



**A Vision for Transformation**  
Vaughan Official Plan Discussion Paper

Prepared by Urban Strategies





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## Message from the Official Plan Review Committee Chair

As Chair of the Official Plan Review Committee, my primary goal is to oversee the development of Vaughan's New Official Plan. The Official Plan is part of Vaughan's integrated Growth Management Strategy, known as Vaughan Tomorrow. It will address all elements of effective, sustainable and successful city-building, while managing projected growth to 2031. This document – A Vision for Transformation Discussion Paper - represents the outcome of our first phase visioning process. On behalf of the Official Plan Review Committee and Members of Council, I would like to thank everyone who participated in this process. Our gratitude goes to the many residents who attended the workshops, speaker series, contributed to the documentary as well as the students who produced insightful media pieces. Through this process we were able to form a good understanding of the City of Vaughan and the great place that its residents want to see it become.

### **Peter Meffe**

Official Plan Review Committee Chair

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# Introduction

The City of Vaughan is undertaking an ambitious three-year project to create a new Official Plan. The Official Plan is part of Vaughan's integrated Growth Management Strategy. It will address all elements of effective, sustainable and successful city-building while managing projected growth over the next 25 years. Vaughan's new Official Plan must conform to the Province's Places to Grow legislation and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Growth Plan is a land use policy framework that sets out how regional and local municipalities should plan for development, including standards for higher-density and compact urban growth. 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 document provides an overall Vision, to guide the creation of Vaughan's new Official Plan.





## Visioning Process

The Visioning process, which took place in the first half of 2008, is a key component of the Official Plan process. During this period, a series of public engagement activities and events provided Vaughan's citizens with an opportunity to voice what they see as both opportunities and challenges to managing growth and planning in Vaughan. To better understand Vaughan's opportunities and challenges a series of background papers on key growth issues were produced during the winter/spring of 2008. Background papers address the Provincial Policy Context, Population and Housing, Employment, Sustainability, Urban Structure, City-building and Placemaking, Vaughan's Agriculture, and Natural Heritage.

## Public Engagement

This Plan will only be successful if it is supported by the citizens of Vaughan. Public support and stewardship of the long-term planning of the city will happen only if there is meaningful consultation and engagement from the start of the Official Plan process. Recognizing this, the City of Vaughan has initiated an extensive public engagement strategy in its various communities. The engagement strategy kicked-off in January 2008 with the production of Citizen's Bulletins and a Youth Media Program, followed in the spring by a Public Speaker Series and Visioning Workshops.

## Citizens Bulletins

Each background paper has been summarized in the form of a Citizen's Bulletin and distributed at public consultation events, on the City's website and via email. The Citizen's Bulletins give a general overview of key growth planning issues. Citizen Bulletin's have also been created for the Parks, Recreation and Culture and Heritage master plans. Additional Bulletins on specific key issues will continue to be prepared. These bulletins will be available and distributed throughout the Official Plan process.

# Citizens' Bulletin

OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATES    JULY 2008    ISSUE No.9

**Vaughan Tomorrow**

Vaughan's agricultural land is one of its greatest assets. In the coming years, Vaughan must balance the need to accommodate a growing population and employment base with the need to preserve this valuable, non-renewable resource.

## Agriculture in Vaughan

The City of Vaughan contains some of the most diverse and productive agricultural lands in Canada. Despite having a smaller amount of agricultural land than neighbouring King or Markham, in 1996 Vaughan had the second most economically productive land in the GTA. This is the result of the fortunate combination of a number of natural, geographical, and historical factors.

Approximately 4000 ha of Vaughan's land have a high capability for agriculture. Of this total, 3500 ha are rated as Class 1 under the Canada Land Inventory (CLI), the inventory's highest rating for agricultural land. Vaughan produces a significant amount of high value commodities: greenhouse products, dairy, horse and pony operations, vegetables, and fruit consisting of the top five agricultural products in the city by gross farm receipts.

The contiguous layout of Vaughan's agricultural lands and their proximity to the City of Toronto makes this land much more valuable. In an era of increasingly expensive transportation and rising demand for local, sustainable food, this location is an ever more important asset. Contiguous agricultural land, meanwhile, is more easily converted to different agricultural uses, more likely to avoid some and reduce complexity, and is generally more economically viable than land isolated by other uses.

Highly developed transportation and farm infrastructure are two other factors which make Vaughan's agricultural industry more productive. Access to agricultural markets is ensured by Vaughan's position at the intersection of highways 403, 407 and 427. Farm buildings in the City are well-maintained and are a good indicator of the general state of farm infrastructure in the City. These buildings form an important part of both the economic and cultural landscape of Vaughan today.

# Citizens' Bulletin

OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATES    MAY 2008    ISSUE No.4

## Parks, Recreation, Culture & Libraries

Parks, recreation, culture, and libraries are at the very core of those elements that define the City's quality of life. The City invests in these areas because of the many social, physical, cultural, and economic benefits derived from civic participation and its assets in building healthy communities. Some potential benefits include:

- promoting active living and the healthy physical, social, and educational development of all ages
- creating social integration opportunities for people of all ages, including new Canadians, at-risk populations, persons with disabilities, children, and neighbourhoods
- enhancing awareness and appreciation of the environment
- encouraging lifelong learning and information

contributing to economic development.

In the last few years the City has made extensive improvements to its recreational and library infrastructure, including the development of the Village Village Community Centre, Pierre Bureau Recreation Library and Vaughan Green Sports Park, to name a few. Planning is also underway for several new parks, a community centre in Carleton Place, and the Civic Centre Library. The City has seen registration in its recreational programs (club) to over 145,000 a year, while more than 80,000 participate in library programs – and these numbers are growing every year!

# Citizens' Bulletin

OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATES    APRIL 2008    ISSUE No.3

**Vaughan Tomorrow**

The City of Vaughan is undertaking an ambitious three-year project to create a new Official Plan. The Official Plan is part of Vaughan's integrated Growth Management Strategy. It will address all elements of effective, sustainable and successful city-building while managing projected growth over the next 25 years.

## Population & Housing

Vaughan's new Official Plan must conform with the province's Plan of Growth legislation. Plan or Grow is a land use policy framework that sets policies on how regional and local municipalities or the Greater Golden Horseshoe should plan for development including thresholds for higher-density and compact urban growth. To achieve these standards, the City will need to understand the population and housing trends in Vaughan.

# Citizens' Bulletin

OFFICIAL PLAN UPDATES    OCT 2008    ISSUE No.8

## City Building & Placemaking

The new Vaughan Official Plan will emphasize placemaking in the city-building process, over the next 25 years. 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 great streets, parks and squares that invite you to gather and socialize; great architecture and design that inspires you and creates a positive image; great public art that delights and engages the soul of a City; great natural landscapes that make you feel connected to the environment; and great buildings – old and new – that create unique neighbourhoods and a sense of place.

