

3.0 POLICY

A review was undertaken of various documents describing the planned function of arterial streets in York Region.

This review includes planning policy documents, such as official plans, secondary plans, and vision documents, which identify the preferred endpoint in arterial street function and design, as well as urban design guidelines.

Specifically, the York Region Official Plan and the Official Plans for Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan identify the existing general policy approach in terms of the intended functions and form of arterial roads in York Region. A review of the more detailed Secondary Plan policies for Markham Central Area Planning District and Bayview Glen in Richmond Hill, as well as the Secondary Plan and urban design guidelines for the Vaughan Corporate Centre, identify the specific approaches at the local level to maintaining the ability to move people and goods, while better incorporating major arterial streets into the community. The review of vision documents included the Vision for Highway 7 and the Yonge Street Vision, to provide images of the potential future corridors to guide public and private sector activities along these corridors. Additionally, the North Yonge Urban Design Guidelines, developed for the Oak Ridges community in Richmond Hill, outline an approach to address the function and design of an arterial street in a smaller community.

The following sections provide a brief review of the key policies, visions and urban design guidelines related to arterial roads, with a concluding synopsis providing a general overview of the planned function and role of arterial roads in York Region.

3.1 OFFICIAL PLANS

3.1.1 York Region Official Plan, Office Consolidation (As of September 30, 2004)

York Region differentiates its street network primarily on the basis of planned basic road widths, and does not generally differentiate between street types by function or intended traffic volume. The streets identified as part of the "Regional Roads Network" are identified as arterial roads and highways, owned and maintained by the area municipalities, the Region and the Province of Ontario.

York Region clearly states in its Official Plan (OP) that there is a strong relationship between transportation and urban form. The OP indicates that where regional streets travel through urban communities, streetscapes need to be designed in such a way as to encourage walking, bicycling and transit use. Further, the Plan states that a more compact, mixed-use urban form will encourage and be able to support a higher level of transit service, while at the same time helping to reduce the overall average trip length required for work, shopping, school or other purposes.

The Region identifies the need to coordinate roadway systems, to protect rights-of-way for future system improvements and to recognize that rights-of-way will increasingly provide shared corridors for transit, goods, pedestrian and bicycle movements.

Excerpts from the specific policies of Council that identify the planned role of significant transportation corridors in York Region include:

- That the hierarchy of roads on Maps 8 and 9 (of the Official Plan) be designed to support the Region's proposed urban structure, including centres and corridors. These corridors are to be used by all forms of transportation where appropriate (pedestrian, cyclist, transit, automobiles, trucks), as well as public and private utilities and may also be considered for the implementation of rapid transit facilities (6.1.1).
- That right-of-way widths may be varied, as identified on Map 9, in order to protect the character of existing heritage streetscapes (6.1.7).
- To recognize that certain roads under the jurisdiction of the local municipalities, identified on Map 9, serve an arterial road function, and to request that these roadways be protected as such (6.1.8).
- That priority will be given to protecting existing heritage streetscapes using techniques such as variable rights-of-way, use of by-passes and innovative road cross-section standards. In the case of Sharon, a 30 metre right-of-way will be protected until a bypass is assured (6.1.12).
- To encourage all local municipalities to ensure that continuous mid-concession block collector roads are implemented east-west and north-south in all new urban developments. Such continuous collector roads are required not only to serve automobile traffic in the local areas but also to serve efficient and effective transit systems (6.1.15).

In keeping with the Region's objective to identify corridors as mixed-use transit spines that link urban and regional centres, the following excerpts from the Region's OP state that it is the policy of Council:

- To encourage a mix of housing and employment uses to locate along the corridors identified on Map 5 (of the Official Plan) (5.4.1).
- To encourage area municipalities to examine regional and urban corridors in a comprehensive manner that identifies opportunities for mixed use and higher densities and recognizes the function of the corridors in linking centres and providing transit routes (5.4.2).
- That development and redevelopment in the corridors address the following criteria:
 - Identify the function of each section of the corridor;
 - Establish a range of residential unit types, tenures and commercial uses, including retail, offices and services;

- Establish density and performance standards to encourage mixed-use residential and commercial building forms, in addition to single-use building, with particular attention to creating public spaces at grade;
 - Establish consistent setback provisions to encourage a continuous building form adjacent to the street right-of-way;
 - Establish site-specific parking requirements that recognize the level of planned transit service and the need for residential and commercial activities; as well, to encourage the provision of alternatives to street parking along the street frontage, for example, underground or parking at the rear with appropriate screening;
 - Encourage pedestrian activity through the arrangement and design of development and streetscaping; and
 - Observe the streetscape policies in Section 5.2 (listed below) (5.4.3).
- That major new development or redevelopment proposals on corridors be evaluated in terms of the policies of this section of the Plan (5.4.4).
 - That area municipal policies concentrate new employment within 200 metres of transit stops (5.4.5).
 - That area municipalities may identify additional urban corridors without amendment to this Plan (5.4.6).
 - To encourage area municipalities, as part of corridor planning, to revitalize and preserve traditional main street areas (5.4.7).
 - To require that secondary plans contain policies which indicate the function of corridors considering the historic function and provide land use policies along the urban corridors which address the criteria of Policy 5.4.3 (listed above) (5.4.8).

