

VMC Sub-committee Report

DATE: Tuesday, November 2, 2021

WARD: 4

**TITLE: VMC PARKS AND WAYFINDING MASTER PLAN UPDATE –
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

FROM:

Haiping 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 study has continued to refine the master plan while also looking at implementation: when parks can be delivered and how much they will cost, and developing a preliminary framework of recommendations.
- The master plan provides a framework for securing parkland provision standards by 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 signage and wayfinding design process continues to be developed in parallel and will be reported upon at a future VMC Sub-committee meeting.
- The study continues to use the City's Have Your Say platform for engagement with the public, which is ongoing.
- The master plan was well received at the September 2021 Design Review Panel.

Recommendation

1. That the VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan Update – Implementation Plan Report be received for information.

Background

The VMC Parks and Wayfinding Master Plan will provide the City with a Parks and Open Space Master Plan that identifies parkland provision gaps, generates recommendations, and prepares a plan that can be implemented in a timely manner to fulfill the VMC parkland target at a mid-to-long term time frame. 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.

In June 2021, the study presented a refined scenario that incorporated 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 master plan was refined with respect to the distribution of urban park facilities and circulation networks. The study layered various circulation networks over the parks and open space to analyze the connections and address gaps, including a “loop” concept 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.

Parks and open space were programmed according to a hierarchy that recognizes the frequency and importance of use to ensure that facilities are appropriately located. Park facilities reflect the unique needs and demographics of a dense urban population.

The refined scenario, 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.

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, with 75% of survey respondents said parks and open spaces were most important when considering where to live.

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 was posted on Have Your Say for a 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.

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 - Refined Scenario June 2021](#)

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

[VMC Studies Update November 2020](#)

[VMC Studies Update May 2020](#)

Analysis and Options

Growth trends in the VMC are outpacing provision of social infrastructure, with parkland an area of particular concern. VMC parkland development is lagging with respect to the City's aspirational target of 10 hectares of planned parkland by 2031. It is also expected that with growing density trends additional parkland will have to be secured to provide adequate active and passive recreation facilities to all VMC residents, day commuters and visitors.

In the context of the VMC's growth, the study has identified opportunities to add active parkland and improve the public realm both within and adjacent to the VMC. The study is a master plan and is being coordinated with the VMC Secondary Plan Update, which will deal with land designation.

The study has continued to refine the master plan, including creating a three-dimensional model and rendering of the proposed parks and open space system, while also looking at implementation: when parks can be delivered and how much they will cost.

The study was presented to the Design Review Panel on September 30, 2021, where it was well received. Feedback from the panel has been incorporated into the master plan.

The consultant has developed a preliminary framework for recommendations, focused on the following areas:

- Phasing
- Acquisition
- Costing
- Community Benefit Charges (CBC)
- Operations and Maintenance
- Park Governance

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 will ultimately create a diverse, multi-functional, and seamlessly interconnected parks and open space network. As the majority of parks are development driven, Staff have been partnering with landowners to advance parks where possible.

City Staff continue 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, is 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 study team continues to define the area west of the Highway 407 subway station, that the MTO has reserved for the 407 Transitway and its maintenance operations, as potential parkland, to be developed at a future date when there is more clarity around the MTO's intentions. Comments have also been provided to the Region's team studying the South York Greenway, including seeking clarification on how the proposed trail system will interact with the transitway.

The study team continues to communicate with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority about the North Lands of Black Creek Pioneer Village, including two dedicated meetings about 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. The consultant toured the site with the TRCA to evaluate its possibilities as parkland.

Signage design continues

In addition to refining the master plan, the consultant continues the signage and wayfinding design process. The study 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 consultant is developing schematic 3D models of six potential options for a VMC pylon sign which will be evaluated by various City departments. More refined designs, with modifications related to form, graphics, and durability, will be presented to a future VMC Sub-committee. Once developed, the pylon typology will guide the design and creation of a family of additional sign typologies that will address the various needs of the VMC parks and open space network.

Coordination with related studies

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 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.

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

Virtual consultation continues

The third phase of consultation on the study will commence in early November using the City's Have Your Say platform. The consultant worked with Staff to create an engaging presentation to educate, inform, and generate valuable feedback.

The study will consult with local landowners prior to finalizing the master plan.

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 is in progress.

This information will be used to reconcile the expected implementation capital cost and available Park DC's, identify any existing funding gaps and help inform the Community Benefit Charges' ongoing study.

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 their implementation.

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 continues to advance the master plan 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 the 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 Christina Bruce, Director of Policy Planning and Special Programs, ext. 8231.

Attachments

N/A

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