



# City of Vaughan Official Plan

Volume 1



## A Plan for Transformation

April 2010  
DRAFT

Vaughan Tomorrow

OUR CITY. OUR PLAN.

*This Draft Vaughan Official Plan was prepared, under the direction of the Official Plan Review Committee, by **Urban Strategies Inc.**, in collaboration with City of Vaughan staff and with input from the following consulting teams:*

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# 01 INTRODUCTION

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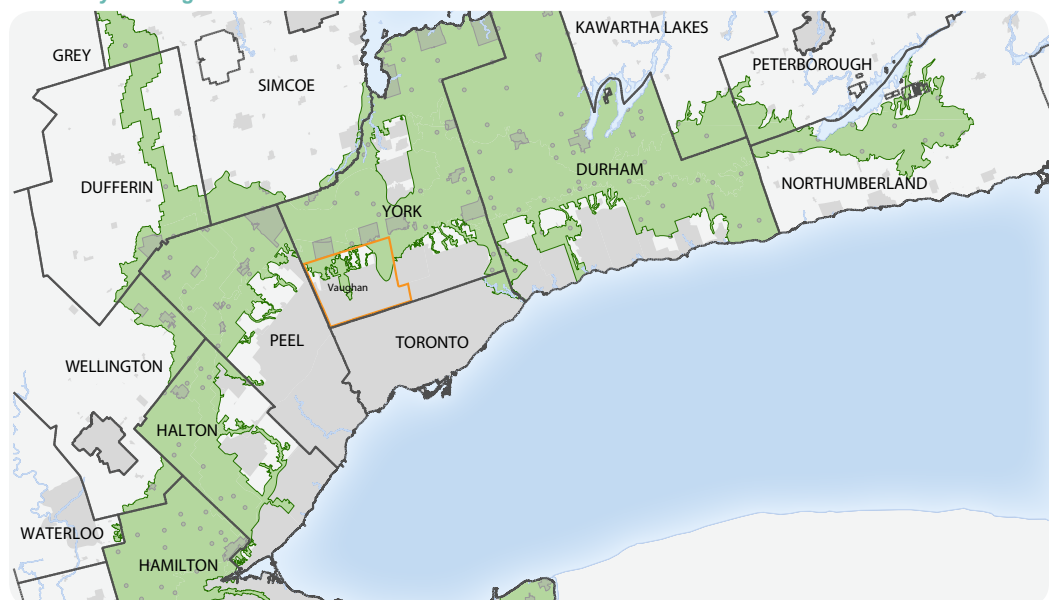
## 1.1 The City of Vaughan in Context

The City of Vaughan, a municipality in York Region, is centrally located within the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). A fast growing urban region that reaches from Niagara to Oshawa, the GGH is the economic engine of Ontario. Vaughan enjoys strong rail and road transportation links to its neighbours and other municipalities across the GGH and beyond. It is also home to the headwaters of both the Humber and Don Rivers - their significant valley systems are a prominent feature on the landscape.

Like the GGH in general, York Region is planning for significant growth through to 2031. It is expected that York Region will grow by over 575,500 people and 318,000 jobs. According to the York Region Official Plan, Vaughan is forecast to accommodate 29% of the Regional population growth and 33% of the Region's employment growth resulting in a growth of approximately 169,500 new residents and 103,900 new jobs between 2006 and 2031 (Vaughan's population in 2006 was 249,300, with 162,200 jobs.)

Vaughan will also be the recipient of tremendous investment in the infrastructure necessary to manage this growth and transform the city in the future. The extension of two subway lines into Vaughan, expansion of the VIVA transit system, construction of a new hospital, extension of Highway 427, and the opening of a new City Hall and civic square are among the major public investments currently in progress.

▼ **Figure 1**  
*The City of Vaughan is centrally located in the Greater Golden Horseshoe*



## 1.2 Vaughan Tomorrow: The City's Growth Management Strategy

The Official Plan is part of an overall Growth Management Strategy, initiated by Council, that will shape the future of the City and oversee its continued transformation into a vibrant, beautiful and sustainable City.

