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OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 671 THORNHILL TOWN CENTRE, CITY OF VAUGHAN

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, June 15, 2005, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Commissioner of Planning and Development Services be authorized to modify and give notice to approve Amendment No. 671 to the Official Plan of the City of Vaughan.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to recommend the modification and approval of the City of Vaughan's Official Plan Amendment No. 671 (OPA 671).

3. BACKGROUND

The lands subject to OPA 671 are shown on *Attachment 2* to this report. They include the lands on both sides of Centre Street from Bathurst Street to New Westminster Drive, and from Clark Avenue West in the south to the current terminus of DiSera Drive in the north.

The subject lands are currently designated "Town Centre Commercial", "High Density Residential", "Open Space", and "Public Secondary School" by the Thornhill-Vaughan Community Plan (OPA 210), as amended.

On June 23, 2003 City of Vaughan Council directed that a Terms of Reference be prepared for a study of Centre Street in Thornhill-Vaughan (the Study) and, at the same meeting, enacted an Interim Control By-law to freeze development within the Study Area to provide time to complete the Study (*see Attachment 1*). The Study Area encompassed the lands subject to OPA 671, and the lands on both sides of Centre Street between Bathurst Street and the Hydro Corridor just west of Dufferin Street. On June 14, 2004 Vaughan Council approved an extension of the Interim Control By-law for a second year to complete the necessary legal documents to implement the findings and recommendations of the Study.

On September 20, 2004 a public meeting was held and, on November 29, 2004 in a report to the City's Committee of the Whole, City Planning staff addressed the issues raised at

that meeting. Vaughan Council deferred approval of the Amendments at that time until the matter was considered by the Committee of the Whole again on May 2, 2005.

Staff prepared two Official Plan Amendments, OPAs 671 and 672, to implement the recommendations of the Study and address the issues raised. OPA 671 proposes to amend the land use designations and introduce policies for the area shown on *Attachment 1*. OPA 672 proposes to amend OPA 210 and the Employment Area Growth and Management Plan (OPA 450) to change the land use designations and introduce policies for the lands on the north side of Centre Street between the Hydro Corridor and New Westminster Drive, as well as the southwest and southeast corners of Centre Street and Dufferin Street.

On May 9, 2005 Vaughan Council adopted OPAs 671 and 672. OPA 671 is now before the Region for approval but OPA 672 is not being considered for approval at this time as Vaughan Council adopted further modifications to the document on May 24, 2005. Regional Planning staff are reviewing the modifications to OPA 672 and will bring forward the amendment to Planning and Economic Development Committee in September, 2005.

The Interim Control By-law and a number of development applications within the Study area were appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). While discussions to date between the City and the appellants have lead to the resolution of some of the issues, a Hearing on the outstanding issues within the OPA 671 area is scheduled to begin on September 6, 2005.

3.1 Amendment No. 671 (Thornhill Town Centre)

OPA 671 applies to the property fronting on the north side of Centre Street between New Westminster Drive and Bathurst Street, and all of the lands within the Town Centre South, including the Promenade Mall (see *Attachment 2*).

The policy changes proposed by OPA 671 encompass:

- The redesignation of a portion of the Amendment area south of Centre Street as “Special Policy Area” (as shown on *Attachment 3*). This designation requires that major or future redevelopment consider the overall urban structure and urban design policies outlined within the OPA. All other applicable policies and land use designations currently in place under OPA 210 are to remain in effect.
- The redesignation of the Amendment area north of Centre Street as “Mixed Use 1”, “Mixed Use 2”, and “High Density Residential”, as shown on *Attachment 4*.
- Requiring development to occur based on a pattern of local streets to be provided within the Amendment area north of Centre Street.
- The Introduction of phasing policies that provide for construction of the “Main Street” and the buildings abutting it to proceed concurrently with the development of a large format retail store in the initial phase of development.

3.1.1 North of Centre Street

OPA 671 proposes a new north-south Main Street that will bisect the Amendment area north of Centre Street and connect the primarily-residential lands to the north to Centre Street. Properties fronting along this new street are to be designated “Mixed Use 1” and are intended to create a typical, pedestrian-oriented, human-scale shopping precinct, with shops, other retail uses, and on-street parking lining the street (*see Attachment 4*).

