

City Building & Placemaking

Vaughan Tomorrow
Background Paper
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Vaughan Tomorrow

“We have theories, specialisms, regulations, exhortations, demonstration projects. We have planners. We have highway engineers. We have mixed use, mixed tenure, architecture, community architecture, urban design, and neighbourhood strategy. But what seems to have happened is that we have simply lost the art of place-making; or, put another way, we have lost the simple art of place-making. We are good at putting up buildings but we are bad at making places.”

- Bernard Hunt, London architect

The city of Vaughan, like other municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), is responding to recent Provincial policies that set out how and where growth will take shape. These policies embodied in the Places to Grow Act (2005), The Greenbelt Act (2005) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act (2001) address the interrelated issues of urban sprawl, food security, climate change, and sustainable community building for future generations.

The new Vaughan Official Plan is part of the Vaughan Tomorrow growth management program. This program will provide the vision, policies and strategies to guide the expected growth of Vaughan to 425,000 residents and 278,000 jobs by 2031.

A three-year project, it will bring the municipality's planning policies into conformity with Provincial legislation (see the Vaughan Tomorrow background paper on the Provincial Policy Context) and set out a framework to accommodate growth and development over the next 25 years. The new Vaughan Official Plan gives us the opportunity to reflect on where we are as a city, how we got here and where we want to go in the future. This is also an opportunity for residents of Vaughan to take ownership of the long-term planning for their communities by identifying the types of changes that they would like to have take place in Vaughan.

The city of Vaughan has initiated an extensive consultation process in its various communities. Residents have made clear that there are a number of great places in the City that help define Vaughan and give it a positive image and character. The most commonly identified great places tend to include the historic villages, such as Kleinburg, the natural heritage features, notably the extensive Humber Valley and the remaining countryside. These places have all existed for a long period of time and helped establish a sense-of-place and image for Vaughan.

However there are also numerous places in Vaughan that lack a sense-of-place and contribute to a negative image of the City. While residents appreciate certain unique developments in Vaughan, such as Canada's Wonderland and the well-served community centres, there is a general feeling that the landscape has become monotonous, designed for cars, not people. This view is reinforced by the prevalence of large automobile-oriented shopping centres; the vast tracts of non-descript industrial buildings; and car-dominated roads with few, if any, pedestrian amenities.

Clearly the most recent City Building initiatives have focused more on developing the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate growth and less on creating distinct and memorable places. Over the next 25 years, City Building initiatives, guided by the new Official Plan, will need to develop principles that support and prioritize the creation of great places. These will be places where residents enjoy coming together to interact, inspire and be inspired. They can be on the small-scale of neighbourhood parks, recreation centres, community gathering spots or on the larger-scale like Vaughan's future downtown centre. These places will help develop the character of Vaughan as we move into the 21st century and reimage Vaughan from a stereotypical suburban municipality to a diverse, interesting and sustainable modern city.

The interchange of Hwy 400 and Hwy 7, at the Vaughan Corporate Centre, is dominated by highway infrastructure





The Concept of Placemaking

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance of creating meaningful and beautiful places as we plan and build our cities. The term placemaking has been around for several decades and has become more generally accepted in recent years as a critical component of good city planning and the development of sustainable cities. Great cities have attractive and green streets, parks and squares that invite you to gather and socialize; excellent architecture and design that inspires you and creates a positive image; public art that delights and captures the soul of a city; beautiful natural landscapes that make you feel connected to the environment; and buildings – old and new – that create distinctive neighbourhoods and a sense-of-place. The new Official Plan should help establish a policy framework that promotes these principles and helps transform Vaughan into such a city.



Why should we focus on placemaking? The way a city looks and the degree to which it is a distinguishable and recognizable place is important for three main reasons.

First, there is an aesthetic delight to living and working in a beautiful, comfortable and liveable city. Secondly, there is an economic impetus for creating great places – a City has to look good to attract entrepreneurs, businesses and employees that will create the diverse economic base required to be a successful City of the 21st century. Finally, a great city with great places speaks to the intangible quality of a City's "soul". Such a City will inspire its citizens who will in turn inspire the creation and expression of other great places.

The contemporary concept of placemaking originated from the work of diverse urban thinkers, ranging from the likes of Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte, and Kevin Lynch, who in different ways stressed the importance of designing and developing public spaces as forums for social interaction.

The Glebe Flea Market takes place in this Ottawa neighbourhood every Spring. Bargain hunters and Sunday strollers come to check out the resident's wares and enjoy the street entertainment and food.

