

VMC Sub-committee Report

DATE: Tuesday, June 8, 2021

WARD: 4

TITLE: VMC PARKS AND WAYFINDING MASTER PLAN UPDATE –
REFINED SCENARIO

FROM:

Haiqing Xu, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an update on the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan (PWMP), its progress and implementation, and how it contributes to the creation of a complete community in the VMC.

Report Highlights

- The VMC PWMP has developed a refined scenario for the parks and open space network in the VMC that includes intensifying parkland within the downtown, capitalizing on parkland opportunities outside of the VMC boundary, and providing significant parkland in potential boundary expansion study areas
- The master plan will create a compact, balanced, and meaningful parks and open space network reflective of the urban context within the VMC boundary, with access to larger sporting facilities, trails, and green space nearby
- The study has developed a circulation network that provides Vaughan residents with multiple ways to travel around and through the VMC and connect with the broader community, particularly into trails and green space

Report Highlights (continued)

- Urban park facilities, including dog parks and playgrounds, are featured in the master plan, which reflects the unique needs and demographics of a dense urban population.
- The signage and wayfinding design process continues and will be reported upon at a future VMC Sub-committee meeting.
- The study has used virtual focus groups for direct engagement with the public and the City's Have Your Say platform for broader engagement, which is ongoing.

Recommendation

1. That this report be received for information.

Background

The VMC PWMP was initiated in May 2020 with the successful proponent, Janet Rosenberg & Studio. A draft Assessment Report, with background research and an evaluation of the parks and open space in the VMC and environs, was presented to the VMC Sub-committee in November 2020.

Building on the findings of the Assessment Report and Phase 1 public engagement process, the VMC PWMP presented parks and open space scenarios to the VMC Sub-committee in March 2021, based on draft design principles and a facility fit study. Park facility requirements were based on projected populations and demographics, and scenarios were studied that looked at parkland opportunities both within and outside the existing VMC boundary.

The developed scenarios included the following:

- Intensifying park facility distribution within the existing parkland defined in the VMC Secondary Plan (2010), including adding a small amount of parkland
- Expanding south to create new parkland south of Highway 407 and west of the 407 subway station
- Expanding north to create new parkland in the elbow of the Black Creek north of Portage Parkway, effectively enlarging Edgeley Pond and Park, and potentially other sites
- Expanding east to create new parkland between Maplecrete Road and Creditstone Road

These scenarios, which can be implemented over time in a measured response to development, will provide the City with options for service level delivery, and ultimately create a diverse, multi-functional, and seamlessly interconnected parks and open space network.

In addition to refining the master plan preferred scenarios, the consultant began the signage and wayfinding design process. The study has defined an area encompassing the Mobility Hub, part of Edgeley Pond and Park and associated Strata Park for the initial wayfinding design exercise. This area was chosen because it includes most of the types of parks and public realm spaces likely to require signage across the VMC.

The VMC PWMP is being coordinated with the concurrent updates of the VMC Secondary Plan, VMC Transportation Master Plan, and the VMC Functional Servicing Strategy Report.

Previous Reports/Authority

Previous reports relating to the VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan can be found at the following links:

[VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan Update March 2021](#)

[VMC Studies Update November 2020](#)

[VMC Studies Update May 2020](#)

Analysis and Options

There are opportunities to add active parkland and improve the public realm both within and adjacent to the VMC. Since March 2021, the VMC PWMP team has worked on refining the preferred scenario for the parks and open space network in the VMC. This scenario incorporates aspects of the previously reported options, including intensifying parkland within the VMC boundary, expanding north and south, and providing significant parkland in potential boundary expansion study areas.

The consultant has refined the master plan with respect to the distribution of urban park facilities and circulation networks. The study has layered various circulation networks over the parks and open space to analyze the connections and address gaps. Building on previous VMC studies, they have further developed a “loop” concept to include an inner “Urban Loop” and an outer “Open Space Loop” providing Vaughan residents with multiple ways to travel around and through the VMC and connect with the broader community, particularly into trails and green space to the south.

Park facilities, including well used urban facilities like dog parks and playgrounds, reflect the unique needs and demographics of a dense urban population. Parks and open space are programmed according to a hierarchy that recognizes the frequency and importance of use to ensure that facilities are appropriately located.

The master plan will create a compact, balanced, and meaningful parks and open space network within the VMC boundary with access to larger sporting facilities, trails, and green space nearby, while providing the City with options for service level delivery, and ultimately create a diverse, multi-functional, and seamlessly interconnected parks and open space network.

The study team continues to communicate with the Ministry of Transportation about the area west of the 407 subway station that the MTO has reserved for the 407 Transitway and its maintenance operations, including the timing of the next phases of the BRT project.

The study team also continues to communicate with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority about the North Lands of Black Creek Pioneer Village, including the availability of the lands, opportunities for programming and activation, and trails or other circulation routes that can safely and efficiently connect the lands to the VMC.

City Staff continues to coordinate the planning and design of the North and South Urban Parks with each landowner respectively. The first block of North Urban Park, also known conceptually as Central Park, was presented to the Vaughan Design Review Panel in March. The design of Central Park, Block 1, with any revisions resulting from the panel's comments, will be incorporated into the VMC PWMP. The design of South Urban Park continues to evolve through a workshop process with landowner, consultants, Staff, and PWMP study team.

The signage and wayfinding design process is considering issues, strategy, and design approach. Further definition of messaging, locations, and typologies is underway in schematic design and will be reported upon at a future VMC Sub-committee.

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

The parks master plan is targeted for completion in Q4 2021 – Q1 2022, with prototype signage design and installation continuing to Q2 2022.

An Innovative and Coordinated Consultation Plan is Being Undertaken

Current consultation methods are focusing on virtual connections and will be evaluated over time. The initial VMC PWMP survey received over 500 responses, both online and through hard copies. Some of the key results from the survey included:

- 75% of survey respondents said parks and open spaces were most important when considering where to live
- 76% of respondents said running/walking was the most popular recreational activity in their household
- Almost a quarter of respondents go to parks to walk their dogs and want off-leash dog areas
- 21% of respondents want community gardens
- 55% of respondents are willing to drive or take transit for at least 15 minutes to use a large sports field

Phase two of the consultation plan commenced in May 2021 through virtual focus groups with members of the public. These focus groups were recorded, and the presentation has been posted on Have Your Say for an ongoing, broader engagement with the public over an extended period. Significant work was done to clarify the master plan for presentation to the public. The landscape architect and engagement consultant worked together with Staff to create an engaging presentation to educate, inform, and generate valuable feedback. Current and future phases of the project will continue to use online surveys and will also utilize online focus groups, idea boards, and other virtual engagement tools.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts resulting from this report. An Order of Magnitude cost estimate that captures the capital cost for developing the VMC Parks will be developed through Q2 – Q3 of 2021. This information will be used to reconcile the expected implementation capital cost and available Park DC's and identify any existing funding gaps.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Collaboration continues with regional stakeholders which is an important factor in realizing the success of the VMC. Certain options developed through the VMC PWMP will require coordination with regional stakeholders and external agencies to determine their feasibility and advance the study.

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. Active parkland and social infrastructure are critical priorities for the VMC.

The VMC PWMP has developed a refined scenario for the VMC's parks and open spaces, vetted by public and stakeholder input, and coordinated with concurrent VMC studies. The study will ultimately contribute to downtown's continuing development 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, public agencies, residents, landowners, and other stakeholders to deliver a complete community.

For more information, please contact Amy Roots, Acting Director, VMC Program, ext. 8035.

Attachments

N/A

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