The overall Growth Management Strategy consists of three main components:

- **Vision 2020** – the City's Strategic Plan;
- **Green Directions** – the City's Sustainability Master Plan; and
- **A Plan for Transformation** – the City's new Official Plan.

This document constitutes the new Official Plan – A Plan for Transformation. It was prepared as part of a comprehensive three-year exercise, involving a number of concurrent studies and Master Plans:

- The Transportation Master Plan defines the street and public transit infrastructure, and other initiatives, which are needed to accommodate the population and employment growth that will result from the implementation of the Growth Management strategy.
- Active Together is the Master Plan for the provision of Recreation, Culture, Parks, Facilities and Libraries that ensures that these services and facilities remain important contributors to the high quality of life in Vaughan.

### Vaughan Vision 2020:

The updated strategic plan establishes the City's mission, vision and corporate values. It outlines the Corporation's strategic goals and initiatives. In turn, these strategic initiatives are implemented through departmental business plans. City programs, such as the Vaughan Tomorrow growth management strategy, are aligned to the organizational strategic goals as outlined in Vaughan Vision. Vaughan Vision 2020 was completed in December, 2007.

### Green Directions Vaughan:

The Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan will function as the City's sustainability plan and will influence virtually all aspects of the City's operational and regulatory activities, including the growth management strategy. The intent of the Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan is to establish the principles of sustainability, which will then be used in the development of other plans and master plans to achieve a healthy natural environment, vibrant communities and a strong economy. Green Directions Vaughan was completed in April, 2009.

- The Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan guides improvements to existing and proposed pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in order to create a friendlier environment for those choosing to undertake active transportation.
- The Built Cultural Heritage Study includes policies to preserve and protect built cultural heritage resources, including designated property and heritage conservation districts. The Cultural Heritage Landscape Plan defines and identifies significant cultural heritage landscapes and includes policies for their preservation.
- The Archaeology Study/Plan identifies registered archaeological sites, includes guidelines for the identification of lands of high potential resources and policies that relate to archaeological resources in the City of Vaughan.
- The Creative Together Cultural Plan identifies cultural resources and includes policies for the integration of cultural development and promotion within the municipality.
- The Commercial Land Use Review analyses the current structure, function and performance of retail activities in the City and provides an updated retail market analysis identifying and quantifying future retail and service commercial space requirements for the City of Vaughan until 2031.
- The Housing and Employment Land Needs Study, provides the background to the growth management and land budgeting exercise that informs the urban expansion and intensification policies of the new Official Plan.
- The Employment Sectors Study looks at the current and future employment mix in the City to determine how Vaughan can meet the needs of a growing community and encourage good quality employment opportunities.

- The Social Services Study investigates current and future social service needs of the people of Vaughan and provides recommendations for Official Plan policy and Strategic Actions. The recommendations include a broad array of ideas for how the City could become involved in social service provision in the future.
- The Water and Wastewater Master Plan and the Storm Drainage/Stormwater Management Master Plan shall be completed in support of the new Official Plan and all related Secondary Plans. The municipal services requirements identified in these documents shall guide infrastructure requirements in support of the new Official Plan.

Five Focused Area Studies were also prepared providing additional detail for the planning of specific areas of the City:

- Kleinburg-Nashville Rural Areas;
- Yonge Street Area including the Yonge and Steeles node, as well as the portion of Yonge Street (Vaughan), north of the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District;
- Woodbridge Core Area;
- The Vaughan Metropolitan Centre; and
- The West Vaughan Employment Area.