Public space includes all of the spaces used on a day-to-day basis by the general public, such as streets, parks, squares and public infrastructure. Some aspects of privately owned spaces, such as cafes, building facades, porches, and gardens, also contribute to public space and are therefore important things to consider as part of placemaking.

The focus on public spaces and placemaking in urban planning and design developed in large part as a response to the urban landscape that evolved from initial post-war developments – in the form of both suburban development and urban renewal. That landscape was characterized by a decline of traditional social spaces and the rise of the automobile. The focus on placemaking was intended to remind planners of the human aspect of city-building.

Over time the concept has evolved as urban planners and designers have attempted to create various tools, criteria and formulas to incorporate placemaking into community design. The most well known of these urban design approaches is neo-traditional design, which has been applied locally (Cornell, Markham, Ontario) and further afield (Seaside Florida).

While the tools and criteria for placemaking may vary, the ultimate goal is the same: to create places that people use, that inspire social interaction and promote community stewardship.

Finally, placemaking is a never ending process requiring ongoing commitment from a community and its political leaders. The new Official Plan for Vaughan will not create great places in itself, but it will create the policy framework that focuses future planning and development decisions on placemaking and demonstrates and ongoing allows this ongoing commitment by the City.

Moving Beyond New Urbanism



New Urbanism applies traditional urban design principles to suburban infill and new development projects. In an attempt to curb sprawl and create more walkable communities, design elements include orienting buildings toward the street, porches in the front of houses with garages to the back and a community focal point such as a piazza or park. However, in order for these types of projects to be successful other elements of City Building should be integrated into the development process. This includes the promotion of affordability, the provision of a diversity of housing forms and tenure, easy access to public transit and other community services and programming initiatives that encourage social interaction.

Commercial area in Vaughan, east of Keele Street and north of Highway 7, illustrates the challenges of placemaking in a suburban setting, dominated by single purpose use areas



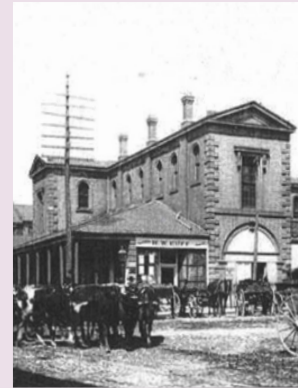
City building and placemaking

There is no set formula for placemaking. The appropriate principles must be localized and based on the character and development pattern of the particular city as well as the values and aspirations of its citizens. To that end, placemaking must be linked to the more general process of city building and understood within the context of a particular city's historical and existing urban structure.