The current state of places in Vaughan

During the Winter and Spring of 2008, Vaughan's residents were asked to identify places that they liked and didn't like through a series of public consultation events held in each of the five communities.

**Places that people like** People have a strong connection to the natural heritage of Vaughan, especially the Humber River, Don River, and protected woodlands. In particular, points of access to these natural features, such as the McMichael Gallery, the Kerridge Centre and the Humber River Trail in Woodbridge. The historic villages of Woodbridge, Kleinburg and Thornhill were also places that people liked for the range of shops, historic architecture, sense of community, and proximity to city-wide and regional destinations.

**Places that people dislike** The most unpopular locations in Vaughan were intersections along Highway 7, characterized by single purpose, large retail stores (Highway 403 and Jane Street), Vaughan Mills Mall, and Calumet Metro Station. This doesn't mean that people don't enjoy shopping or taking a train, but rather it highlights the importance of how these places are designed. Placemaking is so much about how we sit above the beauty or aesthetics of a place. All of these places have a number of common elements that are not out of reach for pedestrian, clearly dominated by automobiles and the environment lacks general good design and beauty.

VAUGHAN TOMORROW 6



## Public Speaker Series

The Public Speaker Series took place at the Vellore Village Community Centre over three evenings in the spring of 2008. Open to the public, over 200 people attended panel sessions that brought together experts to speak on the topics of sustainability, placemaking, and Vaughan as a 21st century city.

The speaker series began with **Defining a Sustainable Future**, exploring the meaning of Sustainable Community Design and its implications for the growth and development of Vaughan. Speakers provided examples of sustainable community actions that can be taken within Vaughan to promote sustainability. Pamela Robinson (Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation), George Dark (Urban Strategies, Evergreen Foundation) and James Micak (DPRA, Vaughan Environmental Master Plan) highlighted the unique relationship between the city and countryside. Some of the questions posed were: what if Vaughan was to become known as the “Headwaters of Lake Ontario”? Can Vaughan harness the potential of its agricultural lands to supply local food at farmers markets and in stores? How can Vaughan better integrate its natural heritage features like the Oak Ridges Moraine and Humber and Don Valley Rivers into future planning?

The next panel presentation focused on **The Importance of City Building and Place Making**, exploring the characteristics of successful urban places. Speakers drew upon their experiences

to highlight examples of successful placemaking initiatives that could be carried out in Vaughan. Gil Panelosa (Walk & Bike for Life, Project for Public Spaces) discussed how creating bike-friendly cities can create more people-friendly places. Mark Lakeman (City Repair Project) showed community-initiated placemaking projects in Portland Oregon where residents remade local intersections into community meeting places and built benches and tea trolleys for neighbours to enjoy. Greg Weimerskirch (Urban Design Associates) talked about specific design features that can create better places such as putting garages in the back of houses (on laneways), the orientation of building faces, and the importance of human scale in creating walkable environments. Catherine O'Brien (Cape Breton University) made the important point that by creating cities that are child-friendly, we are creating cities that are accessible to everyone.

The final presentation explored **Vaughan as a 21st Century City**. Roger Keil (York University City Institute) and Mark Kingwell (University of Toronto) discussed the major transformations taking place in the overall region and the impact on Vaughan's urban structure. They also highlighted how the Official Plan could help to improve the quality of life for Vaughan's residents, ensuring that the city is socially just with a range of housing, transit options and culturally-specific infrastructure. Greg Baeker (Euclid Canada) talked about the importance of having a cultural infrastructure to support creativity in the city and the importance of the city having a 'soul'.



Compilation of dotmography maps used at the Visioning Workshops and at the Be Heard! Take Action! Youth Conference



### Community Visioning Workshops

Following the Public Speaker Series, five **Community Visioning Workshops** were held in each of Vaughan's existing communities: Woodbridge, Thornhill, Concord, Maple and Kleinburg. Each visioning workshop began with a presentation overview of the new provincial policy legislation and what this means for future growth planning in Vaughan. Each workshop was tailored to the individual community, focusing on the specific history of growth in their area and recent municipal initiatives that will have an impact on their communities. This was followed by a workshop wherein feedback was solicited from every person in the room on these issues. All comments were recorded and have helped to form this Vision. At each workshop, a large map of Vaughan was used to

facilitate a dotmography exercise. Workshop participants were given coloured dots and asked to place them on their home, places they like and places that they dislike. The purpose of the exercise was to get an understanding of what places people liked in Vaughan and what places need improvement. By the end of the workshops one map was created that gives a sense of what is working and what isn't working in Vaughan. Based on the maps and discussions of the workshops, it is evident that people have a strong connection to the natural heritage of Vaughan, especially the Humber River and Don River systems, protected woodlots and historic villages. Unpopular places tend to be characterized by single purpose, large retail stores and intersections along Highway 7 that are dominated by heavy truck traffic with little or no pedestrian amenity.



### Vaughan Tomorrow Documentary

Accompanying the Vision document is the documentary *Vaughan Tomorrow: Voices for Transformation*. This documentary captures the current conditions in Vaughan today, showing the diversity of cultures, landscapes and activities that take place in communities across the city. The documentary is also a call for citizens in Vaughan to be aware of the challenges that Vaughan is facing and will continue to face unless we make changes in the way that we plan and develop suburban cities. The documentary will be made widely available for distribution.

### Youth Engagement

Meaningful engagement with youth is a key component of the City's Vision 2020. Vaughan was the first municipality in Canada to appoint a Youth Councillor and has an active Youth Cabinet. So far the Official Plan has involved three high schools from across Vaughan: Vaughan Secondary School, Holy Cross Secondary School, and Stephen Lewis Secondary School.

Workshops were conducted in communications and technology classes in each of these schools, focusing on understanding the Growth Plan, the types of community change expected, and the sorts of changes students would like to see in the future. Classes produced a range of media pieces exploring workshop topics further; including a radio documentary interview, short films and posters addressing issues and opportunities in their communities.

Students were also invited to participate in the Be Heard Symposium, hosted by the Vaughan Youth Cabinet, that took place at the Vellore Community Centre in spring 2008. A video from Vaughan Secondary School was screened at the conference. As well, the participants had a booth to showcase the rest of their work. Throughout this process the Vaughan Youth Cabinet was closely consulted with to create the engagement program. Student work from the Youth Engagement program can be viewed on the Vaughan Tomorrow website [www.vaughantomorrow.ca](http://www.vaughantomorrow.ca).