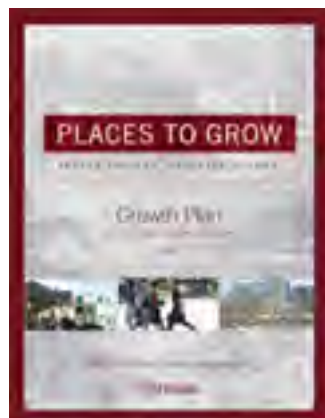
## 1.3 The Provincial and Regional Context

The Official Plan addresses the City's long-term planning requirements to the year 2031 and, in addition to consolidating all former land use policy into one document, this Plan brings the City into conformity with recent Provincial and Regional land use policy direction.

### The Provincial Policy Context

The Planning Act requires municipalities to prepare an Official Plan to set out the municipality's general planning goals and policies that will guide future land use. Specifically, the Official Plan must contain "goals, objectives and policies established primarily to manage and direct physical change and the effects on the spatial, economic and natural environment of the municipality." Such plans are also required to be updated every five years, to ensure conformity with provincial plans and consistency with provincial policy statements.

The Provincial Policy Statement (2005) (PPS) requires that municipal official plans be consistent with its policies for the wise management of land in the Province including: support for intensification and more compact, transit-supportive land use patterns; the protection of employment lands; the redevelopment of brownfields; the promotion and development of clean energy sources and conservation for improved air quality; among other important policies. The PPS also requires that upper and lower tier municipalities coordinate their land use planning efforts, particularly in the area of allocating population and identifying areas for intensification.





The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2002) established the protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine - a significant natural heritage feature part of which is in the north east area of Vaughan. The Greenbelt Plan (2005) builds on the legacy of protection established for the Oak Ridges Moraine and protects agricultural lands, and lands performing vital ecological features, from urbanization. The policies in these plans generally protect these lands for agricultural, passive recreational, and traditional rural settlement area uses.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006) (“the Growth Plan”) sets growth forecasts to guide planning and growth management across the region and emphasizes intensification of already built-up areas, the preservation of designated Employment Areas for future economic opportunity; conservation of natural heritage areas; and multiple modes of safe and efficient transportation to move around. The Growth Plan also stipulates that conversions of employment land to other non-employment uses, and expansions to the urban area can only be made through a municipal comprehensive review, such as the statutory five year official plan review.

On January 1, 2007 changes to the Planning Act came into effect as a result of the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006 (Bill 51). These changes include policies to further support the Province’s move toward healthy, sustainable communities by making the planning process more accessible for citizens and providing tools to help municipalities achieve their planning goals.

### **The Regional Policy Context**

The York Region Official Plan (YROP) has been updated to recognize recent Regional initiatives and to bring it into conformity with the recent Provincial planning changes described above.

The updated YROP is rooted in the concept of sustainability. The YROP policies will protect important natural features with an emphasis on enhancing the natural systems that shape and support the region, while also managing the growth of the rapidly urbanizing region with a shift toward greater intensification of the already built-up areas. The YROP sets intensification targets for each of the local municipalities. Community-building policies support this shift with a new policy focus on integrated city-building to create sustainable communities with a pedestrian-friendly, transit-supportive, transportation system that will reduce reliance on automobiles.

The YROP was under review while the Vaughan Official Plan was under development. Consequently, and in accordance with provincial policy, the two documents are well aligned and share a coordinated policy basis and approach to growth management. Where policies of the Regional Plan conflict with this Plan, the Regional Plan will prevail.

## 1.4 An Extensive Engagement Exercise

A visionary plan that could be supported across the City required extensive input from the public and key stakeholders. In order to gather such input, a new and visionary approach to public consultation was implemented. The innovative approach to consultation, taken under Council direction and described below, garnered Vaughan a 2009 Award for Excellence in Communications and Public Education from the Ontario Professional Planners Institute.

