

## Committee of the Whole (Working Session) Report

---

**DATE:** Wednesday, November 1, 2023

**WARD(S):** 5

**TITLE:** PROMENADE CENTRE PUBLIC REALM FRAMEWORK AND  
URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

**FROM:**

Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

**ACTION:** DECISION

---

**Purpose**

To seek approval of the Promenade Centre Public Realm Framework and Urban Design Guidelines (hereafter referred to as the “Study”), enabling staff and the development community to use this as a reference document in the design and review of applications and capital projects within the Promenade Centre Secondary Plan area.

**Report Highlights**

- The Study will serve as a comprehensive reference document to provide guidance for public realm, urban design and streetscapes within the Promenade Centre based on the Promenade Centre Secondary Plan policy framework.
- The Study provides a design framework to inform and coordinate public realm investment and to guide future growth and development to create a vibrant, urban destination that is well-connected to the larger community.
- The Study provides an implementation strategy to guide the future incremental public and private sector development.

**Recommendation**

1. That the Promenade Centre Public Realm Framework and Urban Design Guidelines (Attachment 1) be approved.

## **Background**

Following the recent Council adoption of the Promenade Centre Secondary Plan in 2022, the City has received a number of development applications within the Promenade Centre. To efficiently assist staff in the review and processing of these development applications, the City has expedited (10 months) the completion of the Public Realm Framework and Urban Design Guidelines study to guide and facilitate these development approvals.

The Study commenced in January 2023 and was developed in two (2) phases of work, including:

- **Phase 1:** Background Review and Analysis, Stakeholder Consultation, Development of Public Realm Framework (January - May 2023)
- **Phase 2:** Stakeholder and Public Consultation, Urban Design and Final Documentation (June to October 2023)

As part of the project, a comprehensive communication and engagement plan was followed to ensure the appropriate input and feedback was received, including:

- Three Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings were held, including internal departments, such as Transportation Planning and Engineering, Policy Planning and Special Programs, Parks Infrastructure Planning and Development, Parks Forestry and Horticulture Operations, Roads Operations, as well as our partnering agencies of York Region and York Region Transit.
- Two meetings were held with the Stakeholders, including the landowners within the area.
- One workshop was held with the Vaughan Design Review Panel.
- One virtual public open house was held on August 28, 2023, with formal notices sent to all residents in the area and also local ratepayers, landowners, and partnering agencies.

The following is a summary of some of the key concerns and feedback received from the Public Open House and Stakeholders' meetings:

- Ensure enough parking to serve the retained mall and to support future development, including securing underground parking offered at low cost;
- Desire to see more opportunities for children and seniors to be able to walk to schools and other daily needs;
- Concern expressed regarding the height of buildings and mitigation of shadow and wind impacts;
- Desire to see more trees and greening incorporated in the plan to mitigate the urban heat island effect;
- Desire to see public spaces include more greening, trees, seating areas, and other features that create quiet, peaceful spaces and spaces for respite. Desire

to see more outdoor spaces and public amenities that will support an aging population;

- Concerns around accessibility of new interior spaces, as well as the desire to see sufficient accessible parking. Expressed frustration with lack of enforcement of accessible parking;
- Desire to see inclusion of civic amenities to support a growing population, e.g. schools, community centres, libraries, and fire stations.

In addition to the above meetings, a dedicated project website was created to provide regular updates on the Study:

[Promenade Centre Public Realm Framework and Urban Design Guidelines | City of Vaughan](#)

### **Previous Reports/Authority**

Not applicable.

### **Analysis and Options**

***The Study will serve as a comprehensive reference document to guide the public realm and urban design within Promenade Centre based on the Promenade Centre Secondary Plan policy framework***

Building upon the vision and policies of the Promenade Centre Secondary Plan, Promenade Centre will maintain and enhance its role as an important place for people to gather, socialize, shop, work, learn and live. The Centre will be planned for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and motorists, providing a network of complete streets and ease of access to high quality local and rapid transit services. These streets, in concert with a network of parks, indoor and outdoor open spaces and gathering places, will be vibrant, safe and accessible for the needs of a multi-generational community. New development within Promenade Centre will be sustainable and provide for a mix of retail, entertainment, community and office uses, as well as a variety of housing types.

The Public Realm Principles build upon the Guiding Principles in the Secondary Plan—Complete Community, Multi-Modal, Places to Gather, Multi-Generational Housing, Context Sensitive, and Sustainable and Healthy—to guide the development of public spaces in a way that is people-first, focusing on safety, comfort, liveability, and sustainability for all residents, employees, and visitors to Promenade Centre. Key principles include:

- **High Quality Open Spaces and Connections** – create a distinct look and feel that promotes a walkable, sustainable, and complete community
- **A Safe and Comfortable Public Realm** - provide calm and comfortable places to gather and rest at all times of day and during all seasons of the year
- **A Complementary Indoor-Outdoor Interface** - create a gradient of active and lively public spaces from plazas to pedestrianized streets

- **Diverse Places, Big and Small** - include a variety of open space types, from forested parks and green community spaces to civic plazas and active streets.
- **Healthy People, Healthy Land** – encourage education, stewardship, and connection with the land and its flora and fauna.

The Study includes best practice design standards, guidelines as well as specific design solutions that will help structure the shape, form, function, and layout of the public realm in the study area. The highly graphic document fundamentally outlines clear, cohesive, and organized design guidelines framework that City departments and development community can reference to inform and coordinate all future private and public projects.

