

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Wednesday, April 7, 2021

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: RESPONSE TO COUNCIL DIRECTION TO EXPLORE LAND USE STUDY OPTIONS FOR VELLORE CENTRE

FROM:

Jim Harnum, City Manager

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To present a staff recommendation for Council decision in response to Council's direction at the October 21, 2020 meeting to explore the options for possible land use studies to guide development in the Vellore Centre as a Local Centre.

Report Highlights

- Three options were assessed in response to Council direction to explore options for possible land use studies to guide development in the Vellore Centre.
- A landowner meeting and a ratepayer meeting were held to obtain community input.
- An overview of the current policy framework is provided, including noting that the previous Vellore Village District Centre Secondary Plan (OPA 650) is superseded by the Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (VOP 2010).
- While the option of an area-specific land use study can be undertaken and be cost neutral to the City, staff recommend maintaining the existing policy framework as a basis to process development applications until further evaluation through the Official Plan Review.

Recommendations

1. THAT the existing policy framework continue to be the basis for processing development applications in Vellore Centre.

Background

In response to Council's consideration of Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment Files OP.20.008 and Z.20016 (Major Weston Centres Limited) at the Committee of the Whole (Public Meeting), on October 6, 2020, the following recommendation was approved (in part):

"That a communication be provided by staff to the Council meeting of October 21, 2020, with respect to implementing a secondary plan in this area."

Council on October 16, 2020, approved the following Recommendation in response to a Staff Communication (Communication #23):

"That Council direct staff to further explore the options for possible land use studies to guide development in the Vellore Centre as a Local Centre in the Vaughan Official Plan 2010."

The Subject Lands are part of a Local Centre in the Vaughan Official Plan 2010

The subject lands as shown on Attachment 1 are identified as a Local Centre on Schedule 1 – Urban Structure and noted as the Vellore Centre in Figure 6 – Intensification Areas in Chapter 2 of Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (VOP 2010). Policy 2.2.1.1 describes Local Centres having a mixed-use focus for their respective communities, in a manner that is compatible with the local context. Policy 2.2.5.7 further directs that Local Centres shall be planned to:

- develop with a mix of housing types and tenures, including housing suitable for seniors and families with children and affordable housing
- be predominantly residential in character but include a mix of uses including retail, office and community facilities intended to serve the local population and attract activity throughout the day
- be the preferred location for locally-delivered human and community services
- be the focal points for expression of community heritage and character
- develop at densities supportive of planned or potential public transit, taking into account the local urban fabric of each Local Centre
- have a fine grain of streets suitable for pedestrians and cyclists, with appropriate internal links, such as sidewalks and greenways, through the Local Centre and links to the surrounding Community Areas

- include well designed public open spaces that are either landscaped parks, or public plazas or both in a manner that is appropriate to the local context
- encourage a pedestrian-friendly built form by locating active uses at grade
- be designed and developed to implement appropriate transition of intensity and use to surrounding neighbourhoods, and/or separation from adjacent Employment Areas

There is a range of existing built form, development approvals and proposals in the Local Centre

The northeast quadrant of the subject lands is subject to the policies of Chapter 12 specifically 12.6 – Northeast Quadrant of Major Mackenzie Drive and Weston Road, in Volume 2 of VOP 2010. The Area Specific Policy - 12.6 establishes the permitted uses and built form including heights, densities, and urban design framework to define both a Village and Commercial District, and a Village Promenade located within the Village District. The northeast quadrant of the subject lands includes the Village Promenade and are designated Village District which is defined as follows:

- The Village District Area is the location of the most compact development form within the subject lands. It is intended to be an area of grade related mixed-use retail commercial and office development, combining high order retail uses and eating establishments. Residential uses appropriately integrated into the area are also permitted.

The lands within the Village District designation may accommodate development to a maximum total gross floor area of 17,000 m² and a maximum building height along the Village Promenade frontage of 4-storeys.

