



2024 Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review

City of Vaughan

Interim Report

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1. Background

The City of Vaughan has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., Dr. Robert J. Williams, Dr. Zachary Spicer, and ICA Associates Inc., hereinafter referred to as the Consultant Team, to conduct a comprehensive and independent Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review (W.B.C.C.R.).

The primary purpose of the study is to prepare the City of Vaughan Council to make decisions on whether to keep the existing electoral structure or to make changes. This report includes preliminary observations on alternative options and configurations to elect Vaughan Council, based upon preliminary research and the first round of public consultation with the residents of the City.

The review is premised on the democratic expectation that municipal representation in Vaughan would be effective, fair, and an accurate reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and people across the City.

2. Study Objective

The project has several key objectives:

- Develop a clear understanding of the present electoral system, including its origins and operations as a system of representation;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the present electoral system based on guiding principles adopted for the study;
- Develop and conduct an appropriate consultation process in accordance with Vaughan's public engagement practices to ensure community support for the review and its outcome;
- Prepare population projections for the development and evaluation of alternative electoral structures for the 2026, 2030, and future municipal elections, if plausible; and
- Deliver a report that will set out recommended alternative council composition, size and ward boundaries to ensure effective and equitable electoral arrangements for Vaughan, based on the principles identified.



In August 2024, the Consultant Team prepared a series of Discussion Papers that set out:

- The parameters and purpose for the review;
- The basic electoral arrangements in Vaughan;
- Council’s legislative authority to change electoral arrangements in the City; and
- An initial assessment of the City’s current ward boundary system.

Discussion Paper D provided a set of guiding principles that will inform the study and the work of the Consultant Team, as follows:

- Balancing the current population distribution among the wards (referred to as the “representation by population principle”);
- Balancing the future population distribution among the wards based on projections (referred to as the “current and future population principle”);
- Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities (referred to as the “communities of interest principle”); and
- Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries (referred to as the “geographic representation principle”).

Taken together, these principles will contribute to achieving the over-arching principle of effective representation.

Each principle is described in detail in Discussion Paper D and can be found on the City’s web page.^[1]

The purpose of this Interim Report is:

- To provide a summary of the work completed to date;
- To provide a summary of the information received from the public engagement sessions and tools, such as the survey and website; and
- To get direction from Council on next steps of the study, specifically in relation to plausible adjustments to local council composition (size) to represent Vaughan residents effectively.

[1] <https://vaughan.ca/WardBoundary>



3. Project Structure and Timeline Update

Council adopted the terms of reference for the W.B.C.C.R. in the spring of 2024. Work completed to date includes:

- Research and data compilation;
- Interviews, presentations, and meetings with councillors, the mayor, and municipal staff;
- Online engagement platform with tools such as surveys, discussion and research papers, interactive maps, and informational videos.
- Public consultation both through the online platform tools and a robust in-person component with multiple sessions at venues across the City. The first round of engagement focused on the existing council composition, size, and ward structure.

Interviews with staff, Council, and meetings with the clerk's office and other staff concerning this study were conducted both virtually and in person. The Consultant Team also conducted a presentation to Council on October 7, 2024, and a first round of public consultation in September and October 2024 (five live sessions at five locations across the City). A second round of public consultation is slated for the new year.

4. Existing Electoral Structure

Vaughan City Council has 10 members, including the mayor (elected at-large), four local and regional councillors (referred to as the Regional councillors) and five ward councillors, elected across five wards, who sit exclusively on the City of Vaughan Council. The Regional councillor who receives the most votes serves as the deputy mayor for the term. A ward system has been used in Vaughan since 1985, while the current five-ward system has been used since a 1994 change ordered by the Ontario Municipal Board (now the Ontario Land Tribunal). The current ward boundaries have been in place since 2009.

The *Municipal Act, 2001*, establishes that the council of a "local municipality" must consist of "a minimum of five members, one of whom shall be the head of council" (subsection 217 (1) 1) and that the head of council (the mayor) "shall be elected by general vote" (subsection 217 (1) 3). Furthermore, the "members, other than the head of council, shall be elected by general vote or wards or by any combination of general



vote and wards” (subsection 217 (1) 4). With 10 members, Vaughan has five Council members above that of the minimum of five required under the Act.

Members of York Regional Council are elected in what is known as a “double direct” form of election, meaning those elected at the lower tier (either a mayor or Regional councillor) earn a seat in both their local Council and their Regional Council. They are, in effect, responsible for running two municipal governments. Vaughan has five representatives on York Regional Council – the mayor and four local and Regional councillors who are elected at-large. These councillors do not represent local wards or individual geographic communities.

5. Existing Population and Forecast Growth in the City of Vaughan

As previously discussed, a basic premise of representative democracy in Canada is the notion that the geographic areas used to elect a representative should be reasonably balanced with one another in terms of population. A detailed population estimate for the City of Vaughan, including its constituent wards and communities, will be prepared to allow for evaluation of the existing ward structure and subsequent alternatives in terms of representation by population, beginning with the most recent Census (2021) and utilizing the most up-to-date information available at the time of this study. This estimate will include the population not captured by Census (i.e., Census undercount).

5.1 Existing Population and Structure

Consistent with the guiding principles, this study is required to consider both the existing and future ward population distribution. Another question this study aims to review is the composition (size) of the council. Currently, with a city-wide population of 333,080 (as of 2021), each local ward councillor is responsible for representing over 66,000 people on average. As shown in Table 5-1, the 2021 population distribution is presented by ward.

Two of the five wards fall within the optimal range ($\pm 5\%$ of the optimal/average population) while three wards (Wards 1, 2, and 4) fall above the 5% optimal range but within the acceptable range of 25% (as outlined in Discussion Paper E). While the existing (2021) ward population distribution is reasonable, based on the optimal and accepted percentage variances, it is important to note that the size of Vaughan’s



population can mean that some wards still have a large degree of population difference. For example, Ward 1 has the largest population and Ward 2 the smallest, and while both lie within the acceptable percentage variance (12%), the wards differ in absolute population by approximately 16,000 people.

Table 5-1
City of Vaughan
2021 Population by Ward

| Ward | Ward Population (2021) | Share | Variance | |
|----------------|------------------------|-------|----------|----|
| Ward 1 | 74,556 | 22% | 1.12 | O+ |
| Ward 2 | 58,901 | 18% | 0.88 | O- |
| Ward 3 | 69,137 | 21% | 1.04 | O |
| Ward 4 | 61,487 | 18% | 0.92 | O- |
| Ward 5 | 69,001 | 21% | 1.04 | O |
| Total | 333,082 | - | - | - |
| Average | 66,616 | - | - | - |

5.2 Forecast Population Growth

Through this review, alternative council compositions and ward configurations will be prepared and reviewed, looking at both current and future population trends utilizing the City's Official Plan targets for 2031 and beyond, and will consider both regional targets and local planning initiatives. The purpose is to review alternative configurations against future growth to understand the distribution over the next two to three municipal elections.

The City of Vaughan is expected to continue to experience significant population growth over the next decade and beyond. A population and housing forecast for the City will be prepared for the 2024 to 2034 period, consistent with the City's adopted Official Plan and will be assessed through the next phase of this study. It is important to note that the planning landscape is evolving rapidly. This review will reflect the most current information available at the time of this study, but changes in population and planning policies may lead to different outcomes moving forward. Given the uncertainty in the current landscape, the Consultant Team recommends that the City continue to monitor population and elector numbers to ensure effective representation by population.



Should population outcomes be different than projected, another review may be required.

6. Public Consultation

The first phase of the W.B.C.C.R. incorporated a public engagement component that was delivered virtually and designed to:

- Inform residents of Vaughan about the reasons for the W.B.C.C.R. and the key factors that were considered in the review; and
- Engage the residents in a manner that provides valuable input to the evaluation of the existing ward structure and the development of alternative ward boundaries.