The Region identifies general streetscaping guidelines for pedestrian friendly streetscapes related to the policy requiring secondary plans to be based on “community design that emphasizes public access and safety” (5.2.4 k). These guidelines include:

- Locate buildings close to street edge;
- Keep height of buildings and width of street in proportion;
- Avoid walls, berms or fences that cut off the street from buildings;
- Locate retail stores and services at grade;
- Locate parking areas in rear or side yards;
- Minimize number of mid-block entry points for vehicles;
- Include amenities such as canopies or arcades along walkways and sidewalks and boulevard trees along the streetfront;
- Provide landscape and building design that improves wind patterns;
- Provide continuous sidewalks;
- Design intersections to accommodate pedestrians as well as vehicles; and
- Explore alternatives to reverse lotting along arterials and collector roads (p. 41).

3.1.2 Town of Markham Official Plan, Office Consolidation, January 1999

The Town of Markham Official Plan states that arterial roads shall be designed to facilitate traffic flow between the major centres of activity within the Town and the surrounding region. The transportation schedule in the OP designates Regional Arterial, City of Toronto Arterial, and Major and Minor Arterial Roads, based on anticipated traffic flow and their associated rights-of-way.

Provisions related to rights-of-way that identify the intended function of major streets in Markham include:

- Rights-of-way shall be established to provide for the future needs of public transportation and vehicular traffic (5.3.3 b i); and
- The Town shall take into consideration the possibility of putting bicycle paths in rights-of-way adjacent to arterial roads where appropriate (5.3.3 b ii).

Markham has several general urban design related policies that can be applied to arterial corridors which support the development of pedestrian environments through general principles of improved physical appearance and the development of higher quality environments. These include:

- The Town shall endeavour to maintain and improve the physical character and appearance of existing communities (2.1.1 d); and
- It will be an objective of Council to foster the development of an environment that will enhance the state of well being and the quality of life for residents of the Town and to pursue human services policies that will meet people's changing needs and promote and maintain a healthy community in keeping with the economic resources of the Town (2.1.1 e).

3.1.3 Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan Consolidation, December 31, 1998

Richmond Hill's Official Plan contains the following policies that define arterial roads:

- Arterial roads are designed to carry large volumes of traffic between areas of the Town and through the Town. Direct access is usually from other arterial roads and collector roads as well as controlled access highways. Arterial roads are the primary routes for local transit services (2.2.3.2.4 a);
- The basis minimum right-of-way width for arterial roads shall generally range from 30 metres (100 feet) to 46 metres (150 feet). Additional right-of-way width shall be provided for additional lanes at arterial intersections or at other intersections, where required (2.2.3.2.4 c); and
- Building setbacks along arterial roads shall be required which will be sufficient to provide rights-of-way for the future needs of public transit and vehicular traffic (2.2.3.2.4 d).

3.1.4 City of Vaughan Official Plan Amendment 600 (Amending OPA 400), Office Consolidation, January, 2003

The City of Vaughan defines its hierarchy of streets based on a functional classification of traffic volume, vehicular operating speed, access, transit service, pedestrian and bicycle activity and development density. Arterial Roads in the City include both Regional and City streets, and are subject to the following provisions that expand upon their intended function:

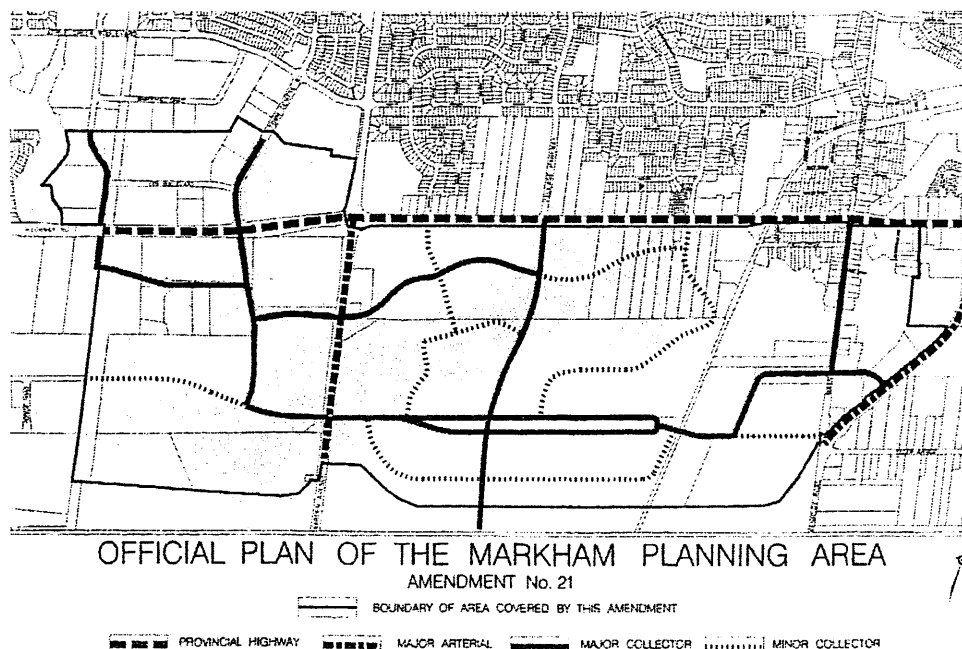
- Provision will be made for sidewalks on both sides of all arterial roads in urban areas (8.2.3 d);
- Arterials will accommodate HOV or bus lanes where required (8.2.3 e); and
- Arterials may accommodate separate bikeways, where required and feasible (8.2.3 f).