## Where We Are Today

Long before Vaughan was constituted as a Township, Town and then a City, it was home to First Nations peoples who camped, fished, hunted and farmed along the Humber and Don rivers. In the 19th century, European settlers established a number of villages within the city's current boundaries, four of which have survived as distinct communities - Thornhill, Maple, Woodbridge and Kleinburg/Nashville. By 1880, these villages had become clearly defined communities that supported and serviced vast agricultural areas. Each village contained homes, businesses, churches and other places for congregating, in close proximity to one another. Those villages and associated countryside remained relatively stable for over 100 years while the Town of York to the south grew into the City of Toronto. A lack of servicing (water and sewers) limited the amount of growth in Vaughan and contained it within the four villages. By 1971, when Vaughan was formally incorporated as a municipality, more than 90% of Vaughan was still rural.

The York-Durham Sewer System lay the groundwork for an explosion of growth in the newly incorporated Town of Vaughan. With Toronto built-out and the provision of water and sewer services, population in Vaughan exploded, growing from 15,000 in 1971 to over 100,000 in 1991. That year, the Town of Vaughan became the City of Vaughan. It has continued to undergo significant growth and has transformed, in a very short time, from a collection of rural villages and countryside into one of Ontario's largest cities. Vaughan has been one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada in terms of both population and job growth; over 200,000 people and almost 150,000 jobs came to Vaughan in about 30 years. It is now a major City within a growing Region. Today, Vaughan has a population of 250,000 with a forecast of 420,000 by 2031 and employment of 162,000 with a forecast of 276,000 by 2031. With 170,000 more people and 114,000 more jobs forecast, we are at a critical moment in Vaughan's history and in an exciting position to determine where and how we accommodate this growth. Central to this Official Plan process will be setting out land use principles that manage growth in a way that is sustainable, equitable, affordable and culturally-appropriate to a growing and diverse population.

Vaughan is full of great places and significant assets. Many of these were highlighted by citizens at the Visioning Workshops – natural features, Humber Valley, countryside, village cores, heritage resources, active and engaged citizens. However, the intensity and speed of growth over a short period of time has also created a number of issues that need to be addressed urgently:

- The countryside is being rapidly consumed.
- New developments in the City consist of large and segregated single-use areas.
- Newer neighbourhoods exhibit a uniformity of design and lack diversity in type and tenure of housing.
- Mobility in Vaughan is almost entirely dependent on cars.
- There exist few great civic spaces that provide opportunities for social interaction and the architecture is generally uninspiring.
- The cost of housing is rising while housing types and tenures remain limited.

This pattern of development, typical of suburban areas over the past 30 years, is not sustainable. Looking globally, this way of living contributes to global warming and the overconsumption of the planet's resources. Locally, this pattern of development has resulted in traffic congestion, increasing commute times, inefficient management of municipal infrastructure, and a significant loss of agricultural lands. Recognizing the seriousness of this situation, all levels of government have actively initiated programs and measures to reverse this pattern.

**“At the city-level of government, Vaughan Council has established the concept of “sustainability” as the main driving force for future municipal decisions through the City of Vaughan Strategic Plan 2020...”**

At the Provincial level, the Government has mandated changes to this development pattern and created a series of policy initiatives that will help municipalities plan for and achieve more efficient and sustainable land use. These initiatives include: The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2001) and Greenbelt Plan (2005), The Provincial Policy Statements (2005), The Places to Grow Act (2005) The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006), and the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan (2008). Together, these plans give municipalities a framework within which to plan for communities that are more pedestrian-friendly, require less commute times, create a stronger relationship between urban areas and natural heritage and both strengthen and build upon existing public infrastructure. In addition to guiding growth in urban areas, the Provincial legislation also sets out protective measures to preserve and enhance the natural and agricultural features of the Greater Golden Horseshoe through protection of the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine, both of which are a significant part of Vaughan's landscape.

At the city-level of government, Vaughan Council has established the concept of “Sustainability” as the main driving force for future municipal decisions through the City of Vaughan Strategic Plan 2020. A new Environmental Master Plan (EMP) will be part of the Vaughan Tomorrow Growth Management Strategy. The EMP will establish principles for sustainability that touch on all areas of the City’s responsibility. These principles will guide decision making across the City and will define what actions the Corporation of the City of Vaughan can take to become a more sustainable entity. The new Official Plan is another key municipal tool to establish policies for how land is used in the city in a sustainable manner.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, it is clear that the citizens of Vaughan are demanding change in the way that we build our city. Over the course of the public events in the winter and spring of 2008, we heard about the importance of the natural and architectural heritage of Vaughan in the cultivation of local identity. We heard time and time again that monolithic sprawl in the form of big-box shopping malls and poorly designed residential areas needs to be re-thought. Local food production, sourcing and promotion was high on the list of priorities in each of the communities, along with a deep appreciation for the beautiful natural heritage features (the Don and Humber Rivers, Oak Ridges Moraine) of Vaughan. Traffic congestion and commute times were linked to poor public transit infrastructure and long distances between amenities, home and work. But, it was clear that many of the amenities in Vaughan such as parks, recreation facilities, libraries and schools are of high quality.

The foundation for a great City of Vaughan is in place. This Vision document builds on this foundation and presents principles and directions to manage future growth while also addressing issues created by past development.

## Vaughan Vision 2020

A city of choice that promotes diversity, innovation and opportunity for all citizens, fostering a vibrant community life that is inclusive, progressive, environmentally responsible and sustainable

### Lead & Promote Environmental Sustainability

To preserve, protect and enhance Vaughan’s natural and built environment through responsible leadership and innovative policies, practices and education

-Vaughan Vision 2020



# Vaughan Tomorrow

## A Vision for Transformation

The past 30 years have seen the City of Vaughan transform from a series of agricultural villages in the rural countryside of the Greater Toronto Area to one of the largest suburban municipalities and most rapidly growing economies in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The issues created by this period of growth and change now demand a second “transformation”- this time from a 20th century suburban municipality to a vibrant and sustainable 21st century city situated at the geographic centre of Canada’s largest regional economy.

We have heard clearly from citizens and experts that what we've done in the past isn't good enough - we need a new urban model to structure our City and the growth that will happen in it. The vision forwarded by the citizens of Vaughan is a vision of improvement, it is a vision of sustainability, and it is a vision of change.

The next thirty years will, therefore, be driven by a vision of transformation – shifting Vaughan from a 20th Century suburb to a vibrant and sustainable 21st Century City. The Vaughan of tomorrow will be one of the leading cities within the multi-centred Greater Golden Horseshoe. Vaughan will no longer be defined as the “City above Toronto” but as the most vibrant, green and sustainable municipality in the GGH. It will be an example of how to build a great city and how to achieve the objectives of the new Provincial Planning Framework.