Five in-person consultation sessions were conducted on the following dates:

- September 23, 2024 (Al Palladini Community Centre)
- September 24, 2024 (Garnet A. Williams Community Centre)
- September 25, 2024 (Chancellor Community Centre)
- September 26, 2024 (Vaughan City Hall)
- October 1, 2024 (Vaughan City Hall)

The Consultant Team's virtual W.B.C.C.R informative presentation and other information about the review are available on the City's website:

vaughan.ca/WardBoundary (see Appendix B for more details).

Through the public consultation sessions, a survey, and the project website's online comment/feedback form, participants were invited to provide their input/opinions with respect to the following:

- Existing council composition – Is five local councillors, four local and Regional councillors and the mayor, for a total council of 10 members, an appropriate number for a population greater than 333,000?
- Existing ward structure – What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current ward structure?
- Guiding principles – Which guiding principles should be given the greatest priority in the development of ward boundaries?



The feedback and comments collected through the public consultation process are reflected in the analysis presented below and will help inform the preliminary set of ward configurations moving forward. While public input from consultation offers valuable insight into the review, it is not relied on exclusively. The Consultant Team used the public input in conjunction with its professional expertise and experience in W.B.C.C.R.s, along with best practices, to inform the observations and direction sought in this report.

7. What We Heard

To promote public engagement in the W.B.C.C.R., the City of Vaughan created a [project web page](#)^[2] for all documents necessary to give residents an informed voice. All later communications could then direct people to that page, through social media and other forms of outreach. Members of the public were able to visit the site, read context about the study, download a background report and, most importantly, they were urged to complete a survey. The Consultant Team also prepared a whiteboard-style explainer video describing the overall process of the W.B.C.C.R.

The public survey was a key tool for collecting input from as many residents as possible and gave some of the best high-level insight into the views and perspectives of Vaughan's residents. The level of participation in the survey was fairly high, with 217 people responding to some or all questions; the detailed summary of these results can be found in Appendix A. The survey results tended to confirm what earlier research had begun to indicate:

- About half the survey respondents (49%) thought having five local councillors, with one elected from each ward, was adequate for their needs. Of those who felt that the size of council is inappropriate, approximately 7% indicated they would prefer a smaller council and 35% of the respondents felt it was too small, and they wanted to see the size of council increased.
- Most importantly for the next phase of the project, respondents prioritized the principle of current and future population trends, with 35% of respondents ranking it as the most important to them. The three remaining guiding principles were similarly prioritized, with the representation by population principle being prioritized by 23%, the community of interest principle prioritized by 22%, and the

^[2] vaughan.ca/WardBoundary



geographical and topographical features as boundaries principle prioritized by 20% of respondents.

The survey also included several questions that were not multiple choice and, instead, allowed respondents the opportunity to give longer, written responses about issues they considered important. In total, 91 respondents (42%) gave their views on what they regard as the strengths and 99 respondents (46%) gave their views on what they regard as the weaknesses of the existing ward system. There were three major recurrent themes that arose in these responses. First, many indicated that their existing ward is too large, both geographically and population wise, with some arguing that it is too many people for one councillor to manage. Conversely, other respondents defended the size of their existing ward as a strength, stating that the wards keep communities together. Second, similarly to the first theme, several respondents believe that there should be an increase in the number of wards and council size. Third, many respondents raised questions about the role of Regional councillors, with some respondents believing that Regional councillors should be elected in wards rather than at-large or at least have some geographic divisions.

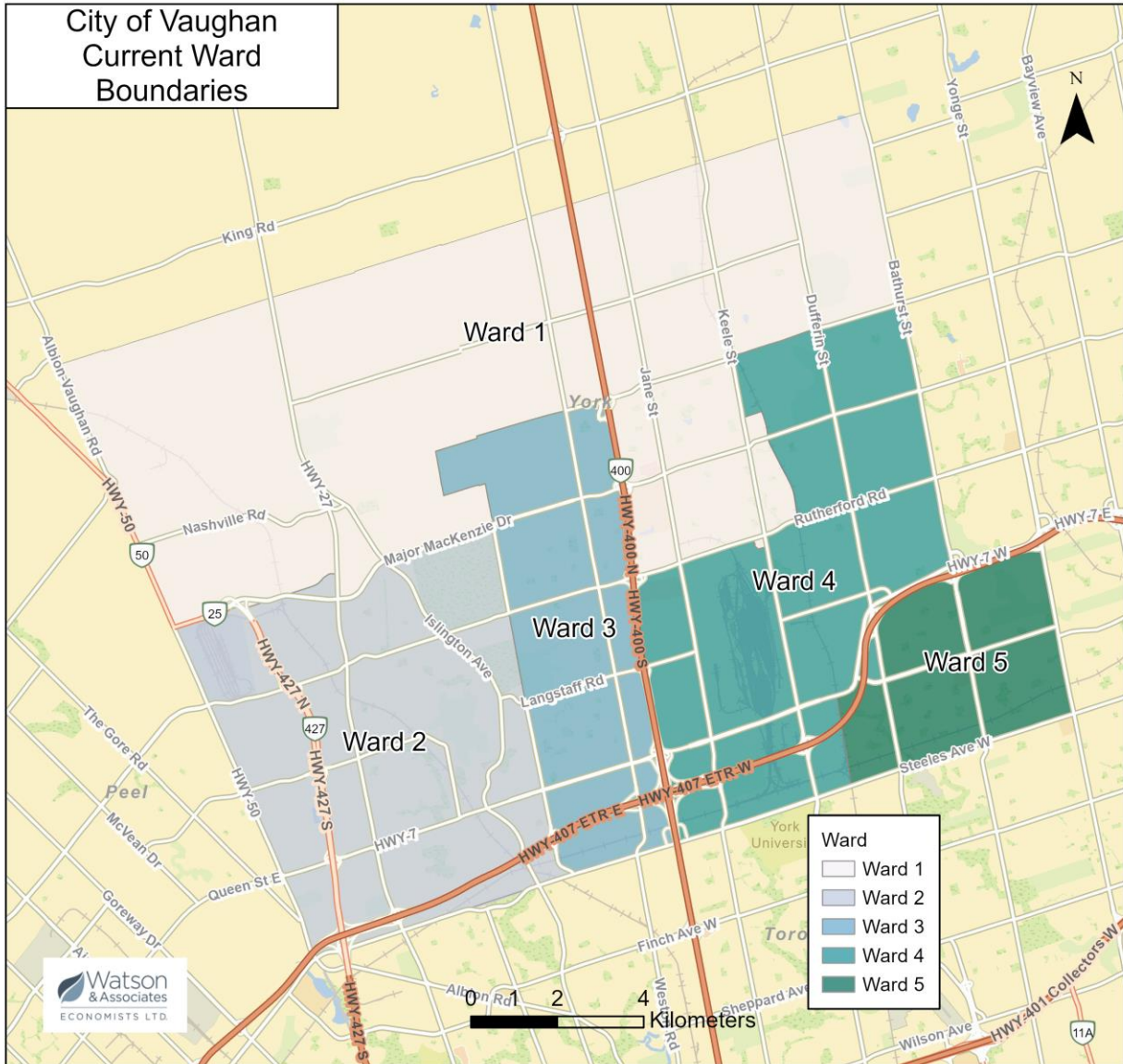
8. Evaluation of the Existing Ward Structure and Council Composition

A preliminary evaluation of the existing ward structure included in Discussion Paper D addressed the wards in terms of the guiding principles. For reference, the current wards are presented in Figure 8-1. The survey, conducted as part of the first phase of public consultation, asked respondents to assess the current wards in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, as outlined in section 7 of this report. These responses add depth to that preliminary assessment.

This section revisits that evaluation, integrating information received during consultation and addressing certain challenges identified in parts of the existing ward system (shown in Figure 8-1).