To the east and west of this new Main Street, the OPA proposes additional residential, office, retail uses, and mixed-use buildings, with a provision for higher-density residential and office uses. These lands are designated “Mixed Use 2” and permit buildings up to a maximum of 14 storeys for high-density residential, office and mixed uses, and a maximum density of 2.0 Floor Space Index (FSI). In addition, “big box” large format retail uses, up to a maximum Gross Floor Area of 12,635m² (approximately 136,000 sq.ft.), are permitted within the “Mixed Use 2” designation.

The western portion of the Amendment area is designated “High Density Residential” (*Attachment 4*), which permits apartment buildings up to 22 storeys with a maximum density of 2.7 FSI. The exact permitted height of individual buildings will be determined through the more detailed review of site-specific shadowing, massing and other built form considerations.

There is also an east-west secondary street proposed within the area north of Centre Street. The lands at the intersection of this street and Main Street are to be developed as a Town Square, with buildings framing the intersection and specialty paving and plantings, defining it as a readily recognizable and important place at the centre of Main Street. It will be designed with the capacity and amenities to accommodate street events on special “pedestrianized” occasions.

3.1.2 South of Centre Street

In the area south of Centre Street, OPA 671 designates a portion of the Amendment area as “Special Policy Area”. This designation is intended to be an overlay designation, with the current land use designations set out in OPA 210 remaining in effect (*Attachment 3*). This designation is to apply to the commercial properties in the Town Centre South, including the Promenade Mall, as well as the York Region Transit Hub. The “Special Policy Area” requires that any significant redevelopment and/or intensification consider the overall urban structure and design requirements being established for the Amendment area north of Centre Street. The intention is to guide the long-term redevelopment within the designated “Special Policy Area”, integrate and improve the connections between the Town Centre North and Town Centre South, and encourage the Main Street form of development to be extended south of Centre Street along North Promenade toward the Mall.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

As discussed in the following sections, OPA 671 has gone through a public consultation process, conforms to the policies of the Regional Official Plan (ROP) and represents good planning.

4.1 Regional Official Plan

The lands within the boundaries of OPA 671 are designated “Urban Area” by the ROP. There are no identified environmental protection areas, watercourses, wetlands, significant forested areas, or Regional Greenlands in the area.

4.1.1 Local and Regional Corridors

Centre Street is identified as a “Local Corridor” on Map 5 of the ROP. As such, the policies of Section 5.6 of Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 43 (ROPA 43) are applicable. Centre Street has been identified as a VIVA rapid transit service route, with stations proposed at both Dufferin Street and the Promenade Mall (*see Attachment 5*). Policy 5.6.6 states:

“That those segments of Local Corridors identified through the environmental assessment process as locations for rapid transit services and facilities may be subject to and consistent with the Regional Corridors policies under Section 5.5 of [the ROP].”

Therefore, the Amendment area has been treated as a Regional Corridor under Section 5.5 of ROPA 43.

Section 5.5 notes that Regional Corridors have a great potential for more intensive and mixed-use forms of development, served by rapid transit. Regional Corridors are considered the main arteries of the Region’s urban structure and provide for the movement of people and goods between the Regional and Local Centres to support their vitality. Major road and public transit networks also intersect along these corridors to create opportunities for “sub-centres” or “inter-modal nodes” between the Local and Regional Centres. These areas may be identified as “Key Development Areas” in local official plans, consistent with the policies of the ROP.

4.1.2 Key Development Areas

At the Council Meeting of May 9, 2005, Vaughan Council passed the following resolution:

“That the lands subject to OPA 671 be acknowledged as a “Key Development Area” pursuant to the requirements of ROPA 43.”

In accordance with Policy 5.5.5 of ROPA 43, Key Development Areas (KDA) within Regional Corridors serve as places where compact and mixed-use development is focused. Policy 5.5.6 states that KDA should support an overall, long-term density target

of 2.5 FSI for Regional Corridors. As noted above, the proposed Mixed Use 2 designation has a maximum FSI of 2.0 and the proposed High Density Residential designation has a maximum FSI of 2.7. OPA 671 recognizes the Amendment area as a KDA and is consistent with the intent of ROPA 43 in this regard.

4.1.3 Urban Design

Policy 5.5.8 of ROPA 43 encourages the area municipalities to develop urban design guidelines for the various segments of the Regional Corridors. Policy 5.3.9.b) of ROPA 43 states that urban design guidelines should be created to achieve attractive, pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented places through:

- A fine grain grid network of streets.
- Sidewalk connections directly to streets and transit routes.
- Appropriate building massing and articulation.
- Appropriate parking design and standards including provision for above- and below-grade parking structures.