3.2 SECONDARY PLANS

3.2.1 Central Area Planning District (Markham Centre), July 1997

The Town of Markham's Secondary Plan for the Central Planning District identifies Warden Avenue and Kennedy Road as major arterial roads, and Highway 7 as a Provincial Highway, as shown in **Figure 3-1**.

Figure 3-1
Transportation Schedule for Markham Centre



The Secondary Plan for the Central Area Planning District states that:

- Notwithstanding the current designation of Highway 7 as a Provincial Highway, the Town supports the ultimate function of Highway 7 as a transit supportive urban arterial road, and supports urban development in conformity with the Urban Design policies in Section 3.4 of this Secondary Plan (5.1.3 a).
- Prior to approval of development fronting onto Highway 7, a Comprehensive Streetscape Plan shall be prepared identifying built form and pedestrian access for Highway 7 through such features as boulevards, tree planting and street furniture and on-street parking while providing for an urban arterial traffic volume and higher order transit services (5.1.3 b).

In order to create a transit supportive environment along Highway 7, the form of development must present an attractive alternative to the private automobile and encourage greater use of public transit. Development must be transit supportive, and transit facilities and services must be accessible to all potential users.

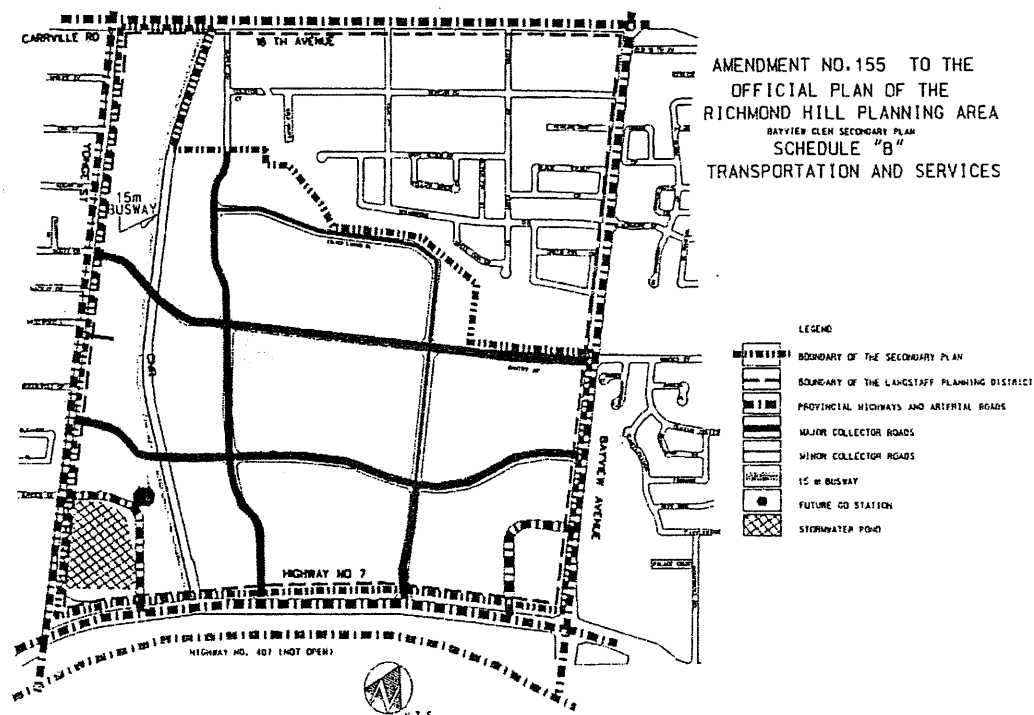
To realize this form of development along Highway 7, the Secondary Plan states that precinct plans, plans of subdivision and site plans will be reviewed relative to the guidelines and requirements of the Transit Supportive Land Use Planning Guidelines (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Ministry of Transportation of Ontario) and the Town of Markham's Transit Accessibility Implementation Plan and the Markham Transportation Planning Study. In particular, the following matters shall be addressed to the satisfaction of the Town:

- a) Provision of a local road pattern and related pedestrian routes that provide for direct pedestrian access to transit routes and stops;
- b) Documentation that all parts of the district are within acceptable walking distance of public transit;
- c) Incorporation of bus bays/right turn lanes into road design requirements;
- d) Provision for transit waiting areas in major buildings adjacent to transit stops;
- e) Reverse lotting adjacent to Arterial and Collector Roads will not be permitted;
- f) The main pedestrian entrance to major commercial and office buildings should front onto the street and on-site parking areas should be away from the front of buildings, where possible;
- g) Pedestrian amenities such as canopies and arcades for weather protection should be incorporated into the design of buildings along major transit routes;
- h) Provision of pedestrian walkways and waiting areas which are attractive, weather protected, comfortable, well lit and contain seating, where appropriate. Walkways and waiting areas should provide for safe and unobstructed pedestrian movement to and from transit services; and
- i) Review of the following to create an accessible environment for individuals who are mobility impaired:
 - Design and placement of newspaper boxes, garbage containers and other street furniture in the vicinity of transit stops; and
 - Design of sidewalks, including curb cuts to provide a continuous barrier free path to transit services (5.1.8.2 a-i).