The consultation program ran throughout the Vaughan Tomorrow process and was tailored to the various stages of the program:

- A Speaker's Series kicked-off the consultation program, featuring invited experts speaking on a number of topics to engage and educate the public on issues of city-building.
- Visioning Workshops were held in each of the communities to gather citizen input into the direction that the new Official Plan should take.
- A documentary film, "A Vision for Transformation", was prepared including contributions from experts, City Council, and citizens describing the need for change and a desired future for the City. This film was shown at Vaughan Tomorrow public meetings, was sent to ratepayer associations and community groups and was screened in libraries and at other public events.
- As background reports were prepared, summaries were provided in a series of Citizens' Bulletins, providing information on the various subject areas being studied in preparation of the new Official Plan. These Citizens' Bulletins, as well as the full length reports, were available at the Civic Centre, in libraries and on the dedicated Vaughan Tomorrow website.
- The Vaughan Tomorrow website acted as a clearing house for all Growth Management related news and information, including the interactive VaughanQuest city growth simulation software which allowed citizen's to see the potential impact of many growth management decisions on the quality of life, and shape of their city.

- The youth of Vaughan were also engaged through the preparation of an educational package which was made available to all Public and Catholic high schools in Vaughan.
- Workshops on the Vision for Transformation were held with land industry professionals, the general public and rate payers associations. The Vision for Transformation was also shared at smaller community events such as community dinners.
- As detailed analyses were prepared, two comprehensive open houses were held to inform the public and stakeholders of key issues and areas of discussion. At these events, representatives of all supporting studies related to the preparation of the Official Plan were on hand to share findings and solicit feedback.
- The draft Official Plan was released in April, 2010 and open houses were held during the spring of that year.

In addition to consultation with the general public, the Plan was prepared through regular consultation with related agencies such as York Region, the School Boards, and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach.

▼ *The Vaughan Tomorrow consultation program included many innovative approaches to gathering public input*



## 1.5 The Vision for Transformation: Goals for the Official Plan

The Vaughan Tomorrow project and Official Plan Review included an extensive visioning process whereby Vaughan residents were engaged to help define the main principles that would guide the development of Official Plan policies and land-use planning decisions. The main principles of Vaughan's Vision for Transformation and the resultant policies are summarized through eight key themes, described below. These have become the goals of the Official Plan.

### **Goal 1: Strong and Diverse Communities**

A city's community areas are among its most important assets. They are where people interact with one another on a daily basis. Distinct and diverse communities make a city an exciting place to live. Vaughan consists of five existing residential communities (Woodbridge, Kleinburg, Maple, Thornhill and Concord) and three developing residential communities (Vellore, Carrville and Nashville). This Official Plan seeks to maintain the stability of existing residential communities, direct well designed, context-sensitive growth to strictly defined areas, and provide for a wide range of housing choices and a full range of community services and amenities within each community. New community areas have been identified and will undergo a Secondary Plan process.

### **Goal 2: A Robust and Prominent Countryside**

Despite the incredible scale and pace of growth, the City of Vaughan still has a considerable amount of countryside and natural areas remaining within its municipal boundaries. It is a focus of this Plan to maintain a prominent and accessible countryside within Vaughan to allow the City's citizens to realize the many benefits of such a close association with this land. Beyond food production and wildlife habitat, the countryside provides a number of valuable functions. Forests and watercourses clean toxins from the air and water, slow storm water and provide flood protection. Additionally, the countryside provides a wide range of opportunities for passive and active recreation. Maintaining these features within the municipal boundary as the City urbanizes will improve Vaughan's attractiveness as a place to live, work and play.

### **Goal 3: A Diverse Economy**

Vaughan is one of the most successful municipalities in the country in terms of job creation. Employment in the City tripled between 1986 and 2006 and while other municipalities have struggled to maintain manufacturing jobs, Vaughan has become an industrial powerhouse. Building on Vaughan's tremendous economic success in recent history, forward looking policies aim to diversify the local economy by attracting a wider range of employment including major office uses, research, and health and education employment. These uses can be located in mixed-use centres, thereby also supporting transit, and preserving designated employment lands for other forms of economic activities: warehousing, manufacturing and industrial operations.

