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CITY OF VAUGHAN OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 631 - BOCA EAST INVESTMENTS LIMITED

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated February 12, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

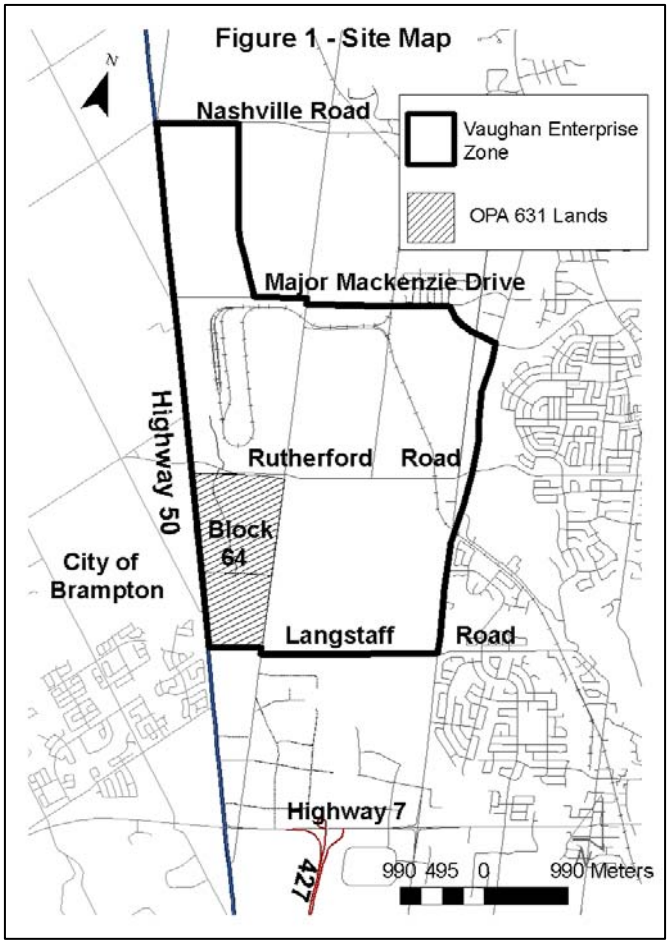
1. The Commissioner of Planning and Development Services be authorized to issue a Notice of Decision to modify and approve Vaughan Official Plan Amendment No. 631, subject to the modification attached to this report as *Attachment 1*.

2. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report and related attachments to the respective planning departments of the City of Vaughan, City of Brampton, Region of Peel and Town of Caledon.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to recommend Regional modification and approval of Vaughan Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 631, and to provide:

- background on the land use and infrastructure planning framework for OPA 631 and the balance of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone lands;
- a summary of the comments from adjacent municipalities and other agencies; and,
- analysis on how OPA 631 provides for the orderly development of employment lands in a manner that protects for the Highway 427 alignment and other transportation improvements.



3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Location and Context

The lands subject to OPA 631 are known as Block 64; comprising approximately 175 hectares (432 acres) of land in south western Vaughan (see Figure 1). Land uses currently occupying these lands include a golf course, service station, farmland, heritage homes and a training centre.

This block forms part of an emerging employment area known as the Vaughan Enterprise Zone. This area is strategically located for employment uses due to its proximity to Toronto, L.B. Pearson International Airport, existing and planned rail and highway infrastructure, and established industrial uses including the Sears Distribution Warehouse and the CP Intermodal Yard.

3.2 Purpose and Effect of OPA 631

OPA 631 does two things with respect to the Block 64 lands: 1) brings them into the City's urban boundary by removing them from the "Rural Use Area" designation and related policies in OPA 600; and, 2) designates them as "Prestige Area," "Employment Area General" and "Valley Lands" within OPA 450 (Employment Area and Growth Management Plan). This amendment was initiated by Boca East Investments Limited, being a major land owner within Block 64. The OPA 631 land use schedule is attached to this report as *Attachment 2*.

Consistent with the planned function of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone, OPA 631 establishes (through OPA 450) a range of employment-generating land uses including offices, warehousing and distribution operations, storage facilities, manufacturing, and limited commercial uses to serve the area.

The amendment also establishes detailed policies pertaining to heritage conservation, urban design and transportation infrastructure, including protections for the northerly extension of Highway 427. These policies will be outlined in more detail in section 4 of this report.

The amendment was adopted by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 26, 2006 and received by the Region for review on July 6, 2006.

3.2.1 Active development application

Boca East Investments Limited has also initiated a draft plan of subdivision application (19T-06V13) for its 109 hectare-lands within Block 64, in anticipation of OPA 631 approval. The application was made to the City of Vaughan and is under review by the Region, as a commenting agency.