3.2.2 Official Plan Amendment No. 155, Bayview Glen Secondary Plan, Town of Richmond Hill

The Bayview Glen Secondary Plan, as shown in **Figure 3-2**, indicates that the right-of-way width for arterial roads shall generally be 36 metres (118 ft.). Additional widenings may be required at intersections and at other locations requiring cutting and filling. Sidewalks shall be provided by developers along both sides of arterial roads.

Figure 3-2
Transportation and Services Schedule for Bayview Glen



While the Secondary Plan places significant emphasis on the development of a public transportation node associated with the proposed Gateway Centre, the plan does not explicitly outline how public transportation will function along arterial roads in the Secondary Plan area. Further, the Plan refers to the provision of pedestrian and bicycle path linkages within the Plan area, but does not elaborate on how these facilities will interact with arterial roads.

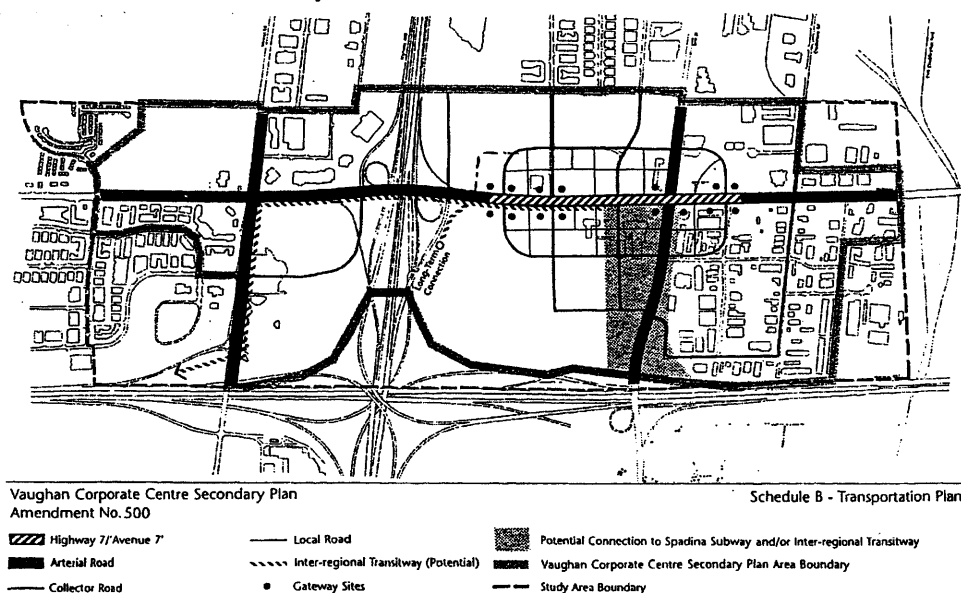
The Secondary Plan indicates that Yonge Street will be developed as a “Main Street” corridor, with attention given to creating building, road and intersection dimensions which achieve pedestrian friendly streetscapes. Richmond Hill’s Council encourages the Region of York to ensure that any improvements to Yonge Street be undertaken in a manner which preserves pedestrian scale and “Main Street” character.

The Secondary Plan accentuates the unique role of Yonge Street as the “Main Street” of Richmond Hill, and indicates that Council will require that a streetscape plan for the east side of Yonge Street be prepared from Highway #7 north to 16th Avenue. This streetscape plan will provide guidelines addressing the landscape relationship of buildings to the street, pedestrian environments and the unity of streetscape elements. Additionally, entry features including both hard and soft landscaping elements shall be required at all intersections of collector roads with Yonge Street.

3.2.3 Amendment Number 500 to the Official Plan of the Vaughan Planning Area - Secondary Plan for the Vaughan Corporate Centre

The Vaughan Corporate Secondary Plan identifies Highway 7, Weston Road and Jane Street as arterial roads, as shown in **Figure 3-3**. The planned functions of Weston Road and Jane Street are not elaborated upon, and thus, it is assumed that their function will remain generally unchanged. Highway 7, however, will undergo significant changes as a result of the Vaughan Corporate Centre Secondary Plan.

Figure 3-3
Transportation Plan for OPA 500



Part of the Secondary Plan deals specifically with urbanizing Highway 7 within the planned Corporate Centre. The Secondary Plan would preserve the existing six-lane cross section and supplement it with two parallel service roads. Only limited access will be provided to the through lanes on Highway 7, thus preserving their existing function as regional traffic lanes.

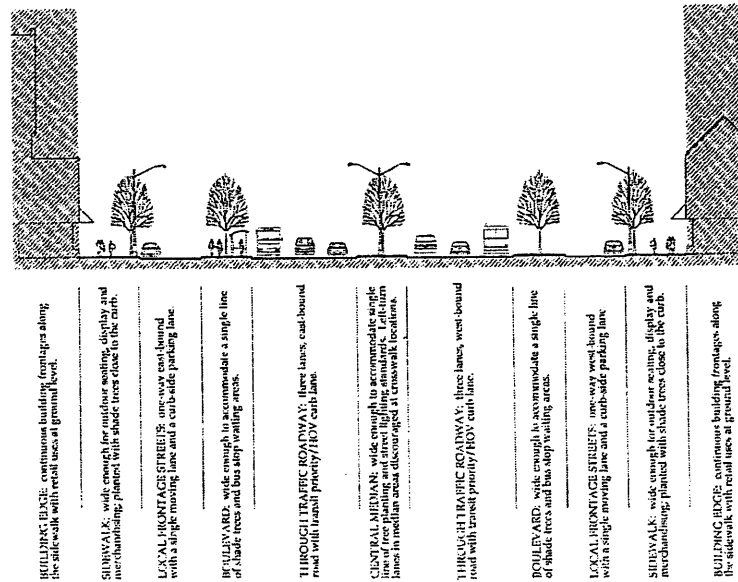
The City of Vaughan Corporate Centre Urban Design Guidelines Report, January 1998, detailed the changes necessary to urbanize Highway 7 by transforming it into “Avenue Seven”. These guidelines outlined how to adapt Highway 7 to serve a new multi-functional role.