The northeast quadrant of the subject lands are 2.55 hectares in size and municipally known as 3600 Major Mackenzie Drive. They are currently undeveloped and were the subject of a report considered by the Committee of the Whole (Public Meeting) on October 6, 2020 to amend the Official Plan and Zoning by-law to (in part):

- redesignate the lands from “Mid-Rise Mixed-Use” to “High-Rise Mixed-Use”, with a maximum building height of 24-storeys and a Floor Space Index (‘FSI’) of 4.1 times the area of the lot
- permit a Seniors Supportive Living Building use with 185 units per hectare and a maximum building height of 12-storeys

The northwest quadrant of the subject lands is zoned “RA3(H) Apartment Residential Zone Three” with the Holding Symbol by By-law 1-88, subject to site-specific Exception 9(1351) that allows for two residential apartment buildings up to 12-storeys, block

townhouse and semi-detached dwellings, and two commercial buildings. This zoning implements an Ontario Municipal Board Order issued in November 2011 (Official Plan Amendment #712 and Zoning By-law 234-2010).

The southeast quadrant is zoned “C5 Community Commercial Zone” and is developed with an existing low rise commercial development. The southwest quadrant is zoned “A Agricultural Zone” and currently occupied with temporary new home sales offices and a Ministry of Transportation works facility.

The Subject Lands were previously part of the defined Vellore-Urban Village 1 area in OPA 600

Vellore-Urban Village 1 as described in OPA 600 included provisions for a future District Centre (Vellore Village Centre) focused on the area at the intersection of Major Mackenzie Drive and Weston Road. Prior to any development occurring in this District Centre a detailed tertiary plan was to be prepared to guide the built form for the four quadrants of the intersection of Major Mackenzie Drive and Weston Road. OPA 600 has been superseded by VOP 2010.

The Vellore Village District Centre Secondary Plan (OPA 650) provided policy direction for a Village Core with generally a Low Rise Residential designation surrounding the Village Core, however, is no longer in-effect

In accordance with the direction in OPA 600 to develop a tertiary plan for the area, the City initiated the Vellore Village District Centre Secondary Plan (Vellore Plan) study which was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board February 3, 2005. The main land use designations included ‘Low-Rise Residential’ and ‘Village Core’. However, when Council approved Vaughan Official Plan 2010 in September 2010, the Vellore Plan was not carried forward and incorporated into the City’s Official Plan and is not currently in-effect.

Most of the low-rise residential development identified in the Vellore Plan has built out at this time. As such, the current Vellore Centre, as a Local Centre in VOP 2010, is generally coincident with the Village Core as shown on Schedule A Vellore Village District Centre Plan of the Vellore Plan.

The Policy Context section of the Vellore Village District Centre Secondary Plan also describes the rationale for heights and densities implemented through the Vellore Plan. With the exception of the Ontario Municipal Board approval for the northwest quadrant that allows heights to 12-storeys, the height maximum of 6-storeys from the Vellore Plan (see excerpted text below) was carried forward to Schedule 13 of VOP 2010 and applies to the ‘Mid-Rise Mixed-Use’ designation of the other three quadrants:

The only notable change to the original vision for the District Centres in OPA 600 was a Vaughan Council adopted reduction of the maximum permitted residential density within the Vellore Village District Centre from high density to medium density. In its approval of OPA 600, the Region of York deferred this policy change pending examination of this issue during the course of the Vellore Village District Centre Study. In the course of the extensive consultation held during the District Centre Study there were conflicting perspectives on the appropriate height of buildings to be permitted in the Village Core Area. This plan addresses the height issue by providing for a transition of heights and densities from the Village Core to the residential neighbourhoods outside the Village Centre.

Applications for greater heights and densities will be required to go through a public process that includes a concurrent site plan application and may be permitted in exchange for public benefits such as underground parking and increased landscaped open space. The applications will also be assessed against a list of urban design criteria and potentially permit up to the 6 stories provided in OPA 600 and 100 units per hectare.