Furthermore, Policy 5.2.7 q) recommends urban design criteria that promote, but are not limited to:

- pedestrian scale, safety, comfort and mobility
- the enrichment of existing areas
- attractive buildings, landscaping and public streetscapes
- compatibility with and transition to surrounding land uses
- appropriate building placement and orientation.

Section 3.2 of OPA 671 proposes Urban Design Policies for the lands with respect to building form, streetscape and the public realm, and includes specific design policies with respect to the proposed Main Street and local streets. The urban design policies of OPA 671 are consistent with the criteria outlined in ROPA 43.

Policy 5.5.16 of ROPA 43 states that residential designations should favour higher density, compact residential forms over those that are exclusively ground-related (i.e. single and semi-detached dwelling types). OPA 671 proposes higher density, compact residential forms and does not include any provisions to permit single and/or semi-detached dwelling types.

Policy 5.5.17 states that new reverse lotting along the Corridor shall not be permitted. The proposed road network and designations of OPA 671 have been designed so as to preclude reverse lotting.

The land use designations in Official Plan Amendment No. 671 provide the Amendment area north of Centre Street with the potential for:

- Approximately 34,000m² of retail and office commercial gross floor area, resulting in an estimated working population of about 500 - 600 employees.

- 600 to 900 residential units, resulting in an estimated resident population of approximately 1,200 to 1,800 persons.

The addition of a significant amount of new housing to the Thornhill Town Centre will move it closer to satisfying the Region's resident-to-employee ratio target of 1:1 for Urban Centres. Locating residential and office uses in close proximity to retail uses will create a resident and working population base to help support the viability of new retail businesses in the area.

OPA 671 is consistent with and supportive of Regional policies.

4.2 Provincial Policy Statement

On March 1, 2005 the Province's 5-year review of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) came into effect. The PPS speaks to the importance of planning for healthy, liveable communities. Subsection 1.1.1 states that healthy communities are sustained by:

"... promoting efficient development and land use patterns which sustain the financial well-being of the Province and municipalities over the long term; [and] accommodating an appropriate range and mix of residential, employment ... uses to meet long-term needs..."

Furthermore, Subsection 1.1.3. speaks to land use patterns within communities being based upon densities and a mix of land uses which promote the efficient use of infrastructure and transportation systems and opportunities for intensification and redevelopment.

The proposed policy framework of OPA 671 is consistent with the Provincial policies set out in the PPS.

4.3 Proposed Modification

Regional staff have been requested to include one modification into the text and schedules of OPA 671. Vaughan Council agreed to a landowner request to introduce policy wording into the body of OPA 671 with respect to the width of required landscaped buffer strips along the northern limits of the lands north of Centre Street. In response to the City's request and for the purposes of clarity, Regional staff recommend that a note be introduced onto Schedules B1 and C that refers to Policy 3.2.2(d).

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be no negative financial impacts on the Region or City with the approval of OPA 671. Introducing new policies that help build a compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented Urban Centre will support the VIVA route along Centre Street.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The City of Vaughan has adopted OPA 671 and the recommendations of this report are consistent with the City's position. The approval of OPA 671 will introduce new policies to the Thornhill Town Centre that will provide the City with the tools necessary to build a mixed, compact and pedestrian-oriented community that provides greater residential choice for Vaughan residents.

7. CONCLUSION

The subject proposal is for an amendment to the City of Vaughan Official Plan to redesignate the lands in the Thornhill Town Centre to facilitate the maturation of this area to a new main street area that is compact, and pedestrian- and transit-supportive.

OPA 671 is consistent with and supportive of Provincial and Regional policies. OPA 671 builds on and strengthens the Thornhill Town Centre as originally envisioned in OPAs 70 and 210. OPA 671 fully accommodates the commercial development permitted under existing provisions, and enhances the opportunity for the Town Centre to fully achieve its envisioned long-term role as the focus of the Thornhill community. OPA 671's contemporary policy framework will guide future development and thereby create the desired urban environment based on the highest standards of urban design. OPA 671 also satisfies the requirement within OPA 210 for the preparation and Council adoption of a comprehensive development plan for the Town Centre, prior to development proceeding.

OPA 671 was prepared on the basis of public input and an analysis of the City's infrastructure and transportation needs and capacity. Furthermore, the policies of OPA 671 are consistent with emerging Provincial and Regional policies and will be complementary to the Region's VIVA initiative. It is therefore recommended that OPA 671 be modified and approved.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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