Comprising this plan of subdivision are four Prestige Area blocks, two Employment General blocks, one Retail Warehouse block, and blocks for new local roads, open space, valleylands and stormwater management. Approximately 9 hectares (22 acres) of retail commercial development is proposed under the plan; concentrated in the vicinity of the Rutherford Road and Highway 50 intersection. This represents approximately 5 per cent of the OPA 631 land area. Retail uses are permitted within the "Prestige Area" designation, and are implemented through a site-specific zoning by-law amendment. Gross floor area and other development standards are established through the zoning process.

3.3 Planning and development framework

OPA 631 is one component of a broader, comprehensive process to determine the type, character, and timing of development in the Block 64 lands and the balance of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone. The following sections of this report outline the components of that process.

3.3.1 Review of the Vaughan employment area

The City and Region in mid-1998 jointly initiated a review of Vaughan's employment lands. The purpose of the review was to assess the City's ability to provide sufficient employment opportunities to 2026. Based on past and current trends, including employment land absorption rates, the study concluded that Vaughan would require an additional supply of 900 hectares (2,222 acres). The study also identified lands in south western Vaughan as the best area for accommodating this growth. One of the deciding factors was that the area represented the logical extension of the existing employment area in the vicinity of the Highway 27 and Highway 427 corridors.

3.3.2 Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 19

The Region initiated ROPA 19 in 2000 to implement the findings of the joint employment area study by re-designating 1,023 hectares (2,529 acres) of Vaughan lands from "Agricultural Policy Area" to "Urban Area" in the Regional Official Plan. The amendment also required the preparation of local secondary plans to identify the detailed land use, infrastructure, and environmental requirements prior to development. The Ontario Municipal Board approved ROPA 19 on October 22, 2001.

3.3.3 Vaughan OPA 600

The findings of the joint study and related ROPA 19 were incorporated into the Vaughan Official Plan (OPA 600) to provide the necessary policy basis for a future local urban area expansion. Among the new policies was the designation of the lands in south western Vaughan as "Employment Secondary Plan Study Area." The lands would remain outside of the City's urban area until such time as further, detailed land use and infrastructure planning was completed. This approach is consistent with ROPA 19.

3.3.4 Block Plan 64

The Vaughan Official Plan (OPAs 600 and 400) requires the preparation of detailed Block Plans for entire concession blocks prior to final development approval, including

plans of subdivision and site plan. The OPA 631 lands, being Block 64, are subject to a Block Plan that was conditionally approved by City of Vaughan Council on June 26, 2006. The Block Plan establishes detailed land use designations, and policies that address transportation requirements, servicing capacity and the natural environment. This approach is consistent with OPA 600.

3.4 Transportation Considerations

3.4.1 York-Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study

This study was a collaborative effort of York and Peel Regions, the cities of Vaughan and Brampton, and the Town of Caledon. It was initiated following the approval of ROPA 19 to address cross-boundary transportation issues and to identify appropriate solutions. The study identified a long-term transportation plan to 2031, and produced a short-term road improvement plan to address the current growing traffic demands in the study area.

The study was completed and approved in 2003, including a Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for the identified short-term road network improvements. The short-term improvements, once implemented, will help reduce traffic congestion at the intersection of Highway 50 and Highway 7, and at the existing Highway 427 terminus at Highway 7.

3.4.2 Highway 427 Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) Study

Highway 427 will be extended north from Highway 7 to a point to be determined through the Individual Environmental Assessment (IEA) process being undertaken by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO). A Terms of Reference for the IEA was approved by the Ministry of Environment on November 1, 2005. The IEA is not likely to be completed and approved until the second half of 2009. Policies within OPA 631 are in-place to ensure that new development in the area will not preclude a potential future alignment of the Highway 427 extension, as outlined in sections 3.2 and 4.3 of this report.

3.4.3 Western Vaughan Transportation Improvements Individual Environmental Assessment (IEA) Study

This transportation study applies to more than half of the City's land area; covering approximately 80 square kilometres in an area west of Highway 400 to Highway 50, between Highway 407 in the south to just beyond Teston Road in the north. The purpose of this study is to identify solutions to existing and projected traffic congestion in western Vaughan, including the OPA 631 lands and the balance of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone.

The study's terms of reference were approved in February 2006 by the Ministry of Environment. It is anticipated that preferred alternatives will be selected by Winter 2009.

3.4.4 Highway 427 Arterial Road Extension – Highway 7 to Zenway Boulevard

This road link will provide a new north-south connection between Highway 7 and the internal road network of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone. This is an interim measure, pending the northern extension of Highway 427 beyond Highway 7.