### **Goal 4: A Vibrant and Thriving Downtown**

The Province has identified the core of the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC) as a provincially designated Urban Growth Centre, recognizing its location along the Highway 7 rapid transit corridor and at the terminus of the planned Toronto-York Subway extension. The VMC is envisioned to become Vaughan's downtown – the highest density node within the City and a focus for civic activities, business, shopping, entertainment and living. The VMC can accommodate a significant amount of Vaughan's planned residential and employment growth, and it is an appropriate location for major institutional uses. Through planning, design, programming and investment, the VMC will be the masthead of Vaughan's identity: a recognizable and special place at the heart of the City.

### **Goal 5: Moving Around without a Car**

Reducing car traffic creates cleaner air and more enjoyable streets, and increasing active transportation (walking and cycling) creates a healthier population. However, people will continue to drive cars until there are more viable transportation options. The Toronto-York and Yonge subway extensions, the VIVA rapid transit and regional bus network and increased GO Transit service will provide a strong foundation for Vaughan's public transit infrastructure. The new Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan is also an important step in this direction, making clear that the current state of auto-dependency needs to be addressed and changed. With this foundation, the Official Plan will focus on implementing planning and design policies that make walking, cycling and transit use realistic options for moving around.

### **Goal 6: Design Excellence and Memorable Places**

Vaughan has a number of remarkable assets that define it as a place. The two river valley corridors are the most identifiable placemaking features in Vaughan. With regards to the built areas of the City, the historic village cores, parks and community centres are highly valued places. While people in Vaughan cherish their residential neighbourhoods they also understand that the City as a whole has not had the time to develop the various attributes that make wonderful built landscapes. Cities take time to develop a sense of place and the next phase of Vaughan's evolution, guided by this Official Plan, will focus not only on accommodating growth, but doing so in a manner that contributes to the overall beauty of the City.

### **Goal 7: A Green and Sustainable City**

The City of Vaughan has established the concept of sustainability as a key City-wide objective. This is reflected in Vision 2020 and Green Directions Vaughan, and is therefore embedded in all aspects of the new Vaughan Official Plan. The main principles of sustainable land-use planning relate to the protection of the natural environment, protection of agricultural lands, and the ability for people to live in communities that minimize energy use, water consumption and solid waste generation and allow for alternative transportation choices.

### **Goal 8: Directing Growth to Appropriate Locations**

Planning for the attractive, sustainable and prosperous city envisioned by this Plan will in large part be achieved by directing growth to appropriate locations that can support it. This means a shift in emphasis from the development of new communities in greenfield areas to the promotion of intensification in areas of the City with the infrastructure capacity and existing or planned transit service to accommodate growth. This Plan provides an appropriate balance in this regard by accommodating 45% of new residential growth through intensification and the remainder within new community areas. Intensification Areas have been limited to 3% of the overall land base to ensure the existing Community Areas and natural areas are well protected. Similarly, employment growth is being accommodated through a balance of intensification within mixed-use centres and through new development in Employment Areas.



## 1.6 Structure of this Plan

The Official Plan is contained in two volumes. The first volume forms the general text and the policies of the Plan that apply across the City. The second volume consists of Site/Area-Specific Policies and Secondary Plans. The purpose and main objectives for each chapter in Volume One are described below.



### **Introduction**

Chapter One sets out the overall context within which the Official Plan was created. It describes the geographical context of the City, the policy context for the Official Plan and the Vision that was derived from the Vaughan Tomorrow consultation process.



### **Managing Growth**

Chapter Two provides policies for managing growth and shaping the future of the City. The growth strategy is based on a transformative shift away from reliance on greenfield development toward the promotion of intensification and reurbanization within the already built-up area of the City. Where new communities are developed, they will be planned and built as compact, complete and transit-supportive neighbourhoods. Such a shift will help promote a more sustainable City by making more efficient use of existing infrastructure, supporting alternative modes of transportation and protecting natural areas, rural areas and existing communities.



