

VMC Sub-committee Report

DATE: Wednesday, November 27, 2024

WARD: 4

TITLE: VMC STUDIES UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2024

FROM:

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ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update on current Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) plans and studies, their purpose and implementation, and how they contribute to the creation of a complete community in the VMC.

Report Highlights

- The VMC Secondary Plan Update is currently in Phase IV – Recommendations which includes a revised planning framework that sets parameters to develop the VMC as a complete and balanced community with minimum heights and densities, but without prescribed maximums. The plan is anticipated to be completed by Q2 2025.
- The October 2024 VMC Sub-committee recommended that Council approve the completed VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan and staff be directed to implement the actions contained in the Plan.
- The VMC Transportation Master Plan Update is anticipated to be completed by Q2 2025 in conjunction with the VMC Secondary Plan Update.
- The VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report as part of the Integrated Urban Water Plan recommendations were presented to Council in Q2 2024 and the final report was published on the project website in early Q4 2024.
- The VMC Stormwater Management and Drainage Enhancement Study has commenced and anticipated to be completed by Q3 2025.

Report Highlights continued

- Additional studies including the VMC Podium Schools Feasibility Study, the VMC Hydrogeological Study, Highway 400 Colossus Drive Overpass and Detail Design and Jane Street Sanitary Upgrade Environmental Assessment (EA) Study are all being considered.
- The various VMC plans and studies inform each other and are being closely coordinated to ensure their collective contribution to the Term of Council Strategic Priority of City Building to “Develop the VMC as a complete community, with emphasis on cultural development.”
- Staff continue to ensure that every study undergoes a robust and strategically coordinated public consultation process to optimize input.

Recommendation

1. THAT the VMC Studies Update – November 2024 report be received for information.

Background

As outlined in the VMC Development Activity Update – November 2024 Report being received today, the approximate number of residential units built, under construction and approved by Council along with the associated estimated resident population are as follows:

Status	Residential Units	Resident Population
Built/Occupied	6,528	12,925
Under Construction	6,016	11,912
Council Approved	12,923	25,588
<i>Total</i>	<i>25,467</i>	<i>50,425</i>

The realization of developments that are occupied, under construction, or approved greatly exceeds the population target established for the 2031 planning horizon. Given that this growth trend is expected to continue, staff continue to focus on the studies that will ensure the VMC develops as a complete and balanced community.

Studies that have been completed to date include the VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report (FSSR) as part of the City’s Integrated Urban Water Plan (IUWP), and the VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan. Staff continue to advance the VMC Secondary Plan Update and the VMC Transportation Master Plan. Studies that have recently commenced or are being considered include the VMC Stormwater Management and Drainage Enhancement Study, VMC Podium Schools Feasibility Study, the VMC Hydrogeological Study, Highway 400 Colossus Drive Overpass and

Detail Design and Jane Street Sanitary Upgrade Environmental Assessment (EA) Study.

The VMC Capital Projects and Implementation Plan Update Report (November 2024) outlines activities that have been undertaken, or are underway, to provide the infrastructure to support development and growth in the emerging downtown.

Previous Reports/Authority

Previous reports relating to the VMC Studies Update can be found at the following links:

[VMC Studies Update April 2023](#)

[VMC Studies Update September 2022](#)

[VMC Studies Update November 2020](#)

[VMC Studies Update May 2020](#)

[VMC Implementation Plan and Priority Infrastructure Project Update March 2019](#)

Analysis and Options

This VMC Studies Update report includes the following plan/studies, led, supported and/or being considered by Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) and Policy Planning and Special Programs (PPSP) staff:

1. VMC Secondary Plan Update
2. VMC Podium Schools Feasibility Study
3. VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan
4. VMC Transportation Master Plan
5. Highway 400 Colossus Drive Overpass and Detail Design
6. VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report
7. VMC Stormwater Management and Drainage Enhancement Study
8. VMC Hydrogeological Study
9. Jane Street Sanitary Upgrade Environmental Assessment

The following includes a summary for each plan/study listed above.

1. VMC Secondary Plan Update

The VMC Secondary Plan (VMCSP) Update was initiated in August 2020. It is being undertaken to address Provincial and Regional policy updates, and to respond to the rapid growth that is putting pressure on realizing Council's vision for a vibrant and balanced downtown. The VMCSP Update will result in a renewed policy framework that supports the completion of a complete and balanced community that is well supported by municipal services and social infrastructure to 2051 and beyond.

The VMCSPP Update is being undertaken in five phases, as follows:

- Phase I – Background and Issues
- Phase II – Prepare and Develop Land Use Options
- Phase III – Elaborate a Preferred Network
- Phase IV – Recommendations (current phase)
- Phase V – Final Implementation

The project is currently in Phase IV – Recommendations, which involves the development of an updated Secondary Plan for the VMC. Updated and new Secondary Plan policies will be developed to align the Plan with the land use schedules developed through Phase III, and refined through Phase IV, and to address Provincial and Regional policy updates.

