

VMC Sub-committee Report

DATE: Tuesday, November 10, 2020

WARD: 4

TITLE: VMC STUDIES UPDATE

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Development

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 established a population target of 25,000 residents and 11,500 jobs by 2031 to achieve the critical mass of a downtown
- Based on York Region's people per unit assumptions, realization of potential residential development currently represent more than 63,300 residents in almost 32,000 units moving into the VMC, achieving over 250% of residential units and population targets identified for the 2031 planning horizon far earlier than expected
- The average density of development projects continues to increase with new applications, a factor which must be balanced with an updated and measured delivery of community services and social infrastructure to ensure continuity in establishing a complete community
- Efforts are being undertaken to maintain a healthy balance between current population density trends and available hard and soft infrastructure, including community services and parks and open spaces

Report Highlights Continued

- The VMC Secondary Plan Update, VMC Transportation Master Plan Update, and VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan have begun
- The VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Update is advancing with a draft expected in Q4 2020
- The various VMC plans and studies inform each other and will be 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 will ensure every study undergoes a robust and strategically coordinated public consultation process to optimize input

Recommendation

1. That the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Studies Update report be received for information.

Background

As outlined in the VMC Development Activity Report being received today, and based on the approved and proposed residential developments to date, close to 63,300 residents in almost 32,000 residential units are moving into the VMC, achieving over 250% of the residential units and population targets identified for the 2031 planning horizon. These numbers have been achieved far earlier than expected. Given that this growth trend is expected to continue, staff have reassessed and refocused the priorities of the VMC. In order to meet the hard and soft infrastructure needs of this growing community, staff are undertaking an update of the VMC Secondary Plan, VMC Transportation Master Plan, and the VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report. Staff have also begun the VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan, the VMC Tree Planting Pilot Project, and the VMC Parking Pilot study. The VMC Capital Projects and Implementation Plan Update report, also received today, 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 May 2020](#)

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

[VMC Term of Council Priorities and Implementation Update April 2018](#)

Analysis and Options

The VMC Program comprises a multi-disciplinary, dedicated team working to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of infrastructure and services to the current and future residents, workers, and users of the VMC. The VMC Program's broad scope of work includes the coordination and delivery of the various studies identified below so that they inform each other and collectively contribute to the creation of a complete community in the VMC.

VMC Secondary Plan Update

The VMC Secondary Plan Update (VMC SP) was initiated in August 2020. The successful consulting team for this study consists of Gladki Planning Associates with Ken Greenberg, dTAH, and Urban Metrics. The consultant team is currently undertaking a review of existing planning documentation and supportive studies to prepare the Background Study Report that will inform the next steps of the VMC SP update. The consultant team has also recently participated in a coordinated site walk with City Staff and consultants for the VMC Transportation Master Plan and VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan to better understand the context of the downtown.

The existing VMC SP provides a strong policy foundation that initiated the development of Vaughan's emerging downtown. The City has been successful in working with landowners to create the first phase of the downtown build-out. The purpose of the VMC Secondary Plan update is to address new provincial and regional policies and confirm that the framework is still relevant considering the nature of existing, approved and proposed development in the VMC. Updates to the VMC SP policy framework and land use plan must continue to recognize the VMC as the City's priority intensification area and emerging downtown, while ensuring that the area continues to develop as a complete community. Fifteen million dollars in Section 37 community benefits have been collected to date through Council approvals to advance needed community infrastructure. With the introduction of Bill 197, a Community Benefits Charge (CBC) will replace Section 37 following adoption of a CBC By-law. The Secondary Plan Update will review this policy change.

The secondary plan update will include a Community Services & Facilities analysis and implementation plan which will assess the amount and types of facilities and community services needed to support the VMC and new density and population targets as mandated by the Province and the Region. The impact of COVID-19 on city building will also be assessed through the VMC SP Update. It will also consider a potential boundary expansion to incorporate additional lands into the VMC Secondary Plan area and will explore land use options, which will likely include opportunities for new parkland, informed by the VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan.