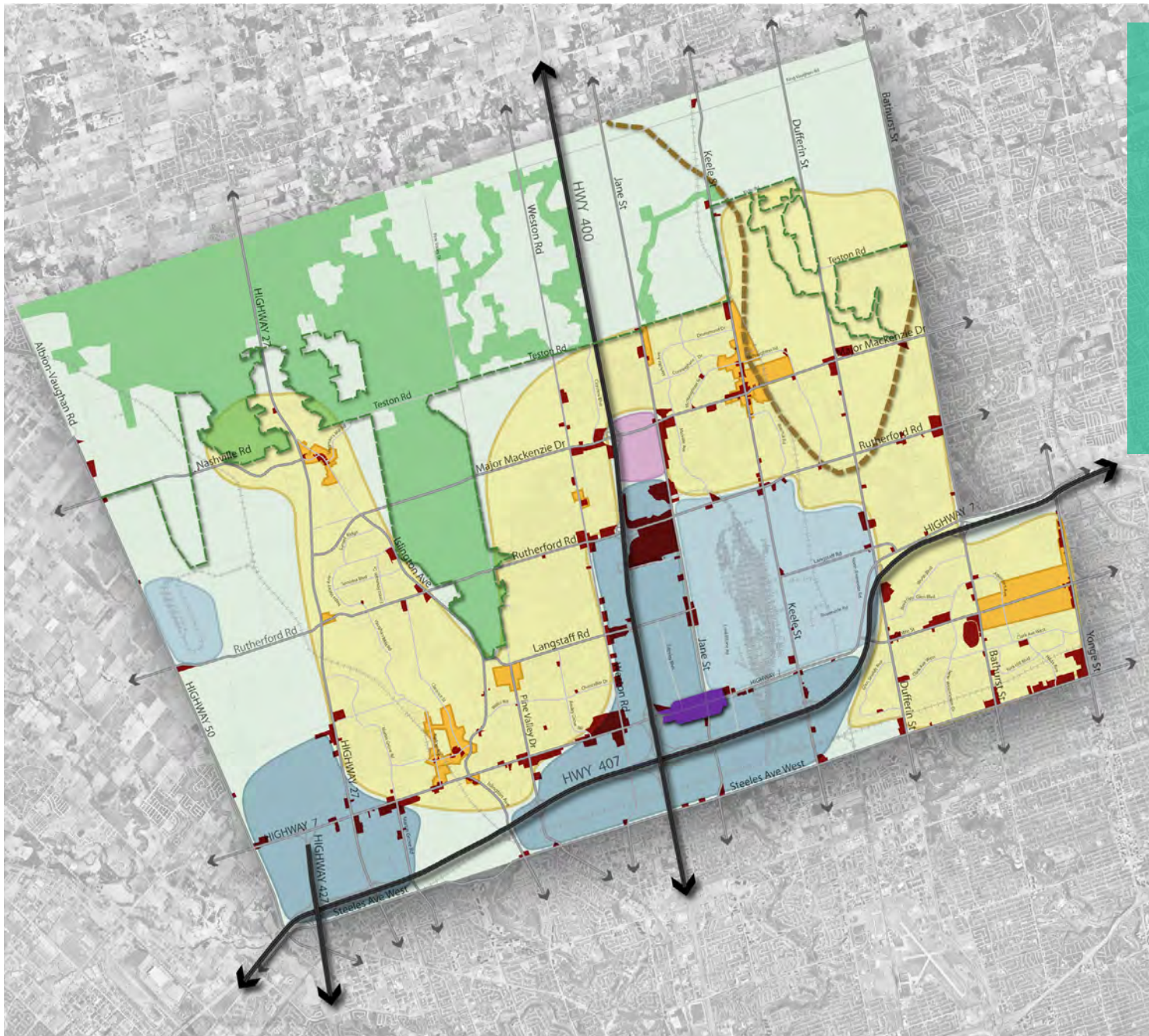
Placemaking principles reflect a combination of values and ideals from medieval European cities, early North American towns and villages and 19th/20th Century industrial cities. These principles promote various attributes that can create a sense-of-place, such as the square or piazza, the urban grid, small blocks, front porches, laneways, etc. These attributes are meant to enliven communities by drawing people out onto the streets and into public space.

Such approaches to placemaking have been highly successfully when repairing the urban fabric or building new neighbourhoods in traditional downtown settings such as the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood in downtown Toronto (see sidebar). Many of these principles are also useful and important to apply in suburban landscapes such as Vaughan as a means of placemaking. However, since the City's existing urban structure creates areas that are more isolated, with large tracts of single uses, applying these principles becomes more difficult. Their application in an urban setting is not always appropriate for a suburban setting and therefore the joint process of city building and placemaking may need a more refined approach.

St. Lawrence Neighbourhood



In the early 1900's, what is now the St. Lawrence neighbourhood was one of Toronto's most prominent industrial centres. As the area's industrial base went into decline, forward-thinking politicians decided to turn the area into a residential neighbourhood. Wary of creating ghettoized housing projects of earlier decades, the area was designed as a complete community with a mix of houses (mostly rowhouses or low-rise apartments, both market-rate and subsidized), stores, a school and park space. There are also a number of design features to promote a social environment: houses have front stoops and meet the sidewalk; the community park has plenty of places to sit, a playground, chess board, and basketball hoop. Seamlessly integrated with the rest of the city, the design and location of the neighbourhood naturally promotes walking, biking and public transit use. The neighbourhood has become a model for the design and planning of new urban communities.



Currently in Vaughan employment, residential and commercial uses are separate and far apart from one another, with few exceptions of mixed commercial areas along the major roadways.

Legend

- Vaughan Corporate Centre
- Historic Village
- Residential Area
- Highway Employment
- General Employment
- Canada's Wonderland
- Commercial Area
- Rural / Open Space
- Greenbelt
- Oak Ridges Moraine
- Highway
- Arterial Road
- Local Road
- Rail

Suburban cities such as Vaughan did not develop in the same manner as traditional industrial cities such as Toronto, Montreal, New York or Chicago. Those cities developed significant urban and built-form structures that pre-dated the automobile and, thus, established substantial pedestrian-scaled buildings and public spaces which form the basis of many placemaking ideals. These cities have also had “urban” places which have existed and evolved over more than 100 years and, as such, have had the opportunity to develop civic spaces which have been influenced by different generations and theories of design and architecture.