Figure 8-1
City of Vaughan
Existing Ward Structure



8.1 Representation by Population

One of the basic premises of representative democracy in Canada is the belief that the geographic areas used to elect a representative should be reasonably balanced with one another in terms of population. This is the concept of representation by population (“rep by pop”) or “one person, one vote” – where the vote of any one person carries



roughly the same weight as that of any other person. In some places (such as parts of the United States) this principle of population parity is enforced rigorously – almost to the exclusion of any other factor – so that there is no noticeable variation in the population of electoral units within a particular jurisdiction.

In the Carter decision,^[3] however, the majority of the Supreme Court understood that Canadian electoral law has never been driven by the need to achieve “full parity” in the population of electoral divisions. The Court concluded that some degree of variation from parity (“relative parity”) may be justified and, at times, even necessary “on the grounds of practical impossibility or the provision of more effective representation.”

Since there are variations in the densities and character of communities and neighbourhoods across Vaughan, the guiding principles make clear that some flexibility in applying the principle of representation by population is acceptable. That is, the concept of “equitable” (that is, fair) representation – not necessarily “equal” representation – is legitimate, although the closer the population of the wards is to parity, the more the entire design can be assessed as successful.

As a working premise, a range of variation of 25% above or below the optimal ward population will be considered acceptable in this review. This is a generous range of tolerance from parity, and more restrictive than long-standing parameters for the federal redistribution process, but in the absence of any guidance in the *Municipal Act, 2001* or provincial regulations, it is a reasonable range of variation for a largely urban municipality like Vaughan.

The goal in any case will be to reduce the range of variation among the wards as much as possible. In the Consultant Team’s experience, however, developing wards within a narrower range of population variation can make the successful achievement of the other recognized guiding principles more difficult.

The degree of parity in each ward will be figured out through the calculation of what will be called an “optimal” ward population in Vaughan, a figure computed by dividing the population by the number of wards in the City. The population of a ward will be considered “optimal” when it falls within 5% above or below that number. A ward population would be considered within the acceptable population range if it is between 5% and 25% of the “optimum” population. Populations that are above or below 25% of

[3] Reference re: Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Saskatchewan) [1991] 2 S.C.R.



the “optimal” population are considered outside the acceptable range. It is important to remember that, as the overall population of the City changes, the “optimal” population size of a ward will also change.

8.2 Consideration of Current and Future Population Trends

The population in the present wards is reasonably well-balanced despite the significant overall growth since they were established. Vaughan, however, will continue to grow substantially over the next decade.

One particularly large growth area will be the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre in the present Ward 4. This area is located at the intersection of Highway 7 and Jane Street, northeast of Highway 400 and Highway 407. In 2017, Toronto’s Line 1 subway was extended, and Vaughan Metropolitan Centre station was fully operational. This pivotal rapid transit link to Toronto has already led to substantial growth in the area. A host of developments are planned for this area over the next decade which should substantially increase the population.

The present equilibrium among the wards, however, could be disrupted by the forecast population growth in the present Ward 1, already the ward with the largest population. Despite forecast growth in the present Ward 2, it will likely fall closer to the lower range of variation. In basic terms, the population growth trend in Vaughan will not correct the present moderate imbalance in population but will increase to the point where the gap between the smallest and largest wards could be quite significant. For example, when looking at 2016 populations, Ward 1 is within 12% of the ward population average and Ward 2 within 14%; however, the absolute population difference between those two wards is more than 16,000.

8.3 Consideration of Communities of Interest

Electoral districts in Canada are not traditionally considered to be merely arithmetic divisions of the electorate designed to achieve parity of voting power. Rather, they are part of a system “which gives due weight to voter parity but admits other considerations where necessary” (Carter decision, page 35).^[4] One of the customary other

^[4] *Reference re Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Sask.)*, [1991], known as the Carter decision.



considerations is “community of interest.” The rationale is that electoral districts should, as far as possible, be cohesive units and areas with common interests related to representation.

In the municipal context, “community of interest” is frequently linked to “neighbourhoods” since the neighbourhood is the most identifiable geographic point in most people’s lives; it is where they live. More importantly, the responsibilities of the municipality are closely tied to where people live. This includes roads and their maintenance, utilities connected to their dwellings, and a wide range of social, cultural, environmental, and recreational services, which are often based on residential communities. Even municipal taxation is inextricably linked to one’s dwelling. Identifying such communities of interest recognizes that geographic location brings shared perspectives that should be reflected in the municipal representational process.

In most municipalities, there are more communities of interest or neighbourhoods than there are electoral districts, so wards will of necessity have to be created by grouping together such building blocks for the purposes of representation. This principle addresses two perspectives: what is divided by ward boundaries and what is joined together. Alternative ward configurations will therefore be assessed in terms of how successfully they separate or aggregate certain communities of interest into plausible units of representation. The first priority is that communities ought not to be divided internally; as a rule, lines are drawn around communities, not through them. Secondly, as far as possible, wards should group together communities with common interests.

Vaughan is a diverse community that is home to several identifying neighbourhoods and communities. Of these, five can rightfully be considered major communities of interests within the City: Concord, Kleinburg, Maple, Thornhill, and Woodbridge. The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre might also be considered a community of interest once the area reaches maturity. Woodbridge is a sizeable community of interest and is largely contained within Wards 2 and 3. Kleinburg and Maple are both within Ward 1, although there is little connection or affinity between the communities since they are some distance from one another. Concord includes extensive employment lands and is mostly contained within Ward 4. The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre is also located in Ward 4. Ward 5 contains most of Thornhill, although parts of the community are outside Vaughan’s municipal boundaries and other parts of Thornhill were placed in Ward 4 because of the 2009 Ontario Municipal Board order. Thus, the Concord, Thornhill, and Maple communities could be considered as lying outside a single ward. Because of the



rapid growth within Vaughan, there are few clear, identifiable boundaries to these communities.

The current ward boundaries do not comfortably contain single, identifiable communities of interest, largely because of the size, growth, and increase in newcomers into many of these areas.

8.4 Consideration of Physical and Natural Boundaries

Much of Vaughan is urbanized, with smaller rural pockets in the north. There is little agricultural land to still speak of. Much of these rural areas are firmly contained within Ward 1; however, fast-growing areas, such as Maple and Kleinburg, are also located in the same ward.

The most significant physical boundary within the City is Highway 400, which effectively bisects the municipality. Through initial interviews, the Consultant Team has learned that communities on the west (Woodbridge and Kleinburg) and east (Maple, Concord, and Thornhill) of the highway tend to have little interaction with each other. The highway creates a physical barrier that is recognized by the current boundaries of Wards 3 and 4, which also effectively separates Woodbridge from Concord. Highway 400, however, also separates Maple from Kleinburg, the two major population centres in Ward 1. The two communities have little interaction with each other, despite being in the same ward.

Other than Ward 1, the existing wards largely reflect natural geographic boundaries.

8.5 Effective Representation

The guiding principles are subject to the overarching principle of “effective representation,” meaning that, to the extent possible, each resident should have comparable access to an elected representative and each councillor should speak on behalf of an equal number of residents. Deviations from population parity can be justified if they contribute to more effective representation.

Effective representation is not based on the performance of incumbent councillors. It is, rather, a concept that is premised on serving the on-going relationship between residents and elected officials, not just on the way the resident is “counted” on election



day, although that is an important component of a fair system of representation. The expectation should be that the wards support the capacity of councillors to represent their constituents, rather than hinder councillors performing those responsibilities. Are the individual wards plausible and coherent units of representation? Are they drawn in such a way that representatives can readily play the role expected of them? Do they provide equitable (that is, fair) access to councillors for all residents of the municipality?

Overall, Vaughan's present wards come close to achieving effective representation in 2024. However, the combination of accelerating population imbalances, the mix of neighbourhoods and communities within the wards, and the extreme range of population disparity between Ward 1 and the remaining wards (especially Ward 2) in the southern portion of the City suggests that the present wards in Vaughan do not fully contribute to effective representation. Local councillors have a significant workload because of the large populations in each ward. Without having Local and Regional councillors attached to specific wards, the Consultant Team has heard that direct assistance in constituency work from them is sometimes hampered, outside of supporting residents on issues clearly regional in nature.