York Region Official Plan 2010 identifies Major Mackenzie Drive as a Regional Rapid Transit Corridor

The York Region Official Plan 2010 (YROP 2010) identifies Major Mackenzie Drive as a Rapid Transit Corridor east of Weston Road and as a Transit Priority Network west of Weston Road. The following description is provided in the York Region Transportation Master Plan of November 2016 regarding the Major Mackenzie Rapid Transit Corridor:

- *The central section of Major Mackenzie Drive, from Jane Street to Leslie Street, is part of the Viva Network Expansion Plan with curbside stations being constructed starting in 2018. The central section connects the Jane Street rapid transit corridor and the Leslie Street rapid transit corridor. The central section should be extended to Woodbine Avenue to also connect with the potential rapid transit corridor on Woodbine Avenue. Two areas of constraint along this corridor are the sections east and west of Keele Street (Maple) and east of Yonge Street (Richmond Hill)*

The Jane Street rapidway (6 kilometres) and Major Mackenzie Drive rapidway (23 kilometres) are not funded and are identified by York Region Transit as future projects (http://www.vivanext.com/project_nextBRT).

Previous Reports/Authority

[Communication C23](#) is a Staff Communication to the Council meeting of October 21, 2020, responding to Council direction from the meeting of the Committee of the Whole

(Public Meeting) of October 6, 2020, “That a communication be provided by staff to the Council meeting of October 21, 2020, with respect to implementing a secondary plan in this area”.

[Major Weston Centres Limited Official Plan and Zoning By-Law Amendment Files OP.20.008 and Z.20.016](#) for lands at the northeast quadrant of the Local Centre was the subject of a Committee of the Whole (Public Hearing) on October 6, 2020.

Analysis and Options

City Staff reviewed three options, including maintaining the existing policy framework and two land use study approaches

Three options are assessed in response to the Council direction: maintain the existing policy framework in VOP 2010 (Option 1); an area-specific land use study (Option 2); and a secondary plan (Option 3). City staff considered factors such as the longevity of a land use plan, ability to protect the mixed-use vision of the Vellore Centre as a Local Centre in VOP 2010 within the over-arching urban structure, ability to consider resident and landowner feedback, and improving Vellore Centre as a complete community in the analysis of land use study options. Based on the analysis described below, and considering stakeholder input, staff recommend maintaining the existing policy framework in VOP 2010 as a basis to process development applications, and not to initiate a new land use study at this time.

Focused stakeholder consultation included outreach to ratepayer groups and landowners to seek feedback on the three options

Ratepayer Consultation

A virtual meeting was held on Wednesday March 3, 2021 with representatives of the Vellore Woods Ratepayers’ Association and Millwood-Woodend Ratepayers’ Association. A written submission was provided on Monday March 8, 2021.

Members of the ratepayers’ associations noted their support to maintain the existing policy framework and did not support a land use study. Members commented on their interest in maintaining the “original historical nature of Vellore Village”. VOP 2010 policy was noted that directs that new development be context sensitive and be designed to respect and reinforce the existing physical character of the surrounding uses.

Landowner Consultation

A virtual meeting was held on Monday February 22, 2021 to seek feedback from landowners and their agents with interest in the Vellore Centre. One landowner noted that their development applications (Files OP.20.008 and Z.20.016) were deemed complete by the City in August 2020. An agent acting for one property (Vaughan

Northwest Residences Inc.) noted that their applications for a Plan of Subdivision (File 19T-19V005) and Zoning By-law Amendment (File Z.19.029) were recently approved by Council on February 16, 2021. The City received four (4) written submissions on Friday February 26, 2021 from the landowners and agents that participated in the virtual meeting.

Landowners and their agents expressed a concern that a land use study, either an area-specific study or secondary plan, would delay the development application and approvals process that is being duly followed by the applicants. There is a general concurrence that the Vellore Centre has been adequately studied and that any additional study at this time would only assist in the review of existing applications.

Option 1 – Maintain Existing Policy Framework

The existing policy framework for Vellore Centre is robust based on VOP 2010 Policy 2.2.1.1(d)(iv) and more specifically Policy 2.2.5.7 (a) through (i) describing the mixed-use vision for Local Centres. The Area Specific Policies of the northeast quadrant of Vellore Centre, Section 12.6 of VOP 2010, has focus on an urban design framework.