These guidelines recognize the need to introduce different design standards from those typically used in highway or major arterial road design. These new standards are different in that they recognize that pedestrians and cyclists are legitimate users of the street and that their needs must be balanced against those of motorists. Thus, “Avenue Seven” would be multi-purpose, an urban street which is both a traffic and transit corridor as well as a place.

The design guidelines are designed to accommodate a wide range of uses and users, some of which require separate or segregated territories within the corridor. As the spine of the Corporate Centre Node, “Avenue Seven” will be lined by buildings with continuous street frontages of at-grade retail uses relating directly to safe, comfortable pedestrian sidewalks. As **Figure 3-4** shows, the public right-of-way between these frontages would be modified to accommodate:

- Transit vehicles on a reserved transitway or on HOV/bus priority lanes;
- Transit stops or stations and passenger waiting areas on transitway medians or expanded sidewalk areas;
- Pedestrian sidewalks and crossings;
- Local frontage traffic lanes and curbside parking;
- Continuous cycle routes on either wide traffic lanes or on separate cycle paths;
- Street-tree planting in sidewalk boulevards and medians; and
- Through (general) traffic moving and turning lanes.

Figure 3-4
 Cross-section view of “Avenue Seven”

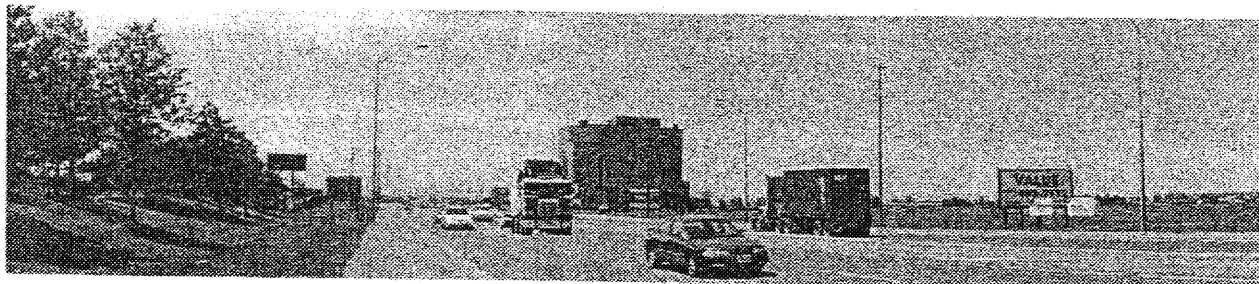


3.3 VISION DOCUMENTS

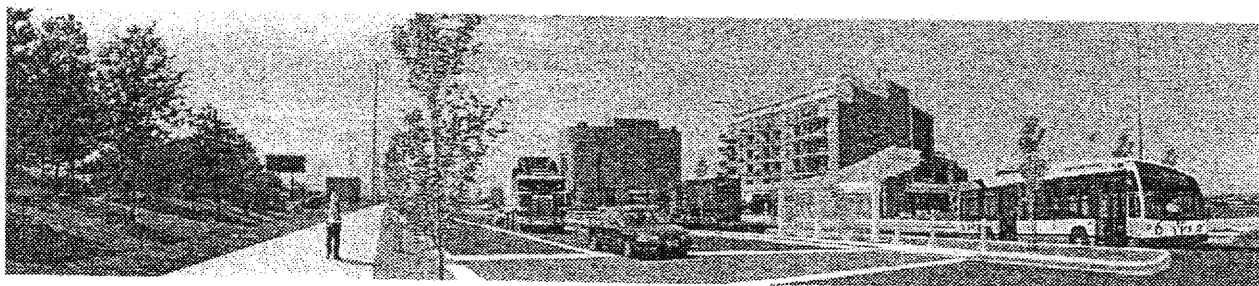
3.3.1 A Vision for Highway 7

The Vision for Highway 7 is a visual vision statement that presents an image of how Highway 7 could look given improvements in pedestrian amenity, public transit, and street and transit related development. By serving as the desired function and design goal for Highway 7, the intent of this document is to help coordinate land use, urban design and streetscape, transportation, transit, public facilities, and other investments in this corridor. **Figures 3-5 and 3-6** illustrate the idealized progression of Highway 7 from a suburban highway to an urban street through incremental changes in the corridor's function and design, and the design of the surrounding land uses.