8.6 Council Composition

No ward design is likely to meet all the principles in their entirety; however, the best designs maximize adherence to the principles, especially in relation to representation by population and effective representation. The population of certain wards is out of line when compared to others, and the variance between the smallest and largest ward is significant at more than 15,500 residents. This has likely worsened over time, and we can anticipate that it will significantly worsen as the City moves towards the 2026 and especially the 2030 municipal election. This trend has significant implications for councillor workload, responsiveness, and representation.



Figure 8-2
City of Vaughan
Present Vaughan Ward Configuration Evaluation Summary

| Principle | Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle? | Comment |
|--|--|--|
| Representation by Population | Partially Successful | While all wards are in the acceptable population range and two are optimal, the difference between the largest and smallest wards is approximately 16,000. |
| Future Population Trends | Partially Successful/No | The population disparity between the present wards is likely to increase as development in and around urban transit corridors intensifies. <u>Final forecast information is being finalized.</u> |
| Communities of Interest | Partially Successful | Current ward boundaries do not always and comfortably contain single, identifiable communities of interest. The size and growth in many of these areas is contributing to changing communities of interest that are not necessarily reflected in the existing wards. |
| Physical and Natural Boundaries | Largely Successful | The existing wards largely reflect natural and physical geographic boundaries with some exceptions around some of the major highways (i.e., Ward 1). |
| Effective Representation | Partially Successful | Accelerating population imbalances, the mix of communities within the wards and the sometimes significant range of population disparity in some wards, hinder effective representation. |

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).

In addition to evaluating the current wards and considering alternative designs, part of the Consultant Team’s mandate concerns the composition of council (i.e., the size). Questions about the size and composition of council were put to the public in the first round of consultation. As discussed above in the summary of the engagement



feedback, the Consultant Team heard from several community members who felt the size of council was too small and needed to be increased.

Two issues surrounding regional representations also surfaced frequently. The first regarded the role of local and Regional councillors; many residents were unsure about the role that local and Regional councillors played on local Council. They were unsure about who to connect with on service requests and often default to their local councillors to report issues or request information. The second issue concerned the selection method. Some residents repeated that they had concerns about continuing with at-large elections and would prefer to have regional representatives tethered to a certain geography in the City to ensure there were clearer lines of accountability and responsibility.

9. Alternative Council Composition Configurations

Shortly after the conclusion of the first round of public consultation, City of Vaughan staff shared information with the Consultant Team that indicated the Province of Ontario could be contemplating changes to regional representation within York Region. The net effect of the change would be that each lower-tier municipality would be represented only by its Mayor who would have a weighted vote in Council deliberations and no regional councillors would be elected. While those changes have not yet been made public, the Consultant Team was asked to address possible composition configurations that did not include the election of both Local and Regional councillors in the present format. To be proactive, the Consultant Team has taken the time to carefully study the impact of these potential changes and offers initial observations here.

It's important to know that the *Municipal Act, 2001* does not specify how council seats should be aligned with wards. Section 217 just says that local council members can be elected by a general vote, by wards, or by a mix of both. In Vaughan, some councillors are elected by a general vote, while others are elected by wards. Since 1994, each ward has elected one councillor. Before that, Vaughan had a mixed system with three single-member wards and one ward that elected two councillors. In March 1994, a by-law was passed to change to single-member wards, which was meant to remove the limitations associated with two-member wards. However, since the *Municipal Act, 2001* does not forbid multi-member wards and many Ontario municipalities use them, it's worth considering whether Vaughan should modify its single-member ward system as



part of a new electoral setup. In the following examples, however, the Consultant Team has assumed a single-member ward system.

Vaughan Council currently has 10 members. The Consultant Team believed it was prudent to explore a composition structure of between six (the current number of wards and ward councillors plus the mayor) and the current council size figure of 10. Working from possible changes to York Region Council implemented by the province, the assumption is that all these individuals, presumably aside from the mayor, would only serve on Vaughan's Council. Each option, however, delivers a different set of opportunities and challenges to the City. In this section, the Consultant Team provides analysis to inform decision-making and produces a series of decision points for Council.

We begin first with the issue of what a small or large council would provide for the City. With a council of 10, members of Vaughan Council will have had ample opportunity to understand how a council of this size operates; however, four of these members serve as Local and Regional councillors. They are elected at-large and do not represent a specific ward. Neither does the mayor. This means that half the members of Vaughan's current Council are not elected to represent geographic constituencies in the City.

While the size of council may be familiar or smaller in the scenarios described above, having only those elected in wards (in addition to the mayor) serve on Vaughan Council would change the dynamics of Council in ways that current members must consider.

Table 9-1 provides information on the various advantages and disadvantages of both a large and small-sized council. There is no distinct "optimal" size for a municipal council, but there are several advantages and disadvantages that the Consultant Team can highlight.



Table 9-1
Advantages and Disadvantages of Council Size

| | Small Council | Large Council |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Advantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debate and decision-making can be completed in a timely manner • Lower expenses for salaries, administrative supports and resources • Clearer lines of accountability for residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More members available to serve on various agencies, boards, and commissions • Ability to represent a more diverse range of interests, communities, and demographics within the City • May allow for the formation of specialized committees, improving focus and expertise on specific issues • Legislative workload is more dispersed, allowing councillors to be more accessible and responsive to residents |
| Disadvantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger, more complex wards for each councillor to represent • A larger workload for each councillor • Less diversity of perspectives, reducing the ability of Council to represent the full range of community interests and demographics • Decision-making may be dominated by a few voices, reducing inclusivity and transparency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debate and decision-making can take more time • It may be more difficult for staff to interpret Council direction • Increased costs for staffing, salaries and Council resources • Possibility of redundancy, overlapping responsibilities and inefficiencies |

The terms “Small” and “Large” are relative, but in general the Consultant Team can point to several distinct advantages of having more councillors, namely having more councillors available to shoulder legislative responsibilities and create a smaller workload for each councillor, which may make them more responsive to constituents. A larger council, however, may also take more time to make decisions because it needs to accommodate a greater array of voices throughout the process. Generally, a smaller



council will be able to move more efficiently through a council agenda and debate but will create a larger workload for each councillor. Another aspect of this issue is the fact that all councillors in Vaughan presently have access to paid staff support and office space that would likely continue and may need to be adjusted in support of a new configuration.

These are, of course, general comments about the size of municipal councils and should be kept in mind as the Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review proceeds. What the right council size is for Vaughan, however, is the most important question. In the following table (Table 9-2), the Consultant Team explores various council size options, using the City's 2021 Census population of 332,082 to demonstrate the size of various ward options. Using these figures, each ward councillor currently represents, on average, 66,616 people.

Table 9-2
Council Size Options for Vaughan

| Council Size | Population Per Ward | Notes |
|--|---------------------|---|
| Six members (five local councillors and the mayor) | 66,616 | This is a familiar structure to members of Vaughan Council. There are currently five local councillors who are elected from five wards. This option would not include local and Regional councillors, making it a marked departure from the current composition of council. The workload for each councillor would likely increase substantially, as would the need for additional support to maintain responsiveness to the community. |
| Seven members (six local councillors and the mayor) | 55,347 | This option would add an additional local councillor. It is still smaller than the current Council, however. With more members around the council table, some of the challenges identified in smaller models ease. There would be more members to serve on various agencies, boards and commissions, meaning that the workload for Council would be more dispersed, albeit marginally. This model would retain some advantages, including legislative efficiencies. |