In contrast, the City of Vaughan has mostly developed over a relatively short time-frame in an era that is highly auto-dependent and with very little diversity of design and architecture. While the historic villages of Kleinburg, Woodbridge, Maple and Thornhill have developed over a much longer timeframe and share some similar “urban” qualities as those described above, they represent a very small proportion of the City of Vaughan’s built area. For the most part the City consists of large single-use areas (residential, commercial, or employment), that are segregated from each other and only connected by way of car-oriented roadways.

The result of Vaughan’s current development pattern is an urban form that discourages people from walking and gathering and makes it difficult to introduce the concepts of successful placemaking. If we want to transform Vaughan into a great city and build great places within it, we need to find ways to modify the urban structure of the City and introduce principles of placemaking.

So, in a suburban setting like Vaughan, what kinds of places do people really like or dislike? In public consultations to date, people have said clearly that some of what we have is extremely good. But they have also pointed out that other aspects of the City are poor and that we can do much better. Therefore, before discussing specific placemaking principles, we will look at some places in Vaughan that residents identified as “working” and “not working”.



Employment areas separated by Highway 7.



Residential housing separated from any kind of commercial or retail uses makes it necessary to drive a car.



Big box retail stores occupy large amounts of land, are often separated from other uses and only accessible by car.



The Current State of Places in Vaughan

During the Winter and Spring of 2008, we held a series of public consultation events to find out what residents of Vaughan like and don't like about their communities and how they want to see the city grow.





Visioning Workshop participants in Woodbridge



Maple Visioning Workshop held at the The Welcome Centre for Immigrant Services



Kleinburg Visioning Workshop held at the McMichael Art Gallery

Five Community Visioning Workshops were held in Maple, Woodbridge, Kleinburg, Thornhill and Concord in addition to a workshop at the Be Heard Youth Symposium (hosted by the Vaughan Youth Cabinet). Using sticky-dots and a wall-size map, residents identified: where they live, places that they like and places that they don't like. By the end of workshops, over 300 residents had covered six maps in red, blue and green dots.

Not surprisingly, a number of common themes emerged from the maps. Some places received mixed reviews (such as Canada's Wonderland), but for most other locations there was a general consensus on places that work and places that don't work. The following pages illustrate the most popular choices in both categories.

Places that people like

Based on the maps and discussions at the Visioning Workshops, people have a strong connection to the natural heritage of Vaughan especially the Humber River, Don River, and protected woodlots. Places that people liked in particular were points of access to these natural features, such as the McMichael Gallery, the Kortright Centre and the Humber River Trail in Woodbridge. The historic villages were also places that people liked for the range of shops, historic architecture, sense of community, and proximity to city-wide and regional destinations.

Historic Villages

Vaughan's historic villages have many of the features of a traditional urban form. A Main Street with a mix of residential and commercial uses provides a focal point for the community where people can walk to buy groceries, meet with friends or go for a stroll. Much of the housing is beautifully designed with front porches and windows that face the street, and tree-lined sidewalks. All of these elements have helped to create a sense-of-place over time. Given that these villages grew out of settlements along the Don and Humber Rivers, they also have a strong relationship with the natural heritage around them.

We should take cues about what works from the Main Streets of our historic villages. These community focal points have always provided a range of activities including, living quarters, stores to buy groceries, and places to eat. In addition to a way to move around town, the streets have been a natural meeting place for people in the community. These areas have also historically provided public transit with a relatively high density of people to support it.



Kleinburg

A well-landscaped sidewalk with colourful tree pits and paving designs creates an inviting setting to walk through and to enjoy a coffee at a sidewalk café.



Woodbrige

The image above illustrates early Woodbridge settlement alongside the Humber River.



Thornhill

An historic image of Yonge Street taken in 1902.

Public access to Natural Heritage

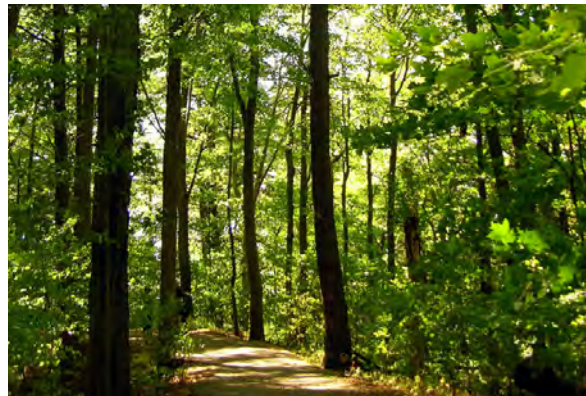
Vaughan's communities are blessed with significant natural features, such as woodlots, ravines and water courses. However, visibility and access to these features tends to be restricted because they are joined to the rear of private lots.

