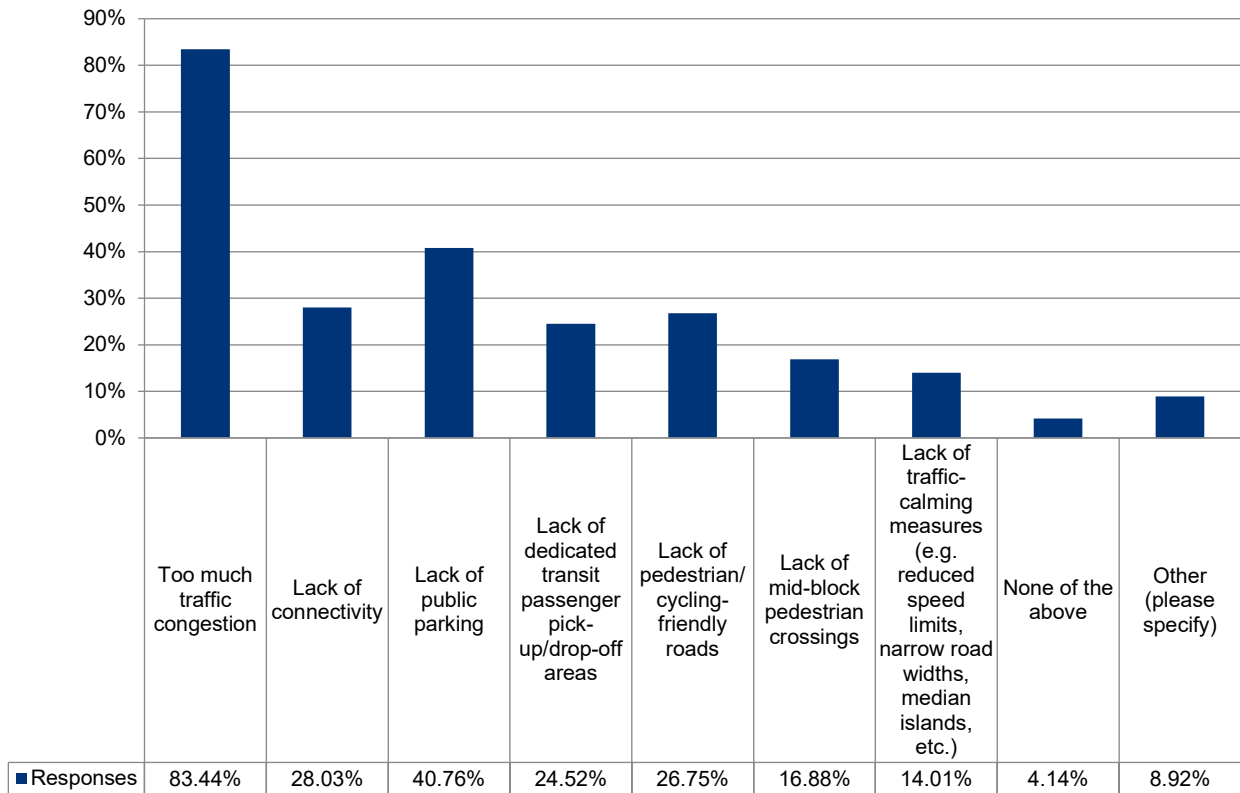


The following list of transportation options and amenities either already exist or are up for consideration to be implemented in the VMC. For each item, please indicate how likely or unlikely you are to use the option, or whether you have or currently use



	On-road, separated bike lanes with plastic flexible posts	Off-road, separated bike lanes*	Parks and open space trails	Buses*	TTC Subway (Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Subway Station)*	Ridesharing (i.e. Taxi, Uber, Lyft, etc.)*	E-Scooters	Autonomous (driverless) transit shuttles	Paid public parking (on- or off-street)	Bike-share programs	Roads with a focus on private automobile and truck traffic movement*	Roads with a focus on pedestrians, cycling and public transit*
Very Likely	14.20%	24.61%	53.94%	12.30%	46.69%	9.78%	9.78%	16.40%	15.46%	8.52%	26.50%	26.81%
Likely	14.83%	20.50%	32.49%	24.92%	28.39%	23.97%	9.78%	21.77%	29.65%	14.51%	32.81%	30.60%
Neither likely nor unlikely	12.93%	14.51%	5.68%	17.98%	7.26%	23.34%	15.77%	21.77%	18.30%	18.30%	15.46%	16.40%
Unlikely	17.03%	12.30%	2.21%	18.61%	4.10%	15.77%	18.61%	9.15%	14.20%	20.50%	6.62%	11.67%
Very Unlikely	37.54%	22.71%	3.47%	21.14%	4.42%	19.24%	39.43%	21.14%	16.40%	34.07%	10.09%	11.67%
Have used/currently use now	0.00%	1.89%	0.32%	3.79%	9.15%	5.36%	1.26%	0.95%	3.47%	0.63%	5.05%	0.63%
Don't know/unsure	3.47%	3.47%	1.89%	1.26%	0.00%	2.52%	5.36%	8.83%	2.52%	3.47%	3.47%	2.21%

**Please identify the transportation challenges you may face, if any, getting to, around and/or through the VMC. Please select all that apply.**



**What is your age?**