| Council Size | Population Per Ward | Notes |
|---|---------------------|--|
| Eight members (seven local councillors and the mayor) | 47,440 | Building from the seven-member option above, an eight-member Council would disperse workload even better, meaning that councillors could focus more time on constituency matters. Having more councillors may lessen the need for increased Council staff support. Each councillor would also represent fewer constituents than they currently do, but without local and Regional councillors, each may receive more requests for service and information from constituents in their ward. |
| Nine members (eight local councillors and the mayor) | 41,510 | This model better disperses workload among Council and would allow for more of a direct connection with constituency members, given that each councillor would now be representing substantially fewer residents than they do now. The same caveat above holds; however, without local and Regional councillors each member may receive more constituency requests. For a council of this size, some of the legislative efficiency gained from a council of five or six members begins to weaken, meaning that council deliberation time may increase, even as workload is more dispersed among members. |
| Ten members (nine local councillors and the mayor) | 36,898 | This is a council of familiar size for Vaughan and could be expected to typically operate from a legislative position that it does today. Deliberation time and legislative workload commitments would be similar as they are today. Each councillor, however, would represent nearly half the residents than they do today, making each more responsive to constituents. A familiar council size also means it would have similar resource commitments, possibly requiring little to no adjustments to council chambers, office space or staffing. |



| Council Size | Population Per Ward | Notes |
|---|---------------------|--|
| Eleven members (10 local councillors and the mayor) | 33,208 | This option, while familiar, does increase the size of council by one additional member. This option would marginally reduce the number of constituents for each councillor, which would likely not significantly reduce constituency commitments or case load. This option would also introduce some of the challenges of a larger council identified earlier in the Interim Report, including decreased legislative efficiency and increased cost. Changes to council chambers and office space may be required. |

In Discussion Paper B, the Consultant Team provided a comparative perspective on council sizes across similarly sized communities in Ontario. This comparison, however, included Regional councillors as well. Across York Region, Vaughan's five local ward councillors placed the City below its peers in the Region – Richmond Hill has six and Markham has eight. Richmond Hill has a significantly lower population, and Markham has only a slightly larger population, meaning that Vaughan has fewer local representatives than other municipalities of comparable size in York Region.

The Consultant Team intends to engage in another round of public consultation. To make this process meaningful, the Consultant Team needs Council to define the parameters of the discussion around composition. Would a council of six or seven be optimal for Vaughan? Or should a council of the same size, with all locally elected councillors (except for the mayor) be considered?

In addition to the examination of council size based on population metrics as outlined in Table 9-2, the Consultant Team also started to explore what different ward configurations could look like using the aforementioned council sizes (i.e., five to 10 wards). The intention of this exercise is to provide Council with additional information to help narrow down the possible options and configurations relating to council size. It is one thing to have an optimal population per ward; however, if designing that number of wards is not possible when considering the guiding principles, it is important to identify that for Council. A summary of the various configurations is provided below.



The Consultant Team has completed a high-level analysis of both a five-ward and six-ward system as part of the work to date. The five-ward system is the existing system and has been evaluated as part of this report. In addition, as part of the last ward boundary review in 2020 and work completed in Phase 1 of this review, the Consultant Team had an opportunity to develop and analyze a preliminary six-ward option and found that it contained the elements of a viable system.

Furthermore, the Consultant Team created new preliminary and conceptual designs of systems contemplating between seven and 10 wards. Each option presents very different ward configurations, creating both opportunities and implications for Council to consider. In doing so, the Consultant Team has made its best efforts to draft boundary lines around natural and identifiable markers. Given its centrality in effectively bisecting the City, Highway 400 was used as a boundary in each option.

We begin with a seven-ward option. Again, the Consultant Team has drafted several configurations, but an important point to consider in a map with seven wards is that an even number of wards is not possible on either side of Highway 400. Given the population growth in the City, the east side of Highway 400 will have four wards. To the west, familiar boundary lines can be used, separating Woodbridge in a similar manner as the current ward map. The area to the north of Woodbridge could potentially serve as its own ward. On the east side, four wards provide options to account for population growth, but consideration must be given as to where to place boundary lines between communities in Maple, Concord, and Thornhill.

An eight-ward model would allow for some balance on either side of Highway 400 and a configuration with four wards on each side could be considered. Another possibility could include having three wards on the west side and five to the east, further accounting for rapidly growing communities in and around the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. Consideration, again, in this model ought to be given to where boundary lines divide communities like Maple, Thornhill, and Concord.

Consideration of a nine-ward or 10-ward model would necessitate conversations about where and how to divide Thornhill. As it stands, it does not appear to the Consultant Team that there is a natural boundary line within the community that could be used. Given the size of the community, the population disparity between Thornhill and the rest of the communities of interest would become vast as the number of wards increases. These models do not also provide for natural wards to appear on the east side of



Highway 400. Established communities of interest, such as Maple and Concord, would need to be divided into multiple wards, while emerging communities of interest, like the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, would be fragmented among various wards.

The Consultant Team believes that a seven-ward and an eight-ward system are viable options for the City of Vaughan, should there be a change to the structure and composition of York Region's government. A few of the challenges described above in larger ward configurations may potentially worsen over time. Some of these options would require population growth to develop over several election cycles before parity is achieved. These options may be needed in the future, as growth increases in certain areas across the City. They would remain available for future Councils, if they so choose. At this point, however, the seven-ward and eight-ward options best account for Vaughan's established and emerging communities of interest, while potentially allowing for a good degree of population parity. As shown in the comparison above, these options would also provide for a balance in legislative efficiency, representation, and financial considerations.

The Consultant Team will prepare detailed maps with associated population projections for the public to consider, but requires Council to consider the question of council size: What is the right size for Vaughan's Council? Providing an answer to this question will allow the Consultant Team to engage more meaningfully with the public and provide focus for the remainder of the Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review project.

10. Next Steps

The evaluations presented here are preliminary; they reflect the application of the core principles for this review to the distribution of population and communities within Vaughan. Given the newly received information from staff on potential changes to regional representation in York Region, the focus for Council from this report should be squarely on the question of council composition: Is a 10-member Council right for Vaughan in 2026 and beyond?

The Consultant Team is requesting direction from council on two main issues related to composition. Each question revolves around whether the composition of York Regional Council is altered.

Staff have indicated the potential of a change to composition at York Regional council may happen in 2025. The Province of Ontario, however, has not made any formal



announcement to date. The Consultant Team will adjust its work according to provincial decision-making, but even if the status quo remains in place, should the size of Vaughan's council:

- A) Remain the same? That is, with ten members in place, including the Mayor elected at-large, four Local and Regional Councillors elected at-large and five Local Councillors elected by ward; or
- B) Increase in size? In this scenario, any adjustment would come from adding additional Local Councillors. The question for council under this option is “what is the right size?” Again, providing an answer to this question does not bind council to a particular size as the Ward Boundary Review continues, but rather defines the configurations that would be palatable to explore in the second round of consultation.

The second possibility assumes an alteration in the way York Region itself is governed. Again, the Province of Ontario (to date) has not announced any changes, but the Consultant Team wishes to be prepared should any changes occur to ensure the timelines original proposed to council are adhered to. If Regional Councillors were eliminated should Vaughan's council size:

- A) Remain at its current overall size – 10. This would include a Mayor elected-at large, and nine Local Councillors, elected in wards.
- B) Maintain the current number of Local Councillors, elected in wards. This would create a council of 6 – the Mayor elected at-large and five Local Councillors elected in wards
- C) Increase the number of Local Councillors, to a figure between 6-8, as outlined by the Consultant Team above. Including the Mayor, who would remain elected at-large, this would produce a council of between 7 to 9 total members.

Again, selecting either option above does not bind council but instead provides more precise direction to The Consultant Team. Potential changes to the regional government are a sizable development that was not expected at the project's outset. It is only prudent that council be allowed to set the parameters of reasonable action given the circumstances.



The Consultant Team will proceed based on Council direction and consult broadly with the public in the second round of engagement. Receiving clarity on Council's stance on the issue of size described in section 9 of this report, and responding the questions addressed immediately above, will produce a more meaningful engagement experience for residents of Vaughan by clarifying the composition options. This will allow the public to deliberate and provide insight on plausible alternatives to the current composition and ward system. This insight will be crucial to inform the next stage of this review.