This improvement was identified in the York-Peel Boundary Transportation Study, and has been approved through a Class Environmental Assessment Process. This project is currently in the detailed design stage. Planning staff will be reporting to Regional Committee and Council in the coming months on an implementation strategy for this piece of infrastructure. Construction requires funding commitments from all partners involved, and could commence as early as the end of 2007.

3.4.5 Existing Road Network

The following road improvements have or will be completed to improve traffic congestion in the Vaughan Enterprise Zone area and vicinity:

- Rutherford Road has recently been widened to four lanes;
- Langstaff Road is scheduled for reconstruction to four lanes in 2007; and,
- Highway 50 is scheduled to be widened to seven lanes in 2009.

3.5 Agency Comments

The location of the OPA 631 planning area and the balance of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone presents potential cross-boundary impacts, given the close proximity to the Region of Peel. Adjacent municipalities, accordingly, and other agencies have been consulted throughout the broader planning process, as outlined in section 3.3 of this report. The comments arising from this consultation have been addressed through OPA 631.

3.5.1 Region of Peel

The Region of Peel informed the City of Vaughan in a letter dated February 19, 2007 that it has no objections to OPA 631. The Region has provided detailed comments to the City throughout various stages of the OPA 631 planning process, including the related Block Plan. Of primary interest to Peel is traffic generation and related impacts on Highway 50, including the number and configuration of additional access points. Peel will have the opportunity to review future development applications within the OPA 631 planning area to ensure that these and other cross-boundary issues are addressed satisfactorily.

3.5.2 City of Brampton

The City of Brampton provided substantive comments respecting the mechanism for protecting a potential Highway 427 alignment through the subject lands through the Block Plan process. The City of Brampton also had the opportunity to review the proposed wording of OPA 631 prior to its adoption by City of Vaughan Council in June 2006. Subsequently, The City of Brampton advised the Region in a letter dated February 5, 2007 that it has no objections to the amendment.

3.5.3 Town of Caledon

The Town of Caledon has advised that it has no objections in principle to the approval of OPA 631. However, the Town shares the concerns of the Region of Peel with respect to Highway 50; to the extent that the Town has requested a further modification to OPA 631 that prescribes that Traffic Impact Studies prepared for site specific development applications within Block 64 be prepared to Peel's satisfaction.

In response, York Region staff have included language in the proposed modification to OPA 631 to ensure that Traffic Impact Studies are prepared to the satisfaction of the City of Vaughan and York Region, "in consultation with the Region of Peel." This inclusion addresses Peel's transportation-related interests in OPA 631 and acknowledges that Peel has jurisdiction over Highway 50.

3.5.4 Ministry of Transportation

The Ministry informed the City in a letter dated January 23, 2006 that it requires "assurances that some level of protection for potential 427 alignments and/or interchanges will ultimately be guaranteed prior to site plan approval." As outlined in sections 3.3 and 4.3 of this report, the use of a Holding ("H") provision attached to the zoning for lands within OPA 631 will ensure that development will not proceed until it has been determined that it will not adversely impact the future alignment of Highway 427.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

OPA 631 is consistent with the Provincial, Regional and City planning policies, and designates at the local level a further supply of employment land in Vaughan. Orderly development, which includes protection for the Highway 427 alignment, is ensured through policies in OPA 631 and through the City's Block Plan process. A modification to OPA 631 is being proposed by the Region to add clarity with respect to ensuring that all required transportation infrastructure is addressed prior to the issuance of site-specific development approvals.

4.1 Provincial Policies

The amendment is consistent with Provincial legislation promoting sustainable planning and development. The OPA 631 lands are located outside of the Provincial Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine.

4.1.1 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (2005) outlines matters of Provincial interest with which planning and development must be consistent. These interests include: ensuring a mix and range of employment to meet long-term needs (Policy 1.3.1); providing infrastructure in a coordinated manner to accommodate projected needs, and integrated with planning for growth (Policy 1.6.1); and, integrating transportation and land use decisions at all

stages of the planning process (Policy 1.6.5.5). Based on the foregoing, OPA 631 is consistent with the Provincial interest.

4.1.2 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Provincial Growth Plan sets out a planning framework to shape development to 2031 in a sustainable manner. Key tenets of the Plan include the enhancement and protection of employment lands (Policy 2.2.6), and the efficient use of existing and planned infrastructure (Policy 3.2.2).

The Growth Plan also sets out population and employment targets that municipalities must aim to accommodate over the next 25 years. One such target is to achieve a density of 50 residents and/or jobs per hectare in new development or "greenfield" areas. The uses proposed under OPA 631, especially those permitted within the "Prestige Area" designation, will meet or exceed this target as the area matures over time.

The Growth Plan also assigns a long-term employment target for the Region as a whole. The OPA 631 lands and the balance of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone are integral in meeting York Region's assigned target of 780,000 jobs by 2031. The purpose and policies of OPA 631 will therefore serve to advance Growth Plan objectives.