Next steps of the VMC SP Update include finalizing the public and stakeholder engagement strategy and developing a dedicated webpage for information and updates on the study. The VMC SP project team will be engaging with stakeholders, including public agencies, staff, landowners, and members of the public to seek input in the near future.

The study is targeted for completion in Q2 2022.

VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan

The VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan (VMC PWMP) was initiated in May 2020 with the successful proponent, Janet Rosenberg & Studio. The consultant has completed their background research and assessment of the parks and open space in the VMC and environs, culminating in their draft Assessment Report, of which they will present a summary of the findings.

The challenges of COVID-19 have made clear how vital parks are to our citizens, especially in high-density communities that have little private open space. The intent of the VMC PWMP is to prepare a master plan and implementation strategy to facilitate the timely development of parks and open space for VMC residents, commuters and visitors, as outlined in the VMC Secondary Plan and envisioned in supportive placemaking studies, together with the development of a public realm wayfinding strategy that can be implemented incrementally to achieve a legible and cohesive public realm.

As noted in the VMC Development Activity Report, there has been a remarkable increase in proposed densities in the VMC. If development trends continue, the VMC could become one of the most densely populated urban areas in North America. This trend, combined with the parkland proposed in the existing VMC Secondary Plan, could place the VMC parkland at or below levels in the most densely populated areas of the largest North American cities, where the shortage of parkland is an acknowledged problem. As other downtown areas in the GTA emerge, this amount of parkland may also place the VMC at a competitive disadvantage in attracting residents, employers, and visitors. Given these trends, the City must act expeditiously to ensure that our downtown is equipped with the necessary services to emerge as a complete community.

The findings of the Assessment Report, the first deliverable of the VMC PWMP, provide the City with valuable insight into demographics, service levels, and benchmarks that

will guide the timely provision of parkland in the VMC. Highlights of the assessment include:

- Active parkland and social infrastructure are critical priorities for the VMC.
- Of the 20 hectares of active parkland proposed through the VMC Secondary Plan, only five hectares are currently scheduled to be open by 2031, supporting a projected population of 63,300 as per the VMC Development Activity Report.
- Substantial additional active parkland, within the VMC or in close proximity, will be required to fully accommodate required facilities to serve the projected 2031 population and position the VMC as a leader in providing parkland to downtown residents in the GTA; this may also require the City to reconsider its approach to how density bonusing is reviewed and approved through the development application process, in order to minimize density growth beyond what was originally approved through the Secondary Plan
- Existing parks and open spaces within the VMC, or immediately adjacent to it, may be explored for potential expansion and/or improvements to service the new downtown's population
- Proposed Neighbourhood Parks are inadequate to provide the amount and configuration of active parkland needed to support required recreational facilities of each VMC neighbourhood precinct
- Stratified or private ownership of parks may limit the City's ability to respond to the future park needs of VMC residents and should be discouraged
- The VMC is uniquely situated among three significant greenways that run along the Humber River, Black Creek, and the West Don River. These greenways are linked by the hydro corridor running south of Highway 407, within which a future extension of the Vaughan Super Trail is proposed. If this trail system was combined with a safe and accessible connection across Highway 407 for pedestrians and cyclists, it would provide VMC residents with access to many kilometers of trails, parks, and green spaces
- The area south of Highway 407 also contains two large parcels of publicly owned lands where active parkland could be located: a 40-hectare parcel west and south of the Highway 407 TTC Station and the 12.8-hectare north parcel of Black Creek Pioneer Village

This initial report is giving the City a better understanding of the current state of parkland provision and gaps in service levels and will guide the next stages of the study as it works to enable the implementation of a diverse, multi-functional, and seamlessly interconnected parks and open space network. The consultant will next produce a Design Brief, with conceptual options that describe the character and facilities of the VMC parks and open spaces, with a particular focus on advancing the public realm of the Black Creek corridor. The consultant will also be looking at preliminary signage options and strategies and will continue to look for options to provide active parkland to the VMC.

The findings of the Assessment Report will inform the Community Services & Facilities study to be completed as part of the VMC Secondary Plan Update.

The study is targeted for completion in Q4 2021.

VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Update

The VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report (VMC FSSR) is advancing, led by consultant Civica Infrastructure with EOR.