### **Environment**

Chapter Three creates a framework for natural heritage and environmental protection. Natural heritage protection is based on establishing a connected Natural Heritage Network that includes important natural features, the open spaces which connect them, as well as opportunities to grow the Network. Beyond the Natural Heritage Network, policies also focus on ensuring clean air, water and soil in the City.



### **Transportation**

Chapter Four provides policy directions to ensure a sustainable and balanced transportation system. Recognizing the dominant role the automobile has played in defining patterns of growth and development in Vaughan, the focus over the next 25 years is on strengthening the pedestrian, bicycle and transit networks and systems. The policies are based on plans for regional rapid transit investments that will provide the framework for the future transportation network and enhancements to all transportation modes that will provide viable mobility alternatives.



## **Economy**

Chapter Five provides policy directions to promote economic vitality and support high quality and diverse employment opportunities. To support a strong and diverse economy, the policies provide direction to, among other things, enhance industrial activity, prioritize green industries and services, attract major offices and institutions, support the retail economy, enhance creativity and culture, and encourage the growth of major institutions such as a new medical centre. Emphasis is placed on long-term economic stability to ensure a wide variety of job opportunities are available that allow residents to live and work in Vaughan.



## **Cultural Heritage**

Chapter Six sets out policies that support the protection of Vaughan's cultural heritage resources by outlining a comprehensive approach to identifying, protecting and promoting cultural heritage. The policies focus on built heritage, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological heritage resources. A broad approach to understanding heritage within its context and landscape is encouraged to ensure comprehensive protection of heritage resources.



## **Community Infrastructure**

Chapter Seven sets out policies regarding the community services and facilities and housing options needed to support strong and healthy communities. Specifically, the policies seek to: ensure appropriate community facilities and services are provided to meet the needs of all residents; provide a diversity of parks and open spaces in terms of size, function and programming; support local food systems and community agriculture; create a variety of housing opportunities in terms of tenure, affordability, size and form; and, and advocate for sufficient and appropriate human and social services to be available in Vaughan.

**8 Municipal Services, Utilities, and Infrastructure**  
Chapter Eight provides policy directions to ensure the long-term provision of sustainable infrastructure, utilities, and servicing. With a focus on minimizing environmental impacts, increasing efficiency and supporting sustainability objectives, the policies provide specific direction for the planning and implementation of traditional and emerging utilities and services, provide clear and innovative approaches for ensuring city-wide energy conservation, and support a wide-range of approaches to reduce waste.

**9 Building a Great City**  
Chapter Nine brings together the various policies in the Official Plan to create the main land-use regulatory section of the Plan. It provides a framework for continuing to build Vaughan as a great City. It includes specific policies and development criteria to ensure a wonderful public realm, an attractive and pedestrian-oriented built form and sustainable and green buildings. Most importantly, it includes the land use designations and building typologies that form the basis for ensuring new development achieves the transformation anticipated by this Plan.

**10 Implementation**  
Chapter Ten sets out the tools and mechanisms to realize the long term growth strategies and policies of this Plan.

## 1.7 How to Read this Plan

This Official Plan (Volume 1 and Volume 2) represents the policy of the Council of the City of Vaughan with respect to land use and related matters. It is intended that the Plan be read in its entirety as policies throughout it may apply to any given parcel of land. Volume 1 contains policies that apply City-wide. Secondary Plans and Site/Area-Specific policies are contained in Volume 2.

The Plan includes both numbered policies and explanatory text. The explanatory text is provided to bring clarity and intent to the policies. Terms that are *italicized* in the text are defined terms found in the Definitions section in Chapter 10 of the Plan. If a term is not defined, the standard meaning is implied. Terms that are **bold** are specific designations found on Schedules to this Plan and defined through the policies of this Plan.

The Plan also includes both illustrative figures and statutory schedules. Illustrative figures are provided to guide interpretation of associated policy. Schedules form part of the policy of this Plan.