The seeds of this transformation are already underway:



**Greenbelt lands have been protected**  
Just over 5300ha, or 58% of Vaughan's countryside lands have now been protected by the Provincial Greenbelt Act.



**Public transit is rapidly advancing**  
York Region Transit now carries 55,000 people per day, and the addition of Viva Rapid Transit has expanded its capacity tremendously. Likewise, Go Transit is improving and increasing its service. With the coming of two subway lines at least four subway stations. Vaughan is positioned to become a major transit city.



**Examples of good mixed-use developments are taking shape**

Woodbridge Core, Kleinburg, Thornhill and Maple contain excellent examples of mixed use, medium density neighbourhoods with retail at grade and residential above.



**Civic Spaces are becoming a priority**

Adding to a history of great places in Vaughan's historic village centres, the creation of a lively, attractive public space at the new the Vaughan Civic Centre signals a sea change in Vaughan's treatment of civic spaces throughout the city.



**Employment remains strong**

One of the country's strongest industrial powerhouses, employment in Vaughan tripled between 1986 and 2006. Our challenge is to build a diverse economic future from this robust industrial base; expanding the types of economic opportunities available in Vaughan and better matching employment and residents should be a priority.



**Diversity is taking shape**

As Vaughan grows, its people and its places are rapidly diversifying. From the original rural villages to the new communities of the Ahmadiyya Peace Village and Vellore Village, Vaughan is truly embracing a bright multicultural future.



### **Our heritage is valued**

The preservation of Vaughan's cultural heritage in the historic village centres is a priority for the citizens of Vaughan; this prioritization is reflected in historical preservation efforts in the Thornhill Heritage District, Woodbridge Heritage District and elsewhere.



### **Citizens are becoming engaged**

Over the course of the Vaughan Tomorrow process, Vaughan's citizens demonstrated their passion for their city and their desire for change: youth voiced their concerns strongly through the Youth Media Project and Be Heard Symposium!, while over 300 attendees of all ages spoke out at the Public Speaker Series and Community Visioning Workshops.



### **Nature and Countryside have been identified as assets**

Citizens at the Community Visioning Workshops indicated a strong appreciation for natural features, such as the Humber and Don River watershed areas, as well as a clear inclination to preserve the agricultural countryside.



### **Sustainability has become our mantra**

The process of change that the City of Vaughan has embarked upon under the umbrella of Vaughan Tomorrow is largely guided by a single principle: sustainability. Social, economic, and environmental sustainability are the drivers behind the Environmental Master Plan, Vision 20/20 and the Official Plan Review.



The Vision for Transformation needs to build on these initiatives and establish principles and directions that protect and strengthen what is important, change what isn't working well, and create new places that are vibrant, beautiful and diverse.

**The Vaughan Tomorrow Vision for Transformation is based on the following 8 themes:**

1. A Vision for **strong and diverse neighbourhoods**
2. A Vision for **a robust and prominent countryside**
3. A Vision for **a diverse economy**
4. A Vision for **a vibrant and thriving downtown**
5. A Vision for **moving around without a car**
6. A Vision for **design excellence and memorable places**
7. A Vision for **a green and sustainable city**
8. A Vision for **directing growth**

The themes and related Principles and Directions are to be supported by an urban structure that directs growth and development to the right places; protecting Vaughan's neighbourhoods, natural heritage and countryside, while supporting a diverse and flourishing economy.

Vaughan's new Official Plan will direct future growth and development to specific and appropriate locations. Based on background studies and extensive public consultation, the consultant team is now engaged in a Capacity Analysis to test Vaughan's urban structure for barriers and opportunities to the implementation of this Vision. Locations for future growth will be identified through careful study of Vaughan's current land supply, trends in future demand for various types of land uses and an understanding of the ecological, agricultural and cultural importance of remaining undeveloped lands. In the fall of 2008, public workshops will be held to discuss the urban structure resulting from the Capacity Analysis. Public feedback will then be incorporated into a final proposed urban structure, to be published in a report entitled "Where and How to Grow" during the spring of 2009.



# **Vision** **Principles &** **Directions**

This section outlines the principles and directions that make up the Vision for Transformation and describes the process through which a new urban structure will be developed.

## 1 A Vision for Strong and Diverse Neighbourhoods

A city's residential neighbourhoods are among its most important assets. Stable neighbourhoods are places families inhabit for generations. They are settings where people interact with one another on a daily basis, forging civic bonds and personal ties – becoming neighbours. An assortment of established neighbourhoods is crucial to house the diversity of workers necessary for a thriving economy. Moreover, distinct and diverse neighbourhoods can be attractions in themselves, making the city a more exciting place to live and visit.

Functioning neighbourhoods are more than simply a collection of houses. At their best they contain schools, parks, natural features and community facilities, places to purchase household necessities, local diners, corner pubs, and lively public spaces. Great neighbourhoods are places where the organization of these services and amenities encourages community interaction, by bringing neighbours into more frequent contact in welcoming spaces that encourage conversation.

Vaughan currently consists of 4 existing residential neighbourhoods (Woodbridge, Kleinburg, Maple and Thornhill/Concord) and three developing residential neighbourhoods (Vellore, Carrville and Nashville). These residential neighbourhoods consist mainly of low-rise and low-density single-family houses although pockets of mid-rise multiple-family housing exist in each of the areas. In addition, Thornhill also has a significant component of high-rise buildings.

Almost all residential buildings in Vaughan are contained within these residential neighbourhoods. However a growing number of residential buildings are starting to be developed in other locations (e.g., along Avenue 7 and at Jane/Rutherford) and future residential uses are planned for mixed-use Centres (e.g., The Vaughan Corporate Centre, Steeles Corridor).



**The principles and directions below seek to protect existing residential neighbourhoods, direct well designed, context-sensitive growth to strictly delimited areas, and provide for a wider range of housing choices and a full range of community services and amenities.**

- 1.1 Vaughan's residential neighbourhoods are predominantly stable areas where the primary use will be a variety of low-rise housing forms.
- 1.2 Specific locations within residential neighbourhoods can be identified for mid-rise housing forms. High-rise housing forms will be limited to the edges of residential neighbourhoods on main corridors well-served by transit.
- 1.3 New development within existing residential neighbourhoods should be limited to infill opportunities that seek to maintain the character of the surrounding areas, although higher densities than currently exist are encouraged.
- 1.4 A wider diversity of housing opportunities, in terms of form, tenure and affordability, should be sought within residential neighbourhoods, such as secondary suites and live/work units.
- 1.5 Uses compatible with housing should be permitted throughout residential neighbourhoods. Such uses include schools, daycares, community services, small-scale convenience retail and restaurants, and live-work opportunities.
- 1.6 All residents in Vaughan should be a 15 minute walk from a park or trail, public transit and a convenience store.
- 1.7 Community centres should evolve as civic spaces and community hubs within neighbourhoods. Centres should include indoor and outdoor spaces that provide a broad range of uses including, recreational, residential, commercial, social and city services.
- 1.8 Vaughan's diverse cultures should be recognized and supported through the creation of new types of cultural centres and open spaces that respond to a range of cultural needs.
- 1.9 The new Official Plan should establish policies under Section 37 of the Planning Act that would allow for increases in height and density in exchange for contributions such as affordable housing, community services, cultural and public realm improvements.