A draft VMC FSSR is expected in Q4 2020, and the final report will be completed in conjunction with the City-wide Integrated Urban Water Master Plan (IUWMP). The IUWMP includes fourteen study areas, including the VMC. The study is assessing the water, wastewater, and stormwater systems performances under existing and ultimate buildout scenarios, based on updated population targets and trends, and will establish a long-term strategy to provide safe, reliable, and sustainable services to the existing and future population of the VMC and the City of Vaughan. The study includes a review and is an update of the VMC's existing 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.

A guideline for Low Impact Development (LID) measures for stormwater management will be included as part of the study, focusing on roads, right-of-ways, and public parks and open spaces. Contributions from all City departments will inform the development of the LID guideline, expected in November 2020.

VMC Transportation Master Plan Update

The VMC Transportation Master Plan Update (VMC TMP) was initiated in September 2020 with the successful proponent, WSP Consulting. The consultant is currently undertaking a review of existing documentation and supportive studies, coordinating

data collection, and has participated in a coordinated site walk with City Staff and consultants for the VMC SP and VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan.

The VMC TMP will undergo a fulsome review and update to support increased densities and population, coordinated with the updated VMC SP. The study will be used to provide direction on developing a refined multi-modal transportation network for the VMC area, supporting innovative mobility strategies and a strategic implementation plan.

The study will work interactively with the City's OPR, and updates to the Zoning By-law and the on-going City-wide Transportation Master Plan (Vaughan Transportation Plan) to inform policies, initiatives, and infrastructure improvements. It will address Phases 1 and 2 of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) process and provide direction on building a refined multi-modal transportation network. The study will include the completion of two Municipal Class Environmental Assessments (to Phase 4) for Interchange Way (from Commerce Street to Creditstone Road) and Millway Avenue (from Highway 7 to Interchange Way East-West).

Results and recommendations of the VMC TMP are anticipated by Q4 2021–Q1 2022.

The Parking Pilot Project RFP was released in October 2020

In May 2020, Council approved a two-year first-of-its-kind pilot project in Vaughan to implement paid on-street public parking in the VMC Mobility Hub area. A Request For Proposal (RFP) was prepared utilizing the information received from a previous Request For Information. The project is expected to be awarded this year and the pilot implemented in 2021 in step with the opening of the new Centre of Community.

The implementation of the pilot is described in the VMC Capital Projects Update Report being received today.

VMC Tree Planting Pilot Project

Staff have identified underutilized roadsides, verges, and medians adjacent to Highways 400 and 407 as an opportunity to create a new green edge to the VMC through the VMC Tree Planting Pilot Project. This new urban forest will increase tree canopy coverage, provide enhanced ecosystem services, create a buffer to new development, and increase the legibility of the VMC.

A specialist consultant is expected to be retained in Q4 2020. The work produced under this study will inform a forthcoming tree planting tender, anticipated in Q1 2020, including a complete soil specification.

An Innovative and Coordinated Consultation Plan is Being Developed

Staff are ensuring every study undergoes a robust and strategically coordinated public consultation process to optimize input to the work. In addition to leveraging the VMC Landowner Working Group platform developed over many years, staff are working both internally and with external consultants to develop engagement processes that effectively reach Vaughan's residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. Current consultation methods are focusing on virtual connections and will be evaluated over time.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts resulting from this report.

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 VMC Program, ext. 8231

Attachments

1. N/A

Prepared by

Cory Gray, Project Manager, Parks Development, VMC, Ext. 8579
Gaston Soucy, Project Manager, Urban Design, VMC, Ext. 8266

Gerardo Paez Alonso, Manager, Parks & Strategic Initiatives, VMC, Ext. 8195
Jennifer Cappola-Logullo, Manager, Development Engineering, VMC, Ext. 8433
Amy Roots, Senior Manager, Planning & Urban Design, VMC, Ext. 8035
Christina Bruce, Director, VMC Program, ext. 8231

Approved by



Nick Spensieri, Deputy City Manager,
Infrastructure Development

Reviewed by



Jim Harnum, City Manager