The 'Mid-Rise Mixed-Use' designation is generally located in Intensification areas such as Local Centres and permits a mix of residential, retail community and institutional uses including home occupations, community facilities, cultural uses, office uses, parking garage, hotel, and gas stations subject to specific policies.

Building types permitted in the 'Mid-Rise Mixed-Use' designation include Mid-Rise Buildings, Public and Private Institutional Buildings, and Gas Stations. Where the 'Mid-Rise Mixed-Use' designation is located within 70 metres of an area designated 'Low-Rise Residential' or on streets that are not arterial streets or Major Collector streets, additional building types maybe permitted to provide an appropriate transition to the 'Low-Rise Residential' area, such as Townhouses, Stacked Townhouses and, Low-Rise buildings.

A small part of the Local Centre is designated 'Low-Rise Mixed-Use' and is general located along arterial and collector streets. The 'Low-Rise Mixed-Use' designation permits residential, home occupation, small scale hotels, retail uses and subject to criteria and office uses. Building Types permitted in the ' Low-Rise Mixed-Use' include Townhouses, Stacked Townhouses, Low-Rise Buildings, and Public and Private Institutional Buildings.

The southeast corner of the subject lands as shown on Attachment 1 is designated 'Mid-Rise Mixed-Use' and permits a maximum building height of 6-storeys with a Floor

Space Index ('FSI') of 2.0 times the lot area. The lands are currently developed with multiple commercial/retail use buildings.

The southwest portion of the subject lands as shown on Attachment 1 is also designated 'Mid-Rise Mixed-Use' with a maximum building height of 6-storeys and an FSI of 2.0. This quadrant of the study area includes 3 separate properties. The larger L-shaped property is owned by the Province and currently used for the Ministry of Transportation Maple Patrol Yard and contains outside storage of equipment and vehicles. Directly at the southwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Weston Road are two properties where four (4) temporary new home sales offices are located.

The northwest quadrant of the subject lands includes 2 properties as well directly at the corner the maximum building height permitted is 12-storeys and an FSI of 1.581 times the lot area the property is currently vacant. The second parcel which is vacant and partly in the study area is designated 'Low-Rise Mixed-Use' with a maximum building height of 4-storeys and an FSI of 1.5 times the lot area.

The building height restriction to 6-storeys, carried forward from the Vellore Village District Centre Secondary Plan approved in 2005, is an issue of consideration when planning to the 2041 or 2051 planning horizon. Otherwise, the existing policy framework for Local Centres and the 'Mid-Rise Mixed-Use' designation, together with guidance documents such as the City-wide Urban Design Guidelines, provides a basis for processing development applications.

The "Where and How to Grow" report, developed as a background study for VOP 2010, estimated 1,400 units and about 2,900 people by the 2031 planning horizon. This analysis, however, only contemplated the parcels at the southwest and southeast of Major Mackenzie Drive and Weston Road.

Attention to transit-supportive development is an additional area for consideration in reviewing the existing policy framework. This does not require that built form densities are maximized. Rather, transit-supportive development in the Local Centre can focus attention on "complete streets" design guidelines, alternatives to surface parking, and multi-purpose open space.

In accordance with Policy 10.1.3.3 of VOP 2010, the City can require a Concept Plan, a Development Concept Report and Phasing Plan, or a Comprehensive Development Plan as part of a complete application. This allows a site-specific application to be reviewed in context of adjacent lands.

Option 2 – Area-Specific Land Use Study with a Focus on Urban Design

Staff consideration of an area-specific land use study has a focus primarily on development alternatives, based on built form and massing, and an urban design framework. The development concepts and urban design framework will inform a revision of relevant VOP 2010 policies, while maintaining the general mid-rise mixed-use vision, implemented through an official plan amendment. The policy revision will also be informed by a transportation analysis and review of open space and pedestrian/cycling network in an effort to promote a multimodal pedestrian/cycling oriented urban fabric. Stakeholder consultation remains a critical component of the land use study. The Carrville District Centre Urban Design Streetscape Master Plan Study completed in 2010 is an example of the deliverable from an area-specific land use study.