The following images show examples of how public access to conservation lands and other natural heritage can enhance the identity of communities.



Humber River at Woodbridge

The Humber River is a great asset for Woodbridge. A bike and pedestrian trail along the river provides access to the river.



The Kortright Centre for Conservation

In addition to providing access nature trails, the Kortright Centre for Conservation also provides leading edge educational programs on how to live more sustainably.



The McMichael Gallery

The gallery, in Kleinburg, provides access to nature trails and hosts a collection of art work, including the Group of Seven collection, that tells the story of Canada's past.

Places that people dislike

The most unpopular places in Vaughan were characterized by single purpose, large retail centres and intersections along Highway 7 dominated by heavy truck traffic with little or no pedestrian amenity. This doesn't mean that people don't use these places, but rather it highlights the lack of value they add to the City's quality of life beyond their function. Placemaking is as much about uses as it is about the beauty or aesthetics of a place. All of these places marked off on the map have a number of common elements: they are not particularly safe or accessible for pedestrians, are clearly dominated by automobiles, and the environment lacks general good design and beauty.

Major Intersections

Intersections along Highway 7 were particularly unpopular with residents of Vaughan. The following images illustrate why people may like to see changes in these areas. Dominated by automobile and truck traffic, these large intersections are loud and difficult to walk through. Surrounding commercial activity is generally sparse, poorly designed and difficult to move through on foot. As a rapid transit corridor, Highway 7 is beginning to evolve and will accommodate significant future growth in the city. We should consider how these intersections and surrounding areas can be turned into better places.



Islington and Woodbridge



Keele and Highway 7



Concord Rail Bridge

Single Use Commercial Areas

Residents have voiced displeasure at the fact that the retail and commercial services they rely upon are completely separated from the places where they live and work. The pattern has meant that even simple tasks such as buying milk in the evening or eating out at lunch require the use of a car.

- How can the Official Plan framework enhance the character of these places?
- How can we use these places as an indicator of good city-building practice for future developments?
- How does the integration of natural heritage with the urban setting have to do with the overall character of these areas?



Colossus

It is clear from this aerial that the design of the plaza discourages walking. The building is entirely surrounded by a parking lot bordered by roadways on all four sides. The area is dominated by grey concrete and has very little greenery.



Vaughan Mills Mall

While a successful shopping plaza, residents identified this place as needing better design elements. The car-oriented plaza has little in the way of streetscaping and is only easily accessible by car.



Large Format Retail

Residents have expressed a desire for more diverse commercial opportunity and better design.



Placemaking Principles

A “place” doesn’t need to be internationally recognized, but it must be recognizable.

The way a City looks and the degree to which it is a distinguishable and recognizable place is an important aspect of City Building.

How do we build on the assets and places in Vaughan that are so cherished by residents and how do we repair the places that are not working well?

There are a set of interconnected elements that must be explored and understood within Vaughan's local context.

The following elements have been specifically chosen because of their relevance to Vaughan. The following components are addressed separately, but they are highly interdependent. They are highlighted here as discussion points that need to be further explored in the course of developing the Official Plan and preparing specific Official Plan policies.

1. Density
2. Mix of Uses
3. Great Streets
4. Civic Spaces
5. Cultural/Artistic Expressions
6. Heritage Resources
7. Natural Features and the Countryside
8. Beauty and Design



Bridge over the Humber River in Woodbridge



Community picnics at Scarborough Bluffs



Outdoor art exhibit, St. Stephens Park, Dublin Ireland

What Makes a Great Place?



“Public places are the geographical glue that binds a community together. These spaces are friendly, secure, distinctive and well-integrated into the community fabric; they are places for democracy, sociability, gathering, collective memory, communication, connection and local economic vitality. Enriching people’s experience of public life and providing a platform for activities where people have a sense of community ownership, great places evoke a sense of identity and provide a focal point for cultural exchange and transformation.”

- City Repair Project, Portland, OR

Density

Density refers to the concentration of people and jobs in a given geographic area. It is considered a major element in the creation of sustainable cities, since a compact urban form makes a drastic difference in the all-around efficiency of a city, from energy to transportation to shopping for basic necessities. Higher densities make it easy to not drive and take transit or walk, which decreases pollution and improves physical health. This is a key reason why the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe promotes higher densities through intensification and compact growth.

Density also plays a significant role in placemaking. It does this in a number of ways. First, higher densities, if designed well, create increased opportunities for interaction and the development of social and community networks. Higher densities can support a higher level of public service – public transit is the most obvious example but this also applies to the use and programming of public space. The more people that live in an area, the more programming you are likely to see in park space, civic squares, along the sidewalks, and within commercial areas. One of the biggest difficulties in Vaughan today is that past development has lacked the population density to support significant civic spaces and programming.

Higher densities also allow for the preservation of natural assets, countryside, heritage buildings and other cherished sites that help give a City diversity and a sense-of-place. Accommodating future growth on less land potentially reduces development pressure on these assets.

Higher densities, however, are not appropriate everywhere. For example, stable residential neighbourhoods are fundamental to creating great cities. Vaughan's existing residential neighbourhoods, many of which can accommodate slightly higher densities, should not be destabilized. Therefore, one of the keys to successful city building and



place-making is determining where different densities should occur and ensuring a healthy variety. More importantly, however, a range of densities will provide for a wider range of housing and employment types, thus creating a city that is affordable and accessible to different household types and a diversity of lifestyles. It is this diversity that helps to increase cultural expression and a far more dynamic and engaging City.

Mix of uses

A great urban place often has a combination of places to live, work, and play where people can fulfill most of their needs in one area. This creates a more varied and interesting urban landscape. But it also increases a sense of ownership and investment (both material and emotional) that people have for their community through the amount of time that they spend using the streets, buildings and public spaces.

Past planning and development in Vaughan has focused on large single-purpose and segregated residential communities and employment areas. This has created homogenous developments, often with little sense-of-place. Taken at a city-wide scale, the result is a monotonous collection of single-family homes, low-rise industrial buildings and car-oriented shopping malls.

Such homogeneity is the natural outcome of the large scale and rapid pace of development that has occurred over the last 30 years. However, for Vaughan to transform itself into a great city there needs to be a better mix of uses in both existing and future development projects. One strategy would be to establish a variety of mixed-use centres that support the forecasted growth and allow for housing, jobs, shopping and entertainment to be concentrated in centres of activity. The background paper on Vaughan's urban structure identifies this opportunity including the establishment of a proper downtown district in the Vaughan Corporate Centre.

Another part of the solution, however, is to more subtly expand the range of uses and activities that occur within the existing and future residential areas. The ability to walk to a convenience store for milk should be an option to all Vaughan residents. The ability for children to walk to school is vital as both a place-making and public health objective. The ability to walk to a community centre or local park is a vital component of encouraging greater civic interaction. And the ability for these residential areas to accommodate a



mix of housing types is critical to help break the current uniformity of building design. There are a number of compatible uses that can co-exist within residential areas and still maintain the neighbourhood fabric and stability. The new Official Plan should identify these uses and allow them within new and existing residential areas.

“Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs...If a city’s streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull.”

– Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Great Streets

Great streets are rare in Vaughan, as in most suburban municipalities. Good street design has been trumped by the demands of the automobile. Once the centre of public life, streets have been planned and developed as unceremonious pieces of infrastructure meant to carry traffic to specific points as quickly as possible. Such engineered roadways discard basic principles of street design that are key to defining “community”. Given the lack of attention to pedestrian amenities on many of Vaughan’s roadways, it is no wonder that they have been commonly identified by residents as one of the components of the City that does not work well.

The existing transportation network has not only failed to deliver streets as places, it has failed to improve mobility as commute times have increased and traffic congestion has worsened. The focus for improved transportation and mobility will need to shift from the building of large roads to the promotion of rapid transit solutions. Vaughan is uniquely positioned within the GTA to become a leader in this regard as the VIVA system is improved and the extension of both the Spadina and Yonge Subway into Vaughan are implemented.

This shift in transportation, from road-building to transit solutions, will allow the opportunity to rethink Vaughan’s streets as public spaces and allow them to form an important component of placemaking within the City. Streets are central to placemaking because of the critical role they play in creating a unique community identity, healthy business environment and public space for citizens to use and enjoy. To do this, the Official Plan process should establish a street typology that recognizes the different functions and different potential of Vaughan’s various streets. Some streets, such as Highway 7 will necessarily transform into rapid transit corridors and could become grand boulevards or Avenues. Some have the opportunity to be transformed into proper Main Streets – with active street life and street-level uses



While Vaughan currently lacks great mixed-use streets, its wide roadways provide opportunities for transformation.

– while others, because of existing rear-lot or window street conditions are better transformed into green streets with improved landscaping facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

Regardless of street typology, the common thread is simple: streets need to be transformed to accommodate a variety of users, to function as public spaces, to promote civic activity where possible and to be better designed and more aesthetically pleasing.