From the June 2024 VMC Sub-committee, the VMC Secondary Plan update will include a revised planning framework that sets parameters to develop the VMC as a complete and balanced community with minimum heights and densities and without prescribed maximums. As a result, staff, in collaboration with the consultant team, are developing a revised development concept to implement a framework without height and density maximums. Further engagement on the revised development concept is being considered for Q1 of 2025. The VMCSPP Update is scheduled to be completed by Q2 2025.

2. VMC Podium Schools Feasibility Study

In the past, both the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) and the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) have constructed standalone schools with supporting outdoor facilities. Costs and other challenges in intensification areas have led the school boards to plan and implement the first shared-facility dual school model in York Region. The joint facility will accommodate an elementary school operated by the YCDSB and another by the YRDSB, along with a childcare center. The new school will provide 1,134 student spaces and 49 licensed childcare spaces, supporting education and fostering community engagement by attracting families, and contributing to growing a diverse population and a vibrant local culture in the VMC. The VMC program, landowner and school boards are collaboratively working together to realize this vision. The joint school site is anticipated to be completed by the end of the decade.

Recent legislative changes, such as Bill 98 and Ontario Regulation 374/23, are supporting more efficient use of school properties in dense communities, allowing for shared uses and joint schools. VMC Staff are currently exploring the implementation of podium schools in high-density areas due to increasing challenges with traditional school development models. To support this, the City will conduct a feasibility study that aims to address the growing constraints of rising property values and land scarcity that make conventional school construction increasingly difficult to implement and

maintain. The study will include design, costing, funding and ownership/tenancy options for podium schools in intensification areas. It will address additional costs associated with urban school requirements, as the current Provincial funding model does not cover these expenses. The study will also investigate necessary agreements for shared facilities in mixed-use developments. The request for proposal (RFP) is anticipated to go out in Q1 2025.

3. VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan

The VMC Parks & Wayfinding Master Plan (PWMP) encompasses a Parks Master Plan, which aims to guide the timely development of parkland within the VMC, and a Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan, including a Signage Pilot, to help people move through its public realm. The Parks Master Plan creates compact, balanced, and meaningful parks and open spaces within the VMC boundary. Similar to the City of Vaughan's other intensification areas, the Park Master Plan recognizes the need to access larger sporting facilities, trails, and green space outside of its boundary. The Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan helps residents, visitors, and businesses navigate through the VMC and guides the development of signage in the downtown area as it evolves.

In October 2024, VMC Sub-committee recommended that Council approve the proposed VMC PWMP, and that staff be directed to implement the actions contained within the Study. The PWMP will be considered in a future session of Council for final adoption.

4. VMC Transportation Master Plan Update

The VMC Transportation Master Plan Update (VMC TMP), as well as the Millway Avenue and Interchange Way Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) studies, are underway concurrently with the VMC Secondary Plan Update. To date, Phase 1 (identification of problems, opportunities and confirmation of transportation needs) has been prepared for both the VMC TMP and road Environmental Assessments (EAs). The VMC TMP study is currently in Phase 2 where transportation solutions are being developed and assessed based on the future population and jobs projections. The VMC TMP presented the problems and opportunities at Public Information Centre (PIC) #1 on February 1, 2023, and will present the transportation solutions at a future PIC anticipated by Q1 2025.

The preferred road alignments and cross-sections for Millway Avenue and Interchange Way were presented through display material at PIC #2 on December 5, 2023. PIC#2 material and an online survey were made available for the public to review and provide feedback until January 31, 2024. The Project Team is currently working on completing the two roadway Environmental Study Reports summarizing the environmental investigation findings, mitigation measures, and features of the Preferred Alternatives, with an estimated completion target of Q4 2024.

The VMC TMP is expected to be concluded in conjunction with the VMC Secondary Plan Update, by Q2 2025. As part of the VMC TMP, the Highway 400 Colossus Overpass corridor protection area is being coordinated in conjunction with the ongoing Weston 7 Secondary Plan and TMP.

5. Highway 400 Colossus Overpass Environmental Assessment (EA) and Detail Design

The Colossus Drive extension over Highway 400 was recommended as one of Vaughan's planned midblock crossings of Highway 400. This has been identified in several documents including:

- City of Vaughan Official Plan (2010),
- A New Path - City of Vaughan Transportation Master Plan (2012),
- Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) TMP (2012 and ongoing update),
- Vaughan Transportation Plan (May 2023), and
- Weston 7 TMP (May 2024).

The Colossus overpass is a key element of the planned multi-modal networks for the Weston 7 and VMC Secondary Plan areas. In June 2024, the draft Weston 7 Secondary Plan (May 2024) was presented to Council. The Secondary Plan identified a policy protection area on the west side of Highway 400 that together with the policy protection area east of Highway 400 continues to protect a minimum area from development for the Colossus Drive extension across Highway 400 to Interchange Way. The Highway 400 Colossus Overpass Environmental Assessment will confirm the noted protection area.