4.2 Regional Official Plan

The Regional Official Plan, through ROPA 19, designated the OPA 631 lands and the balance of the Vaughan Enterprise Zone as "Urban Area." Bringing these lands into the Region's urban boundary was in response to a 1998 study that concluded that the City required an additional supply of employment land to meet its long-term needs. ROPA 19 also established a planning framework to ensure orderly development and the completion of the required infrastructure through detailed land use planning and development phasing through the City's official plan and block plan processes.

4.3 Ensuring orderly development

The capacity of the existing and planned road network, including adequate protections for the Highway 427 alignment, were important considerations throughout the planning process for OPA 631 and the related Block Plan. Substantial policy and phasing mechanisms have been incorporated into the planning and development framework for the OPA 631 lands to ensure that development proceeds in a manner that does not adversely impact the transportation network.

4.3.1 Holding provision to protect for Highway 427 extension

The City of Vaughan, in consultation with the City of Brampton and the Ministry of Transportation, has developed a mechanism to protect future alignment options for the extension of Highway 427, including interchanges and any other requirement. This mechanism includes the use of a "Holding" ("H") provision that is affixed to the zoning by-law for all sites within OPA 631. Removal of the "H" will require confirmation from the Ministry of Transportation that the subject site will not preclude or otherwise interfere

with the future Highway 427, as determined through the EA process. The City of Vaughan will administer this process, in consultation with other parties, as required.

4.3.2 Ensuring road network capacity

Regional planning staff will have the opportunity to review and provide comments on, as appropriate, future development applications (e.g. subdivisions) and associated technical studies for lands in the area of the potential Highway 427 extension. It is important to recognize, however, that the extension of Highway 427 alone is not enough to accommodate the ultimate transportation needs of the area.

The local and Regional road network, too, will play a significant role in accommodating the traffic generated by future employment growth in the area. It is for this reason that Regional staff are recommending a modification to OPA 631 to ensure that other transportation infrastructure requirements (e.g. local collector roads) are in place prior to development proceeding. This approach will be reflected in the Regional conditions of draft plan of subdivision approval, including the current submission by Boca East Investments Limited.

4.4 Outstanding issues resolved

The comments received from adjacent municipalities and agencies were consistent in that proposed development under OPA 631 must not adversely impact the transportation network, as outlined in section 3.5 of this report. Considerable efforts by all parties involved have ensured that the policies of OPA 631 and the Block Plan will direct development in a manner that does not adversely impact the transportation network, including any potential Highway 427 alignment.

4.5 Proposed Modification

Although OPA 631 is consistent with Provincial and Regional policies, a modification is being proposed to add clarity to the intent of its implementation policies. The purpose of the modification is to ensure that development coincides with the necessary transportation infrastructure to accommodate projected traffic volumes. The modification will maintain the intent of OPA 631 and support its implementation. The modification is attached to this report as *Attachment 1*.

The modification adds a new clause to Section 5 – Transportation of OPA 631. The new clause contains language to require that final approval of subdivisions and site plans is conditional upon the submission of a phasing plan and traffic study that demonstrates how there is sufficient transportation capacity to accommodate the proposed development. Those plans and studies shall be completed to the satisfaction of the City and Region.

4.6 Relationship to Vision 2026

The modification and approval of Vaughan OPA 631 will serve to advance all eight goal areas of Vision 2026, in particular, “A Vibrant Economy” and “Managed and Balanced Growth.”

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The Regional infrastructure improvements to support the build-out of the OPA 631 lands are anticipated, and are included within the Region's Ten-Year Capital Plan. The implementation policies of OPA 631 and the detailed development phasing plan contained within the Block Plan will ensure orderly and cost-effective development.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The recommendations of this report are consistent with the decision of the City of Vaughan Council to adopt OPA 631 in June 2006. The proposed modification is consistent with the City-adopted policies and will serve to assist in their implementation. OPA 631 will re-designate 175 hectares (432 acres) of land for employment uses; in keeping the employment policies of OPA 600 and ROPA 19.

7. CONCLUSION

It is recommended that Vaughan OPA 631 be approved, subject to a modification. The amendment was formulated through a comprehensive planning process, and is consistent with Provincial, Regional and City planning policies.

Substantial consultation, planning and analysis has ensured that OPA 631 contains adequate policies to ensure that development proceeds in a manner that is consistent with the capacity of the transportation network, and protects for the future alignment of Highway 427.

For further information on this report, please contact Sean Hertel, Senior Planner, Community Planning Branch at 905-830-4444 ext. (1556) or sean.hertel@york.ca.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are included with this report.)