The development concepts would explore built form and massing within the 'Mid-Rise Mixed-Use' designation (e.g. heights over 5-storeys to a maximum of 12-storeys) as well as modest height increases rationalized and supported through comprehensive demonstration modeling. The built form and massing concepts would explore introducing more context sensitive residential uses while maintaining retail and other uses, provide a fine grain street network, identify a hierarchy of parks and open spaces, and assess densities to support public transit consistent with the policy direction for Local Centres.

An estimated budget of \$275,000 is required to secure consultants through a competitive procurement. This budget can be offset by transferring budget from existing projects PL-9533-13 and PL-9535-13 so the overall capital budget for the City remains neutral.

An area-specific land use study as defined above will require approximately 18 months to complete. It does not necessarily protect the City from appeals related to refusals or failure of the City to make a decision on a development application. There is also a risk that a future Secondary Plan or land use study for a larger study area may be recommended through the Official Plan Review and result in some duplication of effort.

Option 3 – Secondary Plan

Policy aspects addressed in Secondary Plans are outlined in VOP 2010 Policy 10.1.1.3. VOP 2010 Policy 10.1.1.1 directs that "Additional Secondary Plans may be required, at the discretion of the City".

A Secondary Plan study can include a larger study area, consideration of build out to a longer planning horizon, and evaluation of appropriate heights and densities. A Transportation Master Plan is often a concurrent study to a Secondary Plan.

Consideration of community services and possible changes to servicing requirements should be included if a Secondary Plan approach is recommended.

A Secondary Plan has the advantage of providing more longevity to the policy framework and attention to required infrastructure to support proposed development. However, a Secondary Plan would require an assessment through the annual budget process and often requires three to four years for completion. A Secondary Plan, should this option be selected, would only be underway at the earliest in late 2022 and can aim for completion in 2025. While difficult to estimate the cost of a Secondary Plan without consideration of the specific scope of work, a budget over \$400,000 is entirely likely for the land use planning portion of a Secondary Plan. A concurrent Transportation Master Plan would be an additional budget request.

Financial Impact

An estimated budget of \$275,000 is required to secure consultants through a competitive procurement to undertake an area-specific land use study, which can be offset by transferring budget from existing projects PL-9533-13 and PL-9535-13 so the overall capital budget for the City remains neutral.

A Secondary Plan requires an assessment and approval through the annual budget process. Budgets vary depending on the scope of a Secondary Plan, and together with a Transportation Master Plan, is a considerably larger budget request.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The York Region Official Plan (YROP 2010) describes Local Centres as focal points for residential, human services, commercial and office activities for the surrounding community. The smaller scale and scope of Local Centres do not diminish their importance to the overall urban structure. Local Centres can vary greatly in size, nature, and characteristics. Local Centres are also used to reflect the culture and history of York Region through heritage streetscapes. Certain Local Corridors, which may be Regional arterial streets, in existing and proposed urban areas, have the potential for intensive and mixed-use land development, supported by public transit services.

Conclusion

The existing policy framework for Vellore Centre as a Local Centre in VOP 2010 implements the vision of a mixed-use centre and is suitable as a basis to process development applications. Staff recommends maintaining the existing VOP 2010 policy framework to guide future development together with guidance documents such as the City-wide Urban Design Guidelines.

An area-specific land use study described in Option 2 above can provide a more comprehensive urban design vision for Vellore Centre, including attention to a street

network and a parks and open space hierarchy demonstrated through development concepts. Such an approach can have an emphasis on stakeholder consultation to inform aspects of the urban design framework, however, the processing of the current development applications can still proceed in advance of the findings of an area-specific land use study. Should Council direct an area-specific land use study, approved budget in existing capital projects can be reallocated to undertake such a study and be cost neutral for the City.

Staff recommend that any decision to undertake a Secondary Plan be determined through the Official Plan Review that is informed by appropriate studies that establish an updated urban structure and strategy for growth management for the City.

For more information, please contact: Tony Iacobelli, Acting Director of Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability.

Attachments

1. Location Map of Vellore Centre Subject Lands

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