Request for Proposals for the multi-phased Environmental Assessment (EA) and the Detail Design of the Highway 400 Colossus Drive overpass is anticipated by Q1 2025. The study will follow the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment, Schedule C type projects. Once complete, the study will advance to implementation and complete detailed design to a construction-ready state. Critical engagement and consultation with the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and 407 ETR has already been initiated and will continue throughout all project phases.

6. VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Update

The VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report (VMC FSSR), is one of several study areas of the Integrated Urban Water Plan (IUWP), which is a culmination of a four-year study led by Infrastructure Planning & Corporate Asset Management (IPCAM). The VMC FSSR is an update of the current VMC Municipal Servicing Master Plan (2012), ensuring that servicing capacity can support the anticipated increase in height and density of future growth and intensification in the VMC.

The VMC FSSR documents existing issues and opportunities, considers and evaluates solutions, and identifies preferred water, wastewater, and stormwater servicing strategies. This Study was conducted in accordance with the Master Planning process outlined in the Municipal Engineers Association (MEA) Municipal Class EA guidelines. Public engagement took place in-person and online with a dedicated project website. Key community and industry stakeholders as well as other levels of government were also consulted in the process.

The IUWP recommendations along with VMC FSSR were presented to Council in Q2 2024. The report was made available for public review in early Q3 2024. After a 30-day review period, comments were incorporated, and the final report was published on the project website in early Q4 2024.

7. VMC Stormwater Management and Drainage Enhancement Study

The VMC Stormwater Management and Drainage Enhancement Study (SWM Enhancement Study) is being undertaken to support the growing population and development in the VMC area. The purpose of this Study is to revisit and enhance the end-of-pipe facilities plan from the 2012 VMC Municipal Servicing Master Plan and the recent VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report (FSSR) to ensure effective stormwater management and timely delivery of necessary infrastructure improvements.

The outcome of this Study will be a more flexible, practical stormwater management plan focused on at-source, conveyance and end-of-pipe infrastructure including non-conventional stormwater management facilities, which would allow for parkland above an underground SWM facility. The stormwater management strategy will follow the latest stormwater management best practices and City of Vaughan policies to treat storm runoff and reduce flood risks while considering the interests of landowners and developers.

The SWM Enhancement Study was awarded to TYLin Canada International and Third Party Public. The work just recently commenced (Q2 2024) and a Public Information Centre (PIC#1) is scheduled for December 5, 2024, with additional public engagements before completion of the study, which is anticipated by Q3 2025.

8. VMC Hydrogeologic Study

Current and approved development applications in the VMC have demonstrated concern with respect to high-water tables, challenges and increased costs with deep underground parking and long-term dewatering efforts. This has created varying underground parking structure depths, as well as proposals for podium parking which are less expensive to develop and less desirable as a design feature.

The VMC Hydrogeologic Study aims to establish a hydrogeological and geotechnical characterization of the full and expanded VMC areas (endorsed expansion areas A and B) utilizing existing information provided through development applications and supplementing with data from the well water information systems.

The Request for Proposals has recently concluded, and evaluation of proponents is currently on-going. The contract will be awarded in December 2024 and completion of the analysis and report are expected by the end of Q1 2025.

9. Jane Street Sanitary Sewer Upgrade Environmental Assessment (EA) Study

The recently completed 2024 Integrated Urban Water Plan (IUWP) has identified the need for upgrades to the Jane Street Sanitary Sewer to support future development in the VMC and the drainage areas to the north. These required upgrades are based on population projections extending to 2051. However, recent changes in population projections, as approved by City Council, necessitate a reassessment of the recommended upgrades.

Infrastructure Planning and Corporate Asset Management staff has identified an Environmental Assessment (EA) study for Jane Street Sanitary sewer upgrades. This study is set to be initiated in Q3 2025, subject to the 2025 budget approval. It will incorporate the updated population projections approved by City Council as part of the finalization of the VMC Secondary Plan Update and satisfy the requirements of the Municipal Class EA. Upon study completion, the Infrastructure Delivery department will be facilitating the completion of the 100% detail design and ultimate construction.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts resulting from this report.

Operational Impact

The plans and studies developed by staff are well collaborated and coordinated with many City departments and with external agencies and other stakeholders. This input includes regular Technical Advisory Committee meetings and other engagement touchpoints throughout the duration of the project schedule

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Collaboration continues with Regional stakeholders which is an important factor in realizing the success of the VMC.

Conclusion

Building a downtown is an ambitious goal. The average density of development projects continues to increase with new applications, a factor which must be balanced with measured delivery of community services, social and hard infrastructure.

As a result of this growth, studies have been initiated and coordinated to ensure that the downtown continues to develop as a complete and balanced community that is transit supportive and pedestrian friendly, with a vibrant sense of place, a high-quality public realm, and environmentally sustainable design approaches.

The VMC team continues to collaborate across internal departments and with residents, landowners, and other stakeholders to deliver a complete community.

For more information, please contact Christina Bruce, Director of Policy Planning & Special Programs, Ext. 8231.

Attachments

N/A

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