Civic Spaces

Civic, or public, spaces are an extension of a city and its various communities – they serve as a stage for public life and interaction. Civic spaces can take on a variety of forms. The new square under construction as a part of Vaughan’s new City Hall is the mostly commonly understood type of civic space. However civic spaces can function at either a City-wide or local scale and they can be either formal or informal spaces.

At the City-wide scale, civic spaces are key nodes of activity where people gather and interact on a regular basis. These centres tend to be municipal and regional destinations with distinct cultural and civic landmarks. Vaughan currently has very few of these places. While the City Hall square will become an important civic space, a variety of public spaces and piazzas need to be planned and designed throughout Vaughan and its various neighbourhoods. Open spaces around community centres and other public buildings (including the reuse of existing surface parking lots) provide the opportunity to create some of these civic spaces. The redesign of portions of neighbourhood parks as more formal civic spaces provides another opportunity, while the creation of courtyards and urban parks can be secured as development occurs.

At the neighbourhood level civic spaces can be as simple as a community bulletin board and as informal as a local street party or celebration at a religious institution. Regardless of form, civic spaces share a common element: they provide opportunities for face-to-face meetings and relationship-building among neighbours. These types of meetings and interactions are key to promoting the expression of culture, inspiring creativity and developing a sense-of-place. The new Official Plan will need to identify opportunities for such spaces and encourage their development, both within new and existing communities.

“Great civic spaces are really great public places. They are recognized and valued in their cities and towns as places with their own special flavor that relate to and nurture the larger community and bring the public together.”

–Project for Public Spaces



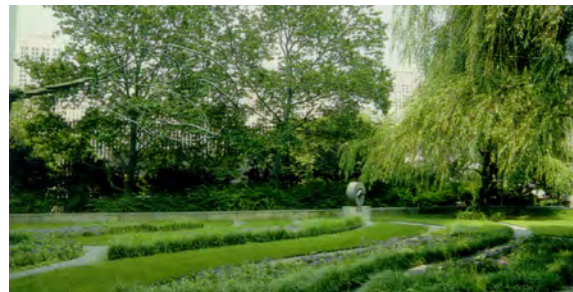
the New Vaughan Civic Centre (under construction)

Artistic/Cultural Expressions

Artistic expressions, both public and private, should make walking through a City's streets and open spaces both pleasant and thought-provoking experience. Art – especially when located in the public realm can contribute to the identity and character of a City or a neighbourhood and the people who live there. Artistic expressions create landmarks, tell stories about places and celebrate the cultural diversity and creativity of a community.

A very simple means of promoting place-making is to encourage artistic expressions in the city of Vaughan through the establishment of policies that promote, support and create funding for public art installations. Public art is a work of art that has been created and executed with the specific intention of being located in the public domain. A public art installation can take many forms. While statues and monuments are the most traditional forms, public art can take other forms and use different media. All types of art should be supported from smaller scale projects to the larger scale.

Building on the Vision 2020 commitment to supporting arts and culture, the new Official Plan should consider establishing a policy framework that secures public art contributions and creates a framework for commissioning, approving and installing public art throughout the city of Vaughan.



Heritage Resources

Heritage buildings and districts create a unique sense-of-place and a rooted sense of local identity. The initial consultation process and the dotmography exercise clearly illustrate that Vaughan citizens greatly value the city's history and the particular historical elements of their specific communities. The fact that the communities of Kleinburg, Woodbridge, Maple and Thornhill are well-known places within a very large city and the fact that each of those communities has a visible and identifiable historic core, speaks volumes to the appreciation of heritage resources within Vaughan. The heritage aspects of each of the communities, and smaller ones such as Purpleville, Nashville and Teston help create a strong sense-of-place within Vaughan and help establish a unique identity for the City.

Despite this appreciation, heritage resources are, and have been, vulnerable within a growing and intensifying city and therefore, they need to be identified and protected, if they are to remain important components of Vaughan's identity. The Official Plan should help to establish appropriate policies that allow for the ongoing identification, preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage resources.



Natural features and the countryside

Great cities understand the importance of natural features such as rivers, valleys and forests and the importance of establishing a sustainable relationship with the rural villages and farms located in the countryside. Many of the world's greatest cities, however, have already been fully built as urban centres and, therefore, rely on regional governments or neighbouring municipalities to create and sustain the natural features and countryside that are so important for both the ecological functioning of the city and place-making. Vaughan is blessed to not be in this situation. It currently possesses an extremely well preserved natural valley system (the Humber Valley is the most prominent feature of Vaughan's landscape), many maintained and protected woodlots and a substantial countryside in the north of the city (much of which is protected through the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine Acts).