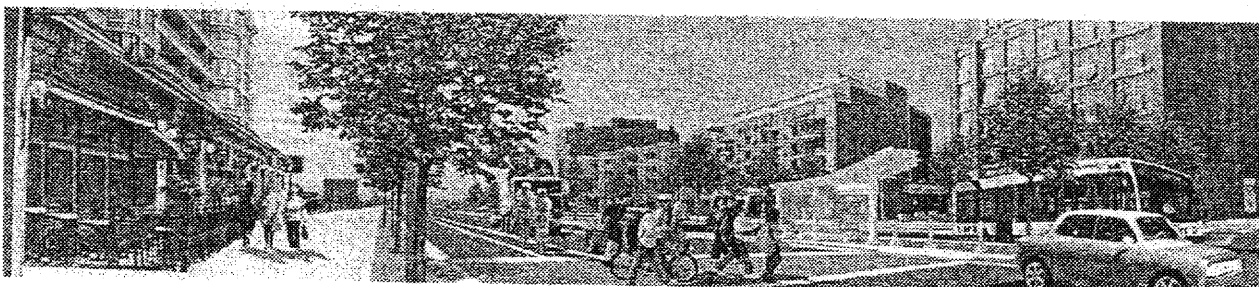
Figure 3-5
Vision for Highway 7, Vaughan Corporate Centre looking west



1 Existing Conditions



2 Bus Rapid Transit | Streetscape Improvements

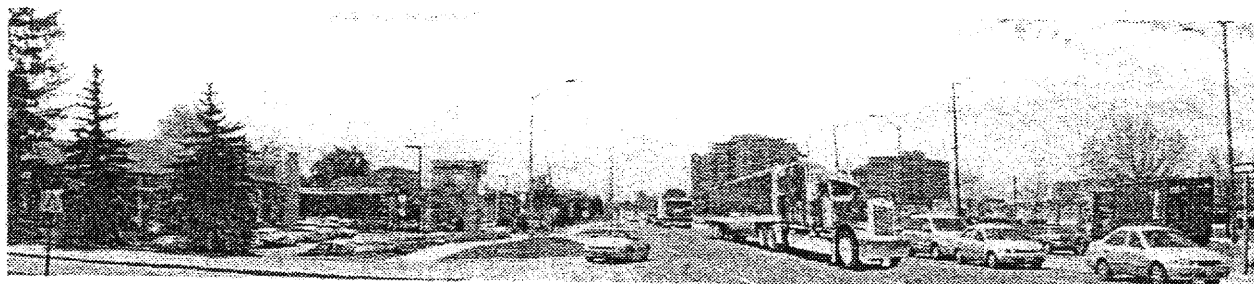


3 Street Related Development | Pedestrian Amenities



4 Light Rail Transit | Transit Supportive Development | Connection to TTC

Figure 3-6
Vision for Highway 7, west from McCowan in Markham



1 Existing Conditions



1 Bus Rapid Transit | Streetscape Improvements



2 Street Related Development | Pedestrian Amenities



3 Light Rail Transit | Transit Supportive Development

Essentially, this visual vision statement was designed to tie together and focus multiple Regional and local initiatives related to Highway 7. To achieve them, this vision proposes a set of planning principles to be applied across Highway 7 to ensure that it is planned in a comprehensive manner consistent with the vision. These principles include:

- The corridor should include the broadest mix of housing types and a mix of commercial, office and institutional uses;
- The corridor should act as a focal point for public buildings, community facilities and human services;
- Commercial uses should be of greater intensity at major intersections;
- Between such areas, uses should be predominantly residential, with commercial uses generally restricted to the ground floor of mixed use buildings;
- Maximum density for commercial development should be less than that permitted for mixed-use and solely residential developments, recognizing that commercial uses generally generate more traffic than residential uses; and
- Permit average densities across the corridor of 2.5 FSI (floor space index), which is the density of traditional main street development. Densities will be higher than 2.5 FSI at strategic locations along the corridor (i.e. within the three regional centres).

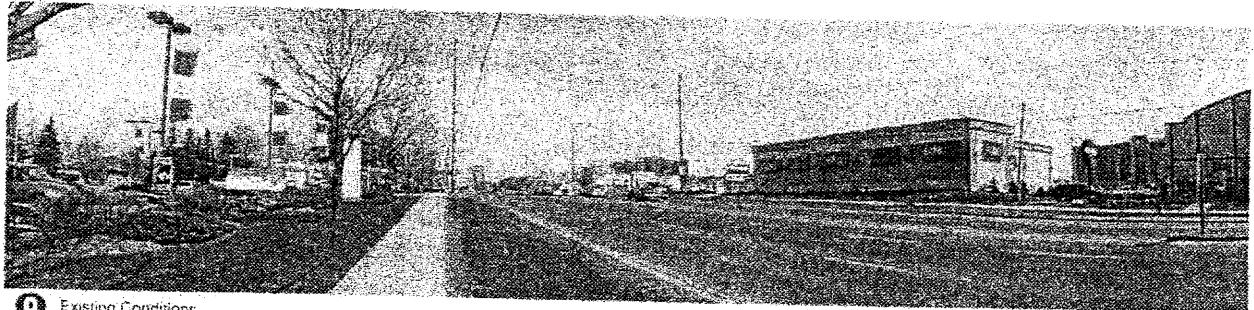
Urban design principles outlined to achieve the vision for Highway 7 include:

- Building heights along the corridor should be compatible in scale with adjacent development and generally be four to eight storeys;
- Additional building heights may be used to emphasize and define major street intersections;
- Continuous building facades should be included in areas that have concentrations of more intense development avoiding large gaps between buildings;
- There should be a transition in height from adjacent low density areas to the buildings fronting the corridor;
- Buildings should be brought as close to the streetline as possible;
- Parking lots should be located in rear yards or side yards;
- Long stretches of walls, berms or fences should be avoided; and
- Retail plazas should accommodate pedestrians and transit users with a direct connection to the sidewalks.