## What if...

Vaughan were to become a model for the provision of a diverse range of housing choices, providing the ability for every person who works in Vaughan to live in Vaughan?

## 2 A Vision for a Robust and Prominent Countryside

Despite an incredible scale and pace of growth, the City of Vaughan still has a considerable amount of countryside remaining within its municipal boundaries. A significant amount of this land is protected in valley and stream corridors and Greenbelt areas, including the Oak Ridges Moraine lands. Other portions of these lands are developable, but such development must be balanced with appropriate forms of protection for natural and agricultural lands and the promotion of the countryside as an important municipal asset. Therefore, in developing the Official Plan, careful attention must be paid to the natural and agricultural features of the countryside in order to establish the appropriate role for these areas within the overall urban structure.

Ensuring a prominent and accessible countryside within Vaughan's urban structure will allow Vaughan's citizens to realize the many benefits of such a close association with this land. Beyond food production and wildlife habitat, the countryside provides a number of valuable services. Forests and riparian corridors clean toxins from the water supply, slow storm water and provide flood protection. Vegetation filters pollutants from the atmosphere; an average hectare of corn, for example, absorbs 22 tons of carbon dioxide per year. Additionally, the countryside provides a wide range of opportunities for passive and active recreation, from cross country skiing to bird watching. Pastoral landscapes offer aesthetic benefits to residents and visitors. All of these countryside functions can be leveraged to support Vaughan's economy.

Indeed, promoting the countryside requires ensuring that it has a strong, diverse and thriving economy. While the primary functions of the Countryside will remain environmental and agricultural, Countryside functions should be bolstered by a wide range of supporting uses both within the countryside, such as on-farm businesses and energy generation, as well as elsewhere within the urban structure, including farmer's markets and supporting infrastructure for locally-grown food.



**Together, the principles and directions below outline a vision for a prominent and accessible countryside supported by a variety of economic functions.**

- 2.1 The City of Vaughan recognizes the importance of protecting its countryside features, including its natural heritage features, as part of a balanced, overall development plan.
- 2.2 The City of Vaughan’s overall urban structure will ensure that it remains a place where the transition from urban to countryside occurs within its municipal boundaries. This transition implies protecting countryside areas within Vaughan and ensuring an appropriate transition of development intensities.
- 2.3 The new Official Plan should contain a Countryside designation that applies to protected valley corridors, Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine, other significant natural features, cultural resources and agricultural lands not required to accommodate the growth forecasts to 2031. The main function of the Countryside designation(s) is to provide for a land base that serves an environmental and agricultural function.
- 2.4 The new Official Plan will define the Countryside designation so as to allow for a broad range of uses that support the overall main function of this area. These uses could include renewable energy generation, small-scale commercial opportunities, tourism, recreation and educational opportunities, to be carried out in a sustainable manner.
- 2.5 Countryside functions will be supported by a range of other uses and municipal actions within other areas of Vaughan. These can include farmer’s markets and supporting infrastructure for locally-grown food, marketing opportunities for major countryside activities and coordinating activities with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

**What if...**

by 2031, Vaughan’s countryside was fully protected and accessible. On a sunny September afternoon you could take a short bus trip from the Vaughan Centre to enjoy a leisurely bike ride through the countryside, past graceful windmills pumping clean electricity to Ontario homes, by fields full of fruits and vegetables ready for harvest and sale at local markets and down through a peaceful stretch of the Humber River Valley trail system, before catching a bus back downtown for dinner.

### 3 A Vision for a Diverse Economy

Vaughan is one of the most successful municipalities in the country in terms of job creation. Employment in the City tripled between 1986 and 2006 from 54,600 jobs to 152,700 jobs and while other municipalities have struggled to maintain manufacturing jobs, Vaughan has become an industrial powerhouse. This incredibly strong industrial foundation can be built upon to create a diverse economic future.

Despite Vaughan's tremendous economic success, a number of weaknesses in the current economic base exist and need to be addressed. First, Vaughan is not currently competitive in the attraction of major office uses and is under-represented in terms of research, health and education employment. Second, most of the employment in Vaughan is found in employment lands and there is almost no concentration of major offices or employment in mixed-use centres, or near transit facilities. Finally, the jobs in Vaughan are not well matched with the residential population and therefore most people living in Vaughan still need to leave the City for work and many people working in Vaughan cannot afford to live in the City.

With regard to retail, Vaughan appears to be "over-retailed" as it has a higher-than-average proportion of jobs in the retail sector in comparison to other GTA municipalities. While retail employment is important, it is generally understood as a population-serving function that does not bring in new wealth in the same ways as other employment. Therefore, as part of a comprehensive economic growth and land-use strategy, retail uses should not diminish the land supply otherwise available for other forms of economic functions.

In the past 30 years, Vaughan has shown an incredible ability to build and strengthen its industrial economy. In the next 30 years, Vaughan must apply the same foresight and determination to the progressive restructuring of its economic base.





**The following principles and directions present a vision for establishing a healthy, balanced and diverse economy in the City of Vaughan, both on Employment Lands and elsewhere throughout the urban fabric.**

- 3.1 Vaughan will endeavor to diversify its economic base in order to support a wide range of employment opportunities in the long term. Future land-use planning decisions should support this overall objective of economic diversification.
- 3.2 Vaughan will continue to support and promote its industrial economic base, by ensuring that its designated Employment Lands are primarily used for the purposes of manufacturing, warehousing, shipping and some related office and servicing functions.
- 3.3 Major office uses within designated Employment Lands will be limited. Such uses should instead be directed towards the Vaughan Corporate Centre, Steeles Corridor and other mixed-use centres and/or corridors with good transit accessibility.
- 3.4 New major single-purpose retail developments are not encouraged. Rather, major retail uses should help establish, anchor and support mixed-use centres and communities. They should not be permitted within designated Employment Lands.
- 3.5 All people working in Vaughan should have the ability to live in Vaughan through the provision of a range of affordable housing options.
- 3.6 The new medical /health care centre development should be leveraged to help create a wide variety of related jobs in health care, health research, education and related industries. This facility should be linked to the future medical faculty at York University.
- 3.7 The presence of York University at the boundary of Vaughan and the Steeles Corridor should be leveraged to help create a wide variety of education related employment opportunities in the City in general and within the Steeles Corridor in particular.
- 3.8 Countryside features, ecological, agricultural and cultural, should be viewed as economic assets. As such, the countryside should be leveraged to create a range of appropriate economic opportunities in education, tourism, recreation, and agriculture.