It should be noted that any decision at this point by Council is merely providing direction to the Consultant Team to explore a change in composition and to narrow the breadth of possible options under consideration. The status quo remains an option available to Council throughout the Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review project.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that a change in the composition of council will require a series of considerations that are beyond the scope of this review and that can be addressed on completion of this review. Included in these considerations are compensation arrangements for additional councillors, staffing in support of councillors and possible changes to office space at City Hall and even the council chamber itself.



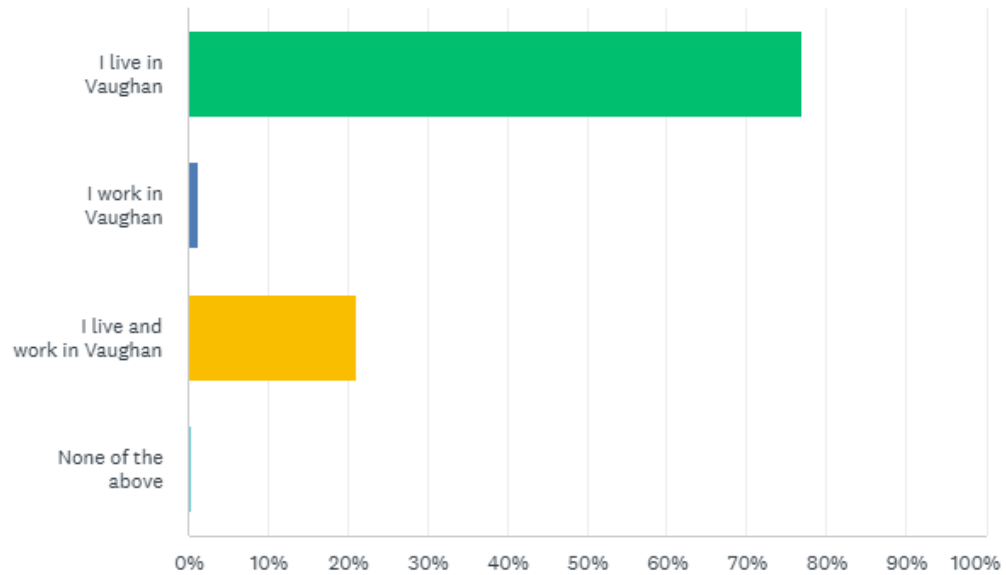
Appendix A

Survey Results (Phase 1)



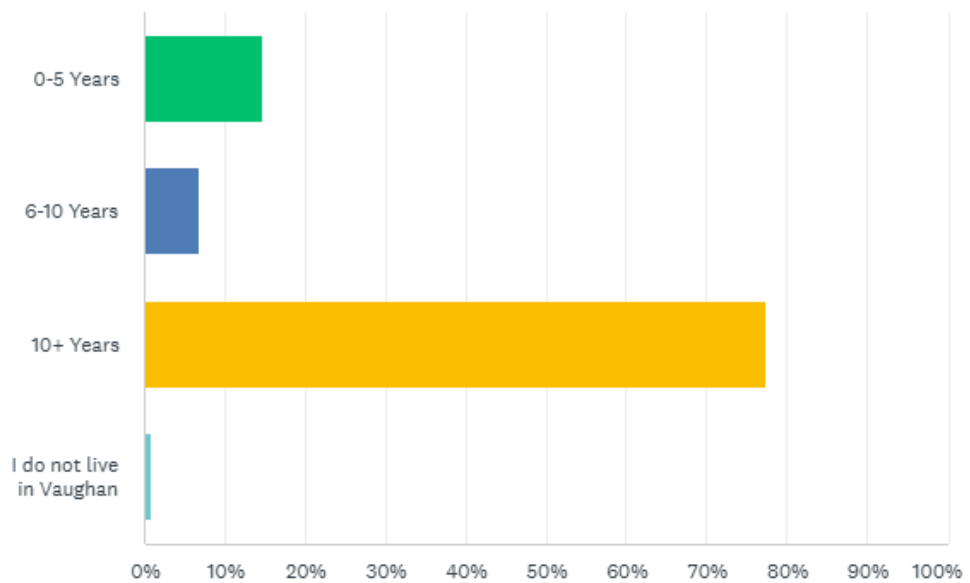
What best describes you?

Answered: 217 Skipped: 0



How long have you lived in Vaughan?

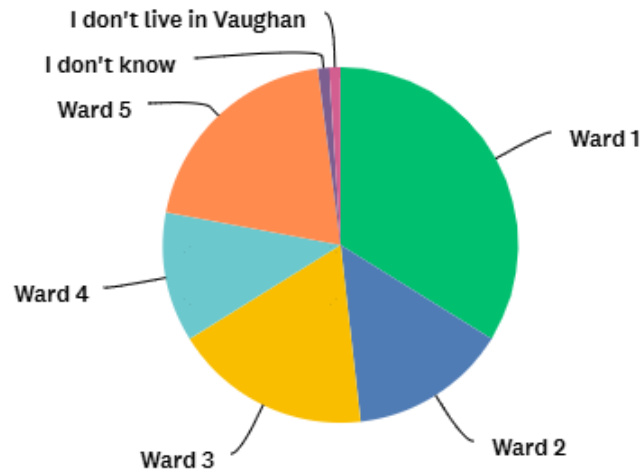
Answered: 217 Skipped: 0





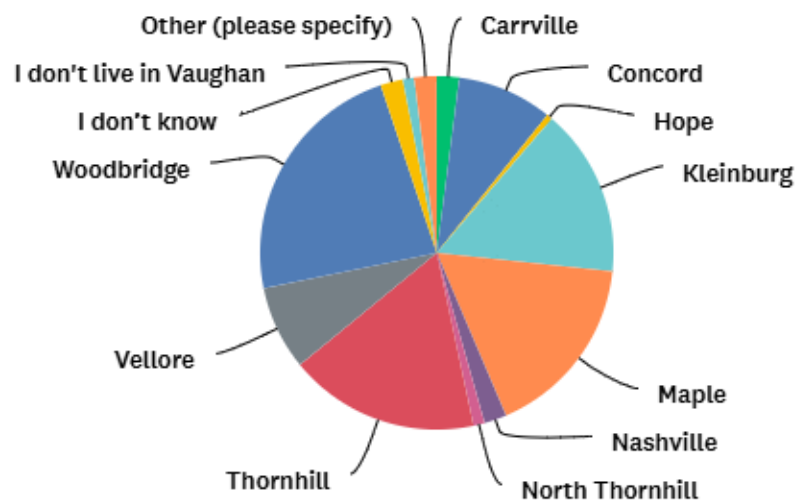
Which ward do you live in?

Answered: 195 Skipped: 22



Which community in Vaughan do you live in?