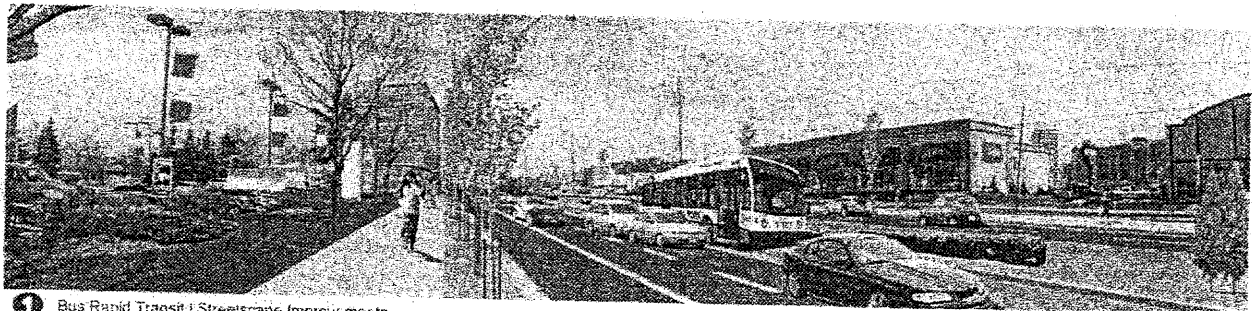
3.3.2 Yonge Street Vision – Richmond Hill Graphic Image

The Vision for Yonge Street was the second vision produced by York Region to act as a guiding image for the development and redevelopment of Yonge Street. However, while the vision for Highway 7 contained images that represented the potential outcome of development over the long-term, the image for Yonge Street in Richmond Hill illustrates what can be achieved over the medium-term, given the ongoing higher density, more pedestrian friendly development in the Bayview Glen Community. **Figure 3-7** illustrates the idealized progression of Yonge Street from a suburban arterial to an urban street.

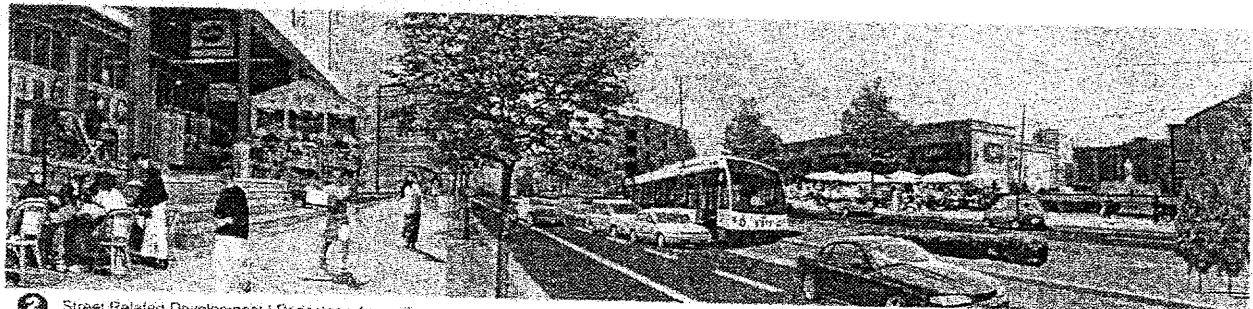
Figure 3-7
Vision for Yonge Street, North of Highway 7 in Richmond Hill



① Existing Conditions



② Bus Rapid Transit | Streetscape Improvements



③ Street Related Development | Pedestrian Amenities



④ Light Rail Transit | Transit Supportive Development

3.4 URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

3.4.1 North Yonge Street – Richmond Hill Urban Design Study

The North Yonge Street Urban Design Study commissioned by the Town of Richmond Hill outlines an urban design framework for future streetscape improvements related to property redevelopment and road improvements in the Oak Ridges community. Specifically, this document addresses issues related to:

- Reducing the impact of high speed traffic on the urban area of the Oak Ridges Community;
- Generating pedestrian friendly streetscapes;
- Creating a healthy environment for business in the area;
- Developing guidelines that will assure a consistent quality to the streetscape and the architecture of the area; and
- The desire to see improvements made to the area in the form of sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting and other public realm features.

The built form recommendations from this report include that:

- The built form along Yonge Street should contribute to the visual appeal and sense of place of the Oak Ridges community;
- Residential development should address the road to reinforce the pedestrian environment and maintain a close relationship to the road; and
- Non-residential development should help reduce the prominence of parking areas, be located to create a defined street edge and should result in articulated facades at a human scale.

The streetscape recommendations from this report include that:

- Treed boulevards with clearly defined walkways, special landscaping at intersections, pedestrian lighting, coordinated street furnishings as well as identity markers will help develop a unique image for the community; and
- The scale of the right-of-way will be reduced through the creation of a median as well as the enclosure provided by new development and planting.