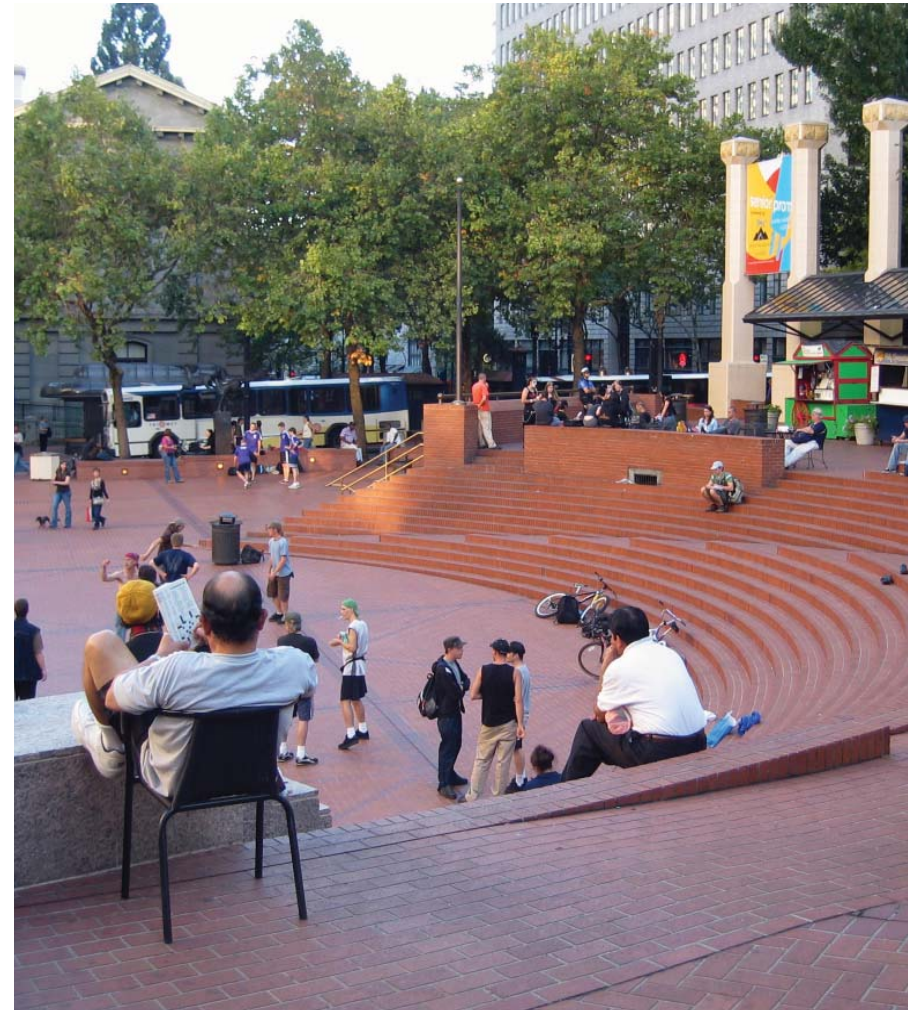
**What if...**

Vaughan concentrated its efforts on developing a medical education and research cluster centered on the development of the new hospital? This cluster, developed alongside the Vaughan Employment Lands, Vaughan Centre, Steeles Avenue Corridor, York University, and Small Farm Enterprise Zone, could make Vaughan renowned for its diverse economy and job base.

## 4 A Vision for a Vibrant and Thriving Downtown

A city's downtown is the masthead of its identity. For citizens the downtown area should become a gathering place - a place to work, shop, recreate; a place to demonstrate, learn, and invent. In short, the downtown should be a "place", a recognizable and special place at the heart of the city. The success of a downtown is part planning, part design, part programming and part magic- the magic comes from the investment of its citizenry. It needs to have streets that invite walking, uses that invite people at all times of day and night, for a full range of ages, abilities and cultures. It should be accessible locally and regionally.

The growth and development of Vaughan around four historic villages has meant that it does not currently have a central downtown to serve the entire City. The Vaughan Civic Centre and the four historic village cores partially contain functions associated with traditional downtowns but there is no one place in Vaughan that brings these various elements together. The Vaughan Corporate Centre has long been planned to become a major mixed-use centre with a concentration of high-density employment and housing. The development that has occurred there to date has consisted of mostly low-density retail, entertainment, hotel and industrial uses. Recognizing its location along the Highway 7 rapid transit corridor and at the terminus of the planned Spadina Subway Line extension, the Province has identified the Vaughan Corporate Centre as a provincially designated Urban Growth Centre. The Vaughan Corporate Centre is poised to become the highest density node within the City; it should be renamed Vaughan Centre and be planned as Vaughan's downtown – a vibrant and thriving focus of social activities, business, shopping and entertainment.



**The principles and directions below seek to shape Vaughan Corporate Centre into a vibrant, mixed use city-wide and regional hub.**

- 4.1 The Vaughan Corporate Centre should be renamed.
- 4.2 The Vaughan Corporate Centre should be developed as a thriving mixed-use community with a special focus on social and cultural activities and significant public and civic spaces such that it gives the City a positive recognizable identity. The mix of jobs and residents in the Vaughan Corporate Centre should be approximately equal, with slightly more residents than jobs.
- 4.3 All proposals for major offices in Vaughan should be encouraged to investigate locating in the Vaughan Corporate Centre prior to looking at other locations.
- 4.4 All proposals for significant investment in government offices or institutions in the Greater Toronto Area – including Regional, Provincial and Federal – should be encouraged to consider locating in the Vaughan Corporate Centre.
- 4.5 Special urban design policies should be established for the Vaughan Corporate Centre in recognition of its special function within the City and need to create a positive recognizable identity. A Design Review Panel for the Vaughan Corporate Centre should be established as a pilot project prior to launching a City-wide Panel.
- 4.6 The Vaughan Corporate Centre should be the showcase for Green City initiatives throughout the municipality. Initiatives could include a district energy facility, green development standards, and demonstration projects showcasing green technology such as green roofs, permeable paving, and renewable energy.
- 4.7 A municipal parking authority should be created to ensure parking standards that support the goals of increasing transit ridership, and creating beautiful, safe, and functional City streets.