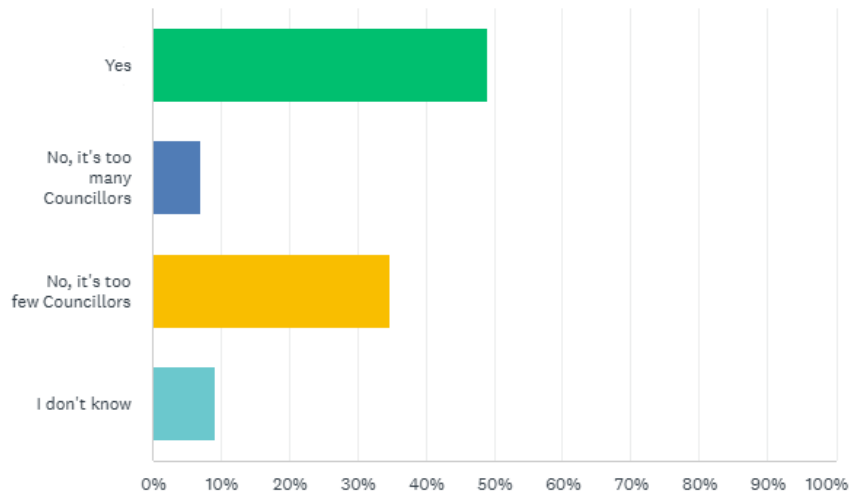
Answered: 195 Skipped: 22





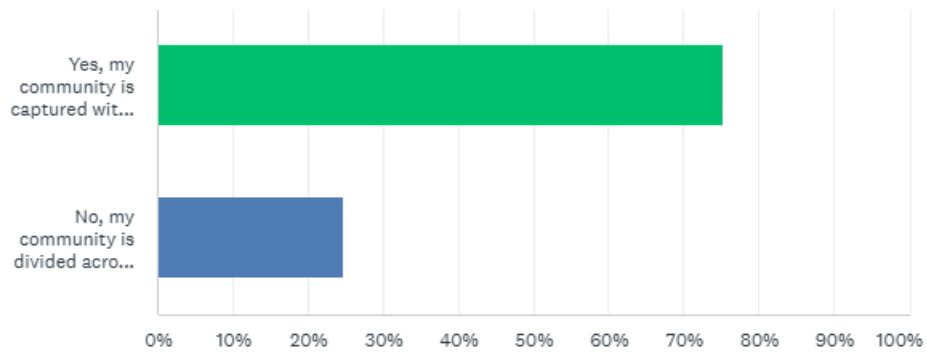
With Local Councillors representing approximately 65,000 constituents per ward, is a five-ward system with five Local Councillors the appropriate number?

Answered: 141 Skipped: 76



Do the boundaries of the ward you live in capture your community?

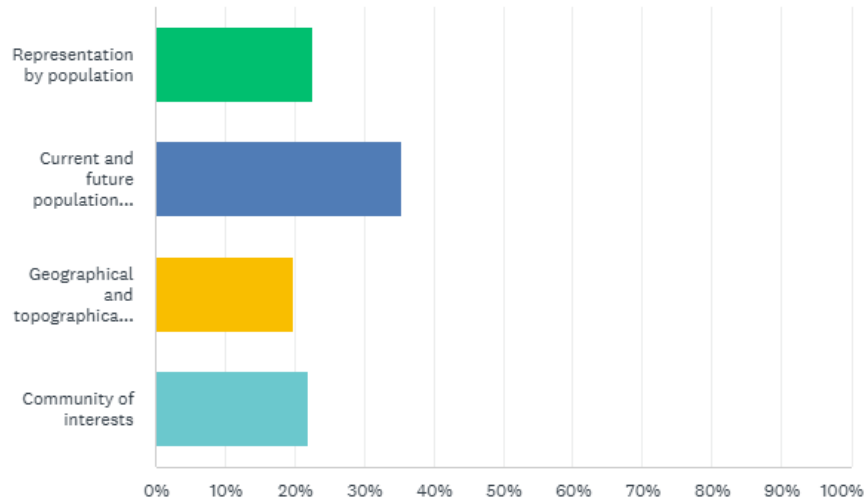
Answered: 141 Skipped: 76





Please indicate the ONE guiding principle that should be given the highest priority to ensure effective voter representation in Vaughan:

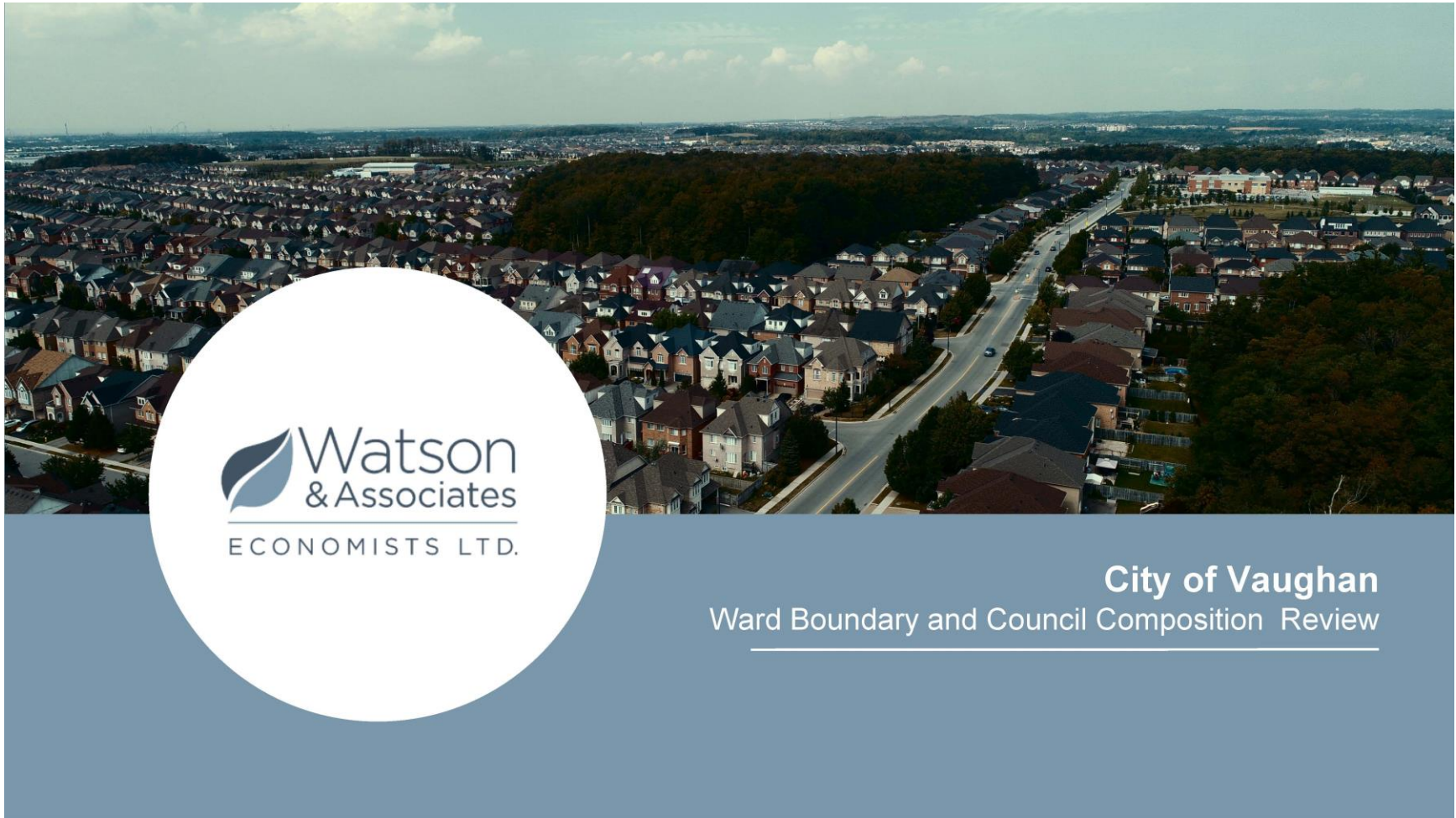
Answered: 141 Skipped: 76





Appendix B

Public Consultation



 **Watson
& Associates**
ECONOMISTS LTD.

City of Vaughan
Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review

Purpose of this review



To equip Council to decide whether to maintain the existing electoral arrangements or to implement an alternative arrangement.

Fair Representation

To equalize representation so communities a comparable voice in the City's decision-making.

Adjust to Change

To re-align boundaries that reflect population shifts and growth, and evolving communities of interest.

Healthy Democracy

To promotes transparency and accountability, bolstering trust in the democratic system, and increasing civic engagement.

Historical context

The City has grown. Has the electoral system kept up?



Town of Vaughan

Established under provincial legislation

Population: ~16,000

City status achieved in 1991



City of Vaughan

Electoral structure

Mayor

(elected at-large)

3 Local & Regional Councillors

(elected at-large)

5 Local Councillors

(1 per ward)

2006 Population: ~238,900



City of Vaughan Ward Boundary Review

Fourth Local and Regional Councillor added for 2022

2016 Population: ~306,200



City of Vaughan Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review

2021 Population:
~323,300

What Research Questions Are Being Explored?