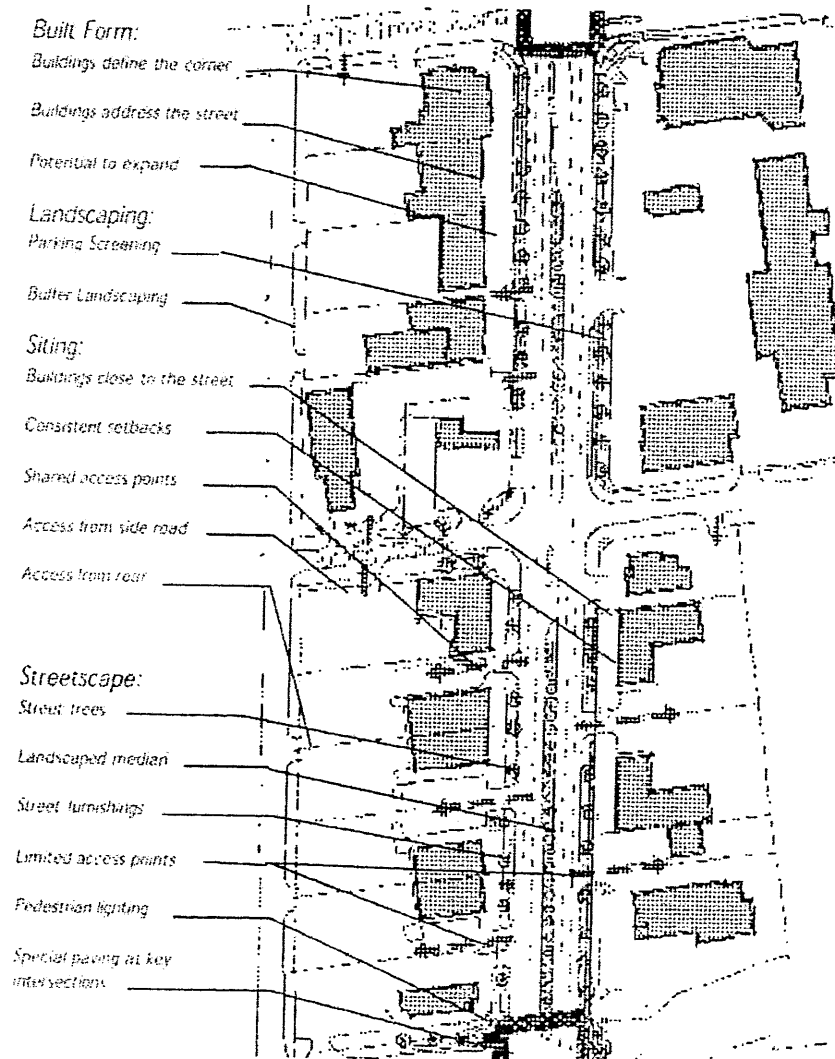
The right-of-way recommendations recognize that the final cross-section for Yonge Street will have to be sufficient to provide for the future traffic and transit needs of the Municipality and the Region. Thus, these recommendations are that:

- A 36 metre right-of-way be provided throughout the study area which is comprised of:
 - Two through lanes in each direction;
 - A third lane in each direction reserved for on-street parking and bus stops that can be used in the future to better accommodate transit needs;
 - A planted 4.5 metre median that provides for left turn lanes;
 - No right turn lanes except at critical intersections;
 - A planted boulevard on each side; and

- Mid-block access generally restricted to right-turns only.
- The implementation of the 36 metre right-of-way through the narrow portion of Yonge Street should take place over an extended period of time, as redevelopment occurs.

This document identifies how these recommendations can be applied to areas of differing character within the study area, including a predominantly residential area, an urban main street area, and a transition area between the two. It provides a host of considerations related to building siting and elevations, parking, access, signage, lighting, landscaping, gateway features and open space to create a comfortable and attractive pedestrian environment in character with the Oak Ridges community. **Figure 3-8** illustrates some of these approaches to creating a pedestrian friendly environment in Oak Ridges.

Figure 3-8
An Illustrated Guide to Built Form, Siting and Streetscape Approaches for Yonge Street in Oak Ridges



3.5 SYNOPSIS

The visual vision statements developed by the Region of York clearly indicate the interconnected nature of the functions of arterial roads, their design, and the design and form of the surrounding uses.

The Official Plans of both the Region and the three southern municipalities clearly indicate the need to maintain arterial roads as vital transportation corridors for people and goods. However, emphasis is also placed on expanding their functions to include greater integration of transit facilities, as well as enhancing their design to encourage use by pedestrians and cyclists. Thus, these principles generally define arterial streets in York Region as multi-purpose transportation corridors.

The secondary plans and urban design guidelines define detailed approaches to urbanizing major arterial streets to maintain the functionality of the road, while improving the pedestrian environment and transit supportive nature through a combination of:

- mixed land uses;
- building siting, massing, design and higher density criteria;
- medians, service lanes with parking;
- sidewalks, crosswalks, tree plantings, landscaping, pedestrian-scale lighting;
- cycling lanes and paths;
- improved transit systems, high occupancy vehicle lanes; and
- transit passenger amenities such as indoor and covered waiting areas.

In summary, the existing policy and guideline documents of York Region and its constituent municipalities support preserving the functional aspects of arterial streets while developing new ways to integrate these major streets into the built environment to create an improved environment for transit, pedestrian and cyclist activities.