**What if...**

a district energy facility powered by a renewable energy source heated all of the buildings in Vaughan Corporate Centre at a fraction of the cost of conventional heating and served as a symbol of the city's commitment to environmental and financial sustainability.

## 5 A Vision for Moving Around without a Car

The option to move around both city-wide and regionally, by foot, bicycle, and public transit are becoming more and more critical as the public becomes aware of environmental and health concerns. Reducing car traffic creates cleaner air and more enjoyable streets. However, people will continue to drive cars until there are more viable transportation options. Cities that don't require a car to move around have a number of common features including, a mix of uses within close proximity to one another so people can walk or bike from one location to the next; a comprehensive and reliable public transit infrastructure that reduces car dependency; well-designed streetscapes that encourage walking and biking. Reducing auto-dependency will have a positive impact on the environment, counteract obesity and increase the overall quality of life for Vaughan's citizens.

The existing pattern of development in Vaughan has created a car-dependent culture. The combination of low-density development, segregated land uses and roadways that have been designed for cars and few other users, has resulted in an environment which is not supportive of alternative modes of travel. The lack of a pedestrian-scaled grid system and the restriction of street connections to major roadways has meant that even short-distance trips need to be made by car as there is an inability to access commercial uses adjacent to residential developments. It has become clear that this reliance on the automobile is not sustainable. Furthermore, it has isolated a large part of the population who are unable to drive or do not have access to cars on a regular basis.

The Spadina subway extension, the VIVA network system and increased GO service will provide a strong foundation for Vaughan's public transit infrastructure. The new Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan is also an important step in this direction, making clear that the current state of auto-dependency needs to be addressed and changed.



**The principles and directions below seek to encourage ongoing commitment and investment into alternative modes of transportation.**

- 5.1 Encourage continued investment by the Regional, Provincial and Federal Governments into high-quality rapid transit as the primary element of the future transportation network for Vaughan.
- 5.2 Ensure transit-supportive densities along existing and planned transit corridors and stations in order to make efficient use of these investments. Minimum densities should be developed in these locations in order to ensure this objective is achieved.
- 5.3 Implement a comprehensive City-wide cycling network to support cycling for daily commutes and recreational opportunities, especially connections with the countryside.
- 5.4 Ensure all new streets and the redesign of existing streets create a balanced streetscape that supports the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, transit vehicles and automobiles. Where conflicts arise, the needs of pedestrians and transit vehicles should have priority.
- 5.5 Small-scale commercial activities should be encouraged to locate within the major block system of Vaughan as a means of making them more accessible. The ability for people to walk for daily necessities will be an important objective in future planning decisions.
- 5.6 New developments need to support a finer grained street network than currently exists. This includes both a more typical grid pattern of development within blocks and a multitude of street connections onto the major roadways.

**What if...**

Vaughan were to increase transit ridership by 40% by the year 2031?

## 6 A Vision for Design Excellence and Memorable Places

Great cities have beautiful streets, parks and squares that invite you to gather and socialize; architecture and design that inspires you and creates a positive image; public art that delights and captures the soul of the City; natural landscapes that make you feel connected to the environment; and buildings- old and new- that create unique neighbourhoods and a sense-of-place. Great places can be as small as a local parkette and as big as a city centre, together they make a great city.

Vaughan has a number of remarkable assets that define it as a place. The two Valley corridors – especially the Humber Valley which plays such a dominant role in the City's landscape – are the most often identified placemaking features in Vaughan. The remaining Countryside and related small settlements (such as Purpleville) are other important features that help give Vaughan a positive identity. With regards to the built areas of the City, the historic village cores and the parks and community centres are well-respected places .

Unfortunately much of the recently developed landscape is devoid of placemaking attributes. While people in Vaughan cherish their residential neighbourhoods they also understand that the City as a whole has not had the opportunity or time to develop the various attributes that make wonderful built landscapes. There is no downtown, there are not enough civic spaces, there need to be more facilities for arts and culture, there needs to be more beauty in general. Cities take time to develop a sense of place. Vaughan has grown rapidly and, therefore, most city building initiatives have focused on developing the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate growth. The next phase of city building, however, will need to focus on placemaking.



**The principles and directions below seek to guide the creation of great places and protect and support existing great places.**

- 6.1 The new Official Plan should contain urban design policies and specific principles to achieve design excellence for all new buildings and site plans.
- 6.2 The new Official Plan should contain policies regarding the public realm that provide specific principles to be achieved by all new developments with regard to creating remarkable public spaces.
- 6.3 The new Official Plan should explore a Design Review Panel as a mechanism for achieving great architecture and design.
- 6.4 Policies regarding the development of public art for all new developments should be established within the Official Plan.
- 6.5 The new Official Plan should support the protection and promotion of heritage properties throughout the City.
- 6.6 The new Official Plan should contain policies supporting the development of arts and cultural institutions within the City.

**What if...**

Vaughan became recognized regionally for its city-wide public art program?

## 7 A Vision for a Green and Sustainable City

Sustainable community design is not a new or radical idea- it is, in fact, more connected to the traditional way of organizing a community and is evident in the vestiges of the four original villages that have grown to become Vaughan: Maple, Woodbridge, Thornhill and Kleinburg/Nashville developed organically around a main street with connections to the river valleys, woodlots and farmlands that literally “sustained” the inhabitants of those places. The design of sustainable communities requires more than a piecemeal approach to development. Indeed, well-planned and designed cities are the foundation for sustainable cities.

The City of Vaughan has established the concept of sustainability as a key City-wide objective. This is reflected in the City’s Strategic Plan – Vision 2020 – and the development of an Environmental Master Plan. The main principles of sustainability, as outlined in the Official Plan Background Paper on Sustainable Community Design, will be found throughout the Official Plan, as they form the backbone for transformation. These principles relate to the efficient and effective use of land, the protection of the natural environment, agricultural lands, and the ability for people to live in a manner that has a low impact on the environmental health of the City.

Within this broad framework of sustainability, one of the key objectives in looking towards 2031 is to establish Vaughan as one of the greenest cities in the country. This includes not only protection of the natural environment and countryside, but the establishment of specific green principles to guide all future developments.





**The principles and directions below seek to identify and implement sustainable community design strategies.**

- 7.1 In concert with the Region of York and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the new Official Plan should clearly identify the elements of Vaughan’s natural heritage that are to be preserved and protected from any future development.
- 7.2 The new Official Plan should identify environmentally sensitive areas that are subject to development and establish clear policies and standards for any development within those areas.
- 7.3 The new Official Plan policies should secure sustainable buildings through Green Building Standards for all new developments prior to final approval.
- 7.4 The new Official Plan should encourage development of the green economy in Vaughan. Such development includes, industrial activities and research and development related to alternative energy and fuels production, material recycling technologies, and conservation technologies.
- 7.5 The new Official Plan should encourage renewable energy sources for new developments and existing communities, which may require retrofitting. District energy systems should be considered for the Vaughan Corporate Centre, Steeles Corridor and new residential communities.
- 7.6 The new Official Plan should establish policies for reducing parking standards subject to specific location criteria (e.g., Vaughan Corporate Centre) and/or the provision of specific alternative measures (e.g., car sharing, cycling facilities).
- 7.7 The new Official Plan should establish policies for allowing and encouraging the production of food on all lands within Vaughan.