- How does the present electoral arrangement for the City of Vaughan measure up?
- Do the current wards deliver **fair representation conducive to good governance**?
- Are the governance structures in harmony with **the contemporary City of Vaughan**?
- Is the electoral system **aligned with the size, diversity and complexity** of the communities in Vaughan?
- What information does the public need to **provide informed input to the Council's decisions**?

Legislated Requirements

The Municipal Act

Ontario's *Municipal Act, 2001* authorizes a lower-tier municipality to:

Change the size of the Council

- Requirement minimum size: five members, including the Head of Council (Mayor).
- No appeal rights associated with this executing this authority.

Determine how Council (other than the Mayor) will be elected

- May be elected by general vote, wards, or any combination of a general vote and wards
- No appeal rights associated with this executing this authority.

Divide or re-divide the municipality into wards or dissolve the existing wards

- A by-law adopted by Council *is* subject to appeal rights.

The Municipal Elections Act

The *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* standardizes key elements:

- Date of elections
- Term of office
- Eligibility
- Counting of ballots



Council Composition of Vaughan

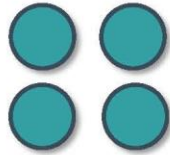


What is it and how does it compare to other municipalities?



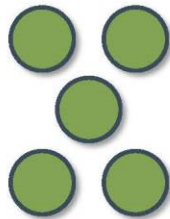
Mayor, Regional Councillor

Elected at large as the Head of City Council *and* sit on the Regional Council



Local and Regional Councillors

Elected at large as *both* a City Councillor *and* Regional Councillor



Local Councillors

Elected by ward as a local representative and does *not* sit on the Regional Council.

Composition of Comparable municipalities

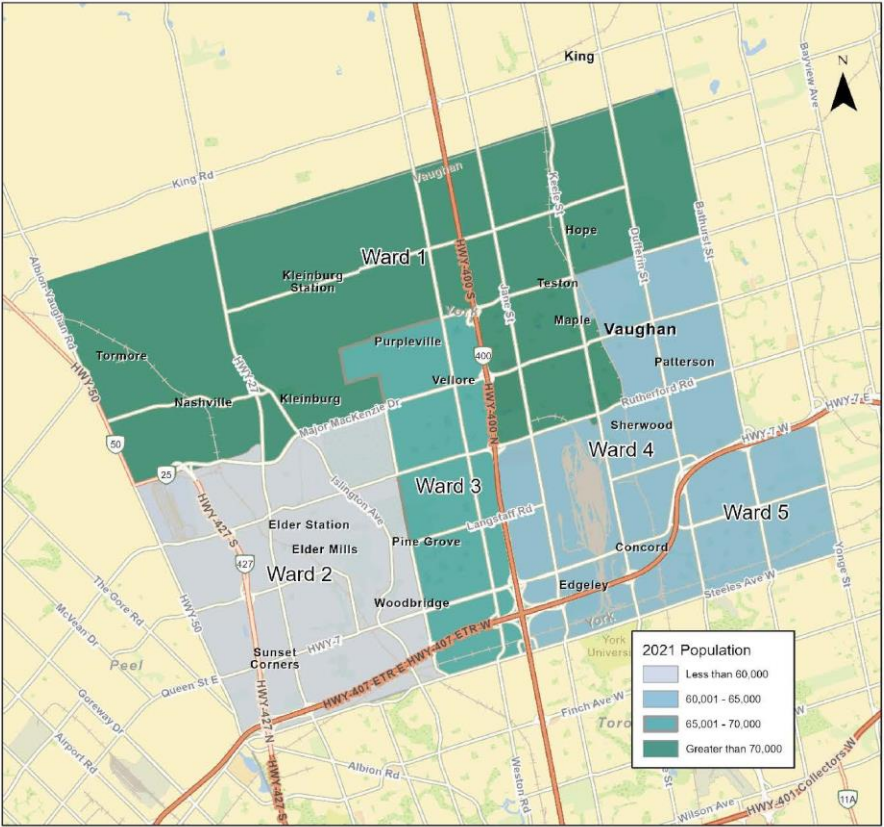
| Municipality | Population (2022 Estimate) | Composition of Council (Excl. Head of Council) | Population per Council Representative |
|---------------|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Toronto* | 3,025,647 | 25 | 121,026 |
| Ottawa* | 1,071,868 | 24 | 44,661 |
| Mississauga | 771,891 | 11 | 70,172 |
| Brampton | 745,557 | 5 Local, 5 Regional (10) | 74,556 |
| Hamilton* | 597,010 | 15 | 39,801 |
| London* | 448,051 | 14 | 32,004 |
| Markham | 352,404 | 8 Local, 4 Regional (12) | 29,367 |
| Vaughan | 338,891 | 5 Local, 4 Regional (9) | 37,655 |
| Kitchener** | 282,375 | 10 Local, 3 Regional (13) | 28,238 |
| Windsor* | 236,789 | 10 | 23,679 |
| Oakville | 224,781 | 7 Local, 7 Regional (14) | 16,058 |
| Richmond Hill | 211,494 | 6 Local, 2 Regional (8) | 26,437 |

*Single-Tier Municipality

**Regional Councillors do not sit on local Council

Existing Wards & Ward Populations

2021 Population by Ward



Guiding Principles for Ward Designs



Which of these required principles need to have primary influence?



Overriding Principle of “Effective Representation”



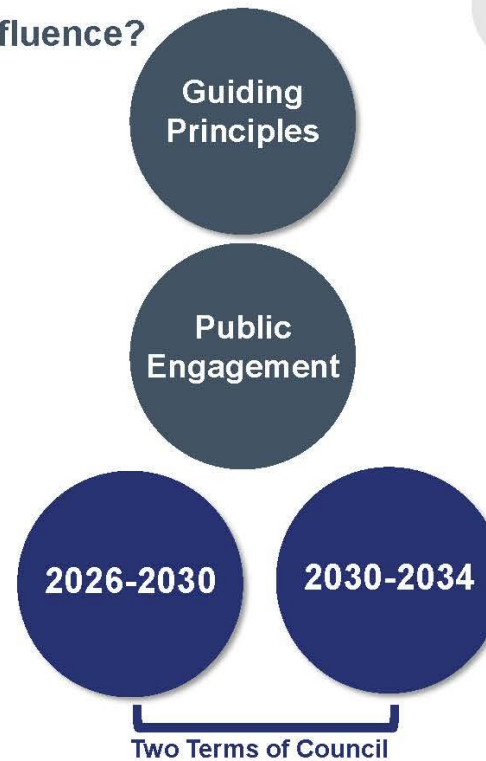
Balancing present populations and considering likely future populations



Respecting the sense of neighbourhoods and communities (Communities of Interests)



Aligning with geographical features, both natural and infrastructure boundaries



Project Phases

General Timeline and Activities



**Spring
2024**

Information Collection

- Individual interviews with Members of Council.
- Orientation session with whole Council.
- Research and reflect to prepare for Background Papers



**Summer
2024**

Reflection and Evaluation

- Write Background papers.
- Evaluate existing electoral structures and systems of governance
- Frame the exploration of alternatives.
- Prepare for public input.



**Fall
2024**

Initial Consultation and Interim Report

- Initiate community engagement and promote public participation
- Deliver and interim report to staff and Council.
- Focus on developing options.



**Winter/
Spring
2025**

Final Report & Recommendations

- Community input on the possible alternatives.
- Consolidate input / ideas.
- Write a Final Report of preferred option(s) for Council consideration.

Stay Involved!

Visit Vaughan.ca/WardBoundary

- Watch the videos.
- Read the research papers.
- Visit the Info sessions to discuss with the team.
- Then ADD your ideas in the survey:
- *How many Councillors are needed in Vaughan for effective representation?*
- *Which guiding principles should most influence the design of wards?*
- *Where do the boundaries need adjustment?*