Vaughan's natural features and countryside have clearly been identified by residents as some of the most cherished aspects of the city. Capitalizing on these assets and ensuring they remain as significant features of the city's landscape, as we accommodate the forecasted growth and development, can be one of the most powerful place-making elements that will give the city a unique, identifiable and positive image.

Establishing Vaughan as a city where the urban areas, natural areas and rural areas can co-exist and function collaboratively will set it apart as one of the most sustainable cities of the 21st cCentury and one of the best places to live, work or visit. Imagine a city where most residents can walk from their home into a vast system of valleys, rivers and forests. Imagine a city where residents still have access to rural areas and rural amenities. Imagine a city where agricultural lands are valued and local food production is a significant economic activity. These are highly valued objectives that need to be explored in the Official Plan review and established as part of the overall policy framework.



Beauty and design

Enjoying where we live has a lot to do with the aesthetics of our surroundings. At the heart of the theory of place-making is that the physical environment matters. It weighs upon our mental state of well-being, how we interact with others and how we care for our surrounding environment. A good example is the psychological distance of 5 blocks. Two different segments of five blocks, with different architecture and streetscaping, can seem incredibly different in terms of distance, even to the point that one may be inclined to walk one and drive the other. People tend toward walking through places of beauty. If there are points of interest, even fleeting, like interesting signage, store windows, small garden plots, rows of trees, these all add to the enjoyment of a landscape. This type of environment in contrast with a grey, cement walkway, building facades with no windows or parking lots can make the same distance considerably different. However, streetscapes alone, won't draw people out- people also need destinations. Destination points can vary in scale, from a smaller outdoor theatre to a larger scale downtown central park, in Vaughan's new city centre.

Cities are beautiful when citizens and politicians demand that beauty and high-quality design be established as one of the primary objectives for all new developments. They happen because people recognize that beauty is not just an aesthetic overlay, but an essential ingredient of city building and place-making.

The city of Vaughan and private developers will need to work together to demand and ensure that a sense-of-place is established by collectively committing to beauty, high-quality design and excellent architecture. The city will ensure that streets, parks, civic spaces and public buildings are all subject to this high standard. Private developers will also do the same and ensure that their buildings, structures and landscapes support these public places and add to the overall beauty of the city.

There is one essential philosophical criteria for urban design, and it is the notion of “welcome”- the notion that a design welcomes its inhabitant or visitor, through the strange alchemy of imagination and benevolence, through a sense of generosity in the spirit of the artist. Perhaps because the architect loves the citizen. –Pier Giorgio Di Cicco





Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the importance of creating great places in the city building process. Feedback from residents of Vaughan throughout the visioning work for the new Official Plan shows that the City has a number of examples to build upon- the extensive natural heritage systems that bring nature into the urban form and create a beautiful countryside and the historic villages that give people a sense-of-place by maintaining historical features of the past.



Summary of Key Questions

We have also heard from residents that recent development projects have tended to ignore the fundamentals of placemaking, creating areas that discourage walking, that fail to inspire people with beauty and perhaps most importantly, fail to create places where people can gather and meet their neighbours. Moving forward, the new Official Plan presents an opportunity to set out principles that will ensure that, over the next phase of city building, Vaughan will become a city of great places- in neighbourhoods, in the countryside, in its centres- this will be the Vaughan of tomorrow.

This paper has raised a number of questions to be addressed during the Official Plan Work:

- What tools for implementation can better get the public involved in the planning process- for planning how their communities are built?
- How can we better integrate all of our needs into a community (food production, community services, affordable housing opportunities, places to live, work and play?)
- Expression of diverse cultures
- How can we encourage more Public Art?
- Should Vaughan have a central or main park space? Where should it be located? Is the former Keele landfill an appropriate location?
- What kind of overall urban structure best supports place-making in Vaughan?

- How can we look at place from a variety of perspectives? How can we address sometimes competing visions of what place is, what types of amenities are required to make place for a variety of cultural backgrounds, abilities and needs?
- Should a Design Review Panel be established for the City that requires all major developments to undergo a peer review process prior to final approval?
- Where are Vaughan's best opportunities for creating wonderful attractive and interesting places where people will love to gather and share common experiences with their neighbours?
- How can we ensure excellent architecture and design of public spaces?