**What if...**

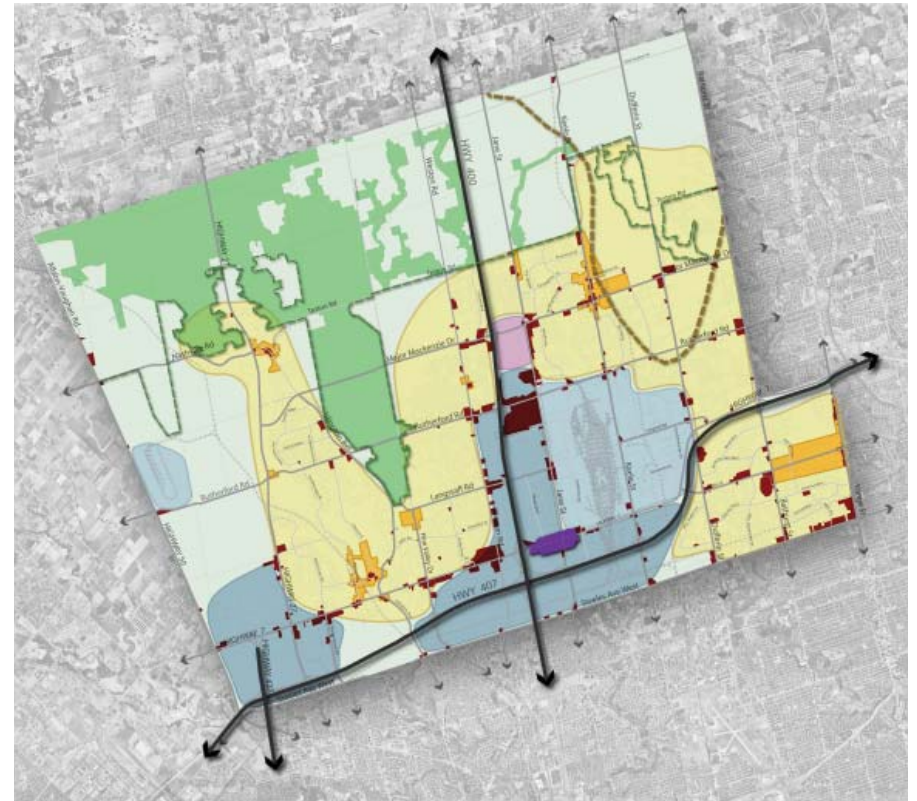
Vaughan became “The Headwaters City of Lake Ontario” and won the Canadian Environmental Award for Sustainable Living 3 times in a row by 2031?

## 8 A Vision for Directing Growth

Planning the attractive, sustainable and prosperous city envisioned by these principles and directions will in large part be achieved by directing growth to appropriate locations. In short, this means directing change towards places that need and can support it. It means re-thinking our urban structure – the way land uses, infrastructure, open spaces and natural features are arranged. Like other suburban municipalities in the GTA, Vaughan has a great deal of isolated land uses and a car-oriented, low density development pattern. By directing growth to the right locations, we can change this pattern and set Vaughan on a path to a more sustainable and prosperous future.

The Provincial and Regional forecasts result in an increase of 114,000 jobs and 170,000 people for Vaughan by 2031. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe requires 40% of this increase to be contained within the built-up area, at a regional level. Working with York Region, it is estimated that this translates into at least 30,000 new housing units within the already built-up area of Vaughan.

Vaughan's new Official Plan will direct future growth and development to specific and appropriate locations. Based on in-depth research (reported in the Vaughan's Urban Structure background paper) and extensive public consultation (as summarized in this Vision document), the consultant team is now engaged in a Capacity Analysis to test Vaughan's urban structure for barriers and opportunities to the implementation of this Vision. Locations for future growth will be identified through careful study of Vaughan's current land supply, trends in future demand for various types of land uses and an understanding of the ecological, agricultural and cultural importance of remaining undeveloped lands. In the fall of 2008, public workshops will be held to discuss the urban structure resulting from the Capacity Analysis. Public feedback will then be incorporated into a final proposed urban structure, to be published in a report entitled "Where and How to Grow" during the spring of 2009.



**The principles and directions below outline the Vision resulting from the initial background work and consultation undertaken in late 2007 and early 2008. They present an overall, generalized picture of the appropriate locations for growth and development in our City.**

- 8.1 Working with York Region, Vaughan will ensure sufficient development opportunities within the existing built boundary in order to meet the regional target of 40% intensification.
- 8.2 Specific intensification opportunities will be identified to accommodate the majority of growth within the built boundary. Areas not identified as intensification opportunities will remain relatively stable with the exception of minor infill and ongoing gradual change.
- 8.3 The Vaughan Corporate Centre will evolve as the downtown for Vaughan and will become the major focus of new mixed-use development. It will be developed to a minimum density of 200 people and jobs per hectare.
- 8.4 Future growth centres will be located along key corridors and around future subway and rapid transit stations and planned GO stations.
- 8.5 Highway 7 will evolve as the main east-west corridor through Vaughan and serve as an important transit-oriented intensification corridor. Jane Street will serve as a similar north-south corridor. Other intensification corridors should also be established.
- 8.6 Intensification opportunities to support mid-rise and medium-density mixed-use development should be established in the Vellore and Carrville District Centres, Woodbridge Core (including the Kipling Avenue area), Maple and Thornhill.
- 8.7 Beyond the existing built boundary, the Vellore, Carrville and Nashville Areas will be built out as residential neighbourhoods within the existing urban boundary. The Vaughan Enterprise Zone around Highway 427 will be built out as an Employment Area within the existing urban boundary with a high density focus and a transit hub at the Highway 427 / Highway 7 interchange.
- 8.8 The areas between the Provincially designated Greenbelt lands and the built boundary are known as the “whitebelt”. Working with York Region, whitebelt areas will be analyzed as part of the overall land supply analysis to understand their most appropriate land use and whether or not they should be added to the urban boundary.

### What if...

Vaughan were to organize growth in a manner which supported the most efficient transit system in North America, its population were concentrated within walking distance of services and amenities, and retail thrived in dense, vibrant, pedestrian-oriented urban centres throughout the City?

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