***The Study has three main components: The Public Realm Framework & Guidelines, Built Form Guidelines and Implementation Strategy***

1. **The Public Realm Framework** sets out design directions and strategic priorities for all of Promenade Centre to ensure a holistic, site-wide approach that implements the Promenade Centre Vision and Guiding Principles. Any new improvements to the public realm or new development should align with the overall strategies in the Framework. Considering these directions for all future improvements to the site will ensure a strong and cohesive identity for Promenade Centre and contribute to a complete community in which all residents, employees, and visitors will feel accommodated and welcomed.

The Design Guidelines under the Public Realm Framework is organized based on the following urban fabric:

- **Green and Blue Networks** - Integrating stormwater infrastructure provides a wide range of advantages within the streetscape. Green infrastructure and low impact development (“LID”) creates a thriving, pedestrian-friendly street that offers a naturalized buffer, reduces impervious surfacing, increases tree canopy, mitigates heat island effect and slows traffic. These integrated systems extend beyond the streetscape, providing additional support for nearby park lands, contributing to a holistic approach to water overflow, biodiversity, and urban cooling.
- **Parks and Open Spaces** - New green neighbourhood parks, civic plazas, and the naturalized woodlot area will offer many different recreational and social opportunities. Additional publicly-accessible spaces will be woven throughout the area, on streets, at gateways, and along Shared Use Paths. Each space will be unique, responding to the conditions of its immediate context.
- **Streets and Connections** - Promenade Centre will be divided into a number of smaller blocks to improve walkability and permeability throughout the site. Streets will be safe and comfortable places for pedestrians, cyclists, and will allow vehicles to reach their destinations efficiently. An equally important element of the multi-modal network, Shared Use Paths will create an off-street pedestrian and cycling network for a greater level of permeability.

- **Public Realm Interfaces / Building Frontages** - Building frontages define the physical edges of the public realm and have a key role in determining the feel of outdoor spaces. Frontages should feature a varying degree of transparency and permeability to create a seamless transition from public to private. Primary Frontages will be active, pedestrian-focused places with a high degree of animation and transparency. Secondary Frontages will be more neighbourhood-oriented, while containing some active at-grade uses. Tertiary Frontages will support the service-oriented functions.
  - **Urban Elements** – are key factors that contribute to defining the public realm to create vibrant, inclusive, sustainable, and sense of place. The urban elements of Promenade Centre should reflect the unique culture, history, and identity of Vaughan. For example, public art in exterior public spaces has the power to support placemaking, create a sense of belonging and provide interest and activation for the public realm.
2. **The Built Form Principles and Design Guidelines** build upon the Guiding Principles and Community Design policies in the Promenade Centre Secondary Plan and ensure a built form that supports a well-scaled environment, appropriate transitions and attractive streetscapes. Well-designed building edges and streetwalls will help to define development blocks while allowing for porosity through mid-block connections and open spaces at ground-level. The scale of buildings is critical in defining quality of urban spaces. Massing and building transitions will intensify urban uses while creating a livable environment that considers contextual conditions, sun exposure, privacy, sky views, and wind impacts. Buildings will be designed with future uses in mind, allowing the flexibility needed for building uses and occupants to change over time, and the use of high-quality materials and architectural interest will ensure that future generations of Promenade residents will continue to feel pride in their neighbourhood.
  3. **The Implementation Strategy** builds upon the Promenade Centre Secondary Plan. Implementation, phasing and ongoing operations and maintenance have also been considered throughout the design process to deliver a design and phasing strategy that captures both short term opportunities and longer-term strategic investments to facilitate social, environmental, and economic prosperity. The transformation of Promenade Centre will take place incrementally over many years through actions by many players in both the public and private sectors. It is important to acknowledge that Promenade Mall is an existing neighbourhood destination and there are current residents who live and move through this area. No matter what stage of development Promenade Centre is in, all residents and visitors should feel welcomed and should benefit from new amenities, open spaces, and retail uses.

## **Financial Impact**

There are no requirements for new funding associated with this report.

## **Operational Impact**

Operational and maintenance impacts are associated with the built-out of future roads and parks network within the Promenade Centre. The details of these networks and infrastructure are preliminary, as such, cost determinations are not part of the scope of this study.

## **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

York Region has participated as a stakeholder throughout the Study process, providing design review relating to development interface with Bathurst Street and Centre Street. Further consultation with the Region will be required for implementation of the Streetscape Design through the detailed design process.

Through the Study, City staff also consulted with York Region Transit (YRT) to coordinate improvements to Promenade Centre bus terminal. Further consultation with YRT will continue as the development plans for the Transit Hub Precinct evolve.

## **Conclusion**

The Promenade Centre Public Realm Framework and Urban Design Guidelines (Attachment 1) study provides schematic design guidance for the public realm within the Study area to help achieve the vision, principles, and policies of the Promenade Centre Secondary Plan.

The success of the public realm and the unique character of place are important for the long-term social, cultural, and economic prosperity of the Promenade Centre. As one of the City's primary growth centers, the Study's ambition is to transform Promenade Centre into a pedestrian-oriented, multi-modal center with a coherent public realm identity that showcases sustainability and distinct character with well-designed public spaces, connections, parks and amenities that enhance daily life.

**For more information**, please contact Shirley Marsh, Urban Design Project Manager, ext. 8561.

## **Attachment**

1. Promenade Centre Public Realm Framework and Urban Design Guidelines (to be provided prior to the meeting).

## **Prepared by**

Shirley Marsh, Urban Design Project Manager, ext. 8561  
Shahrzad Davoudi-Strike, Manager of Urban Design and Cultural Heritage, ext. 8653  
Nancy Tuckett, Director of Development Planning, ext. 8529

**Approved by**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Haiqing'.

Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager,  
Planning and Growth Management

**Reviewed by**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri'.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager