

# Recreation and Culture Department – City of Vaughan

## YOUTH IN ACTION

### Youth Strategy 2009 & Beyond

#### Overview

Knowing and understanding the needs, preferences and trends of Vaughan's youth is an important stepping stone in the City of Vaughan's Recreation and Culture Department achieving the Corporate mission of *Citizen's First Through Service Excellence*. It also provides staff and community leaders with direction in the development of youth programs and services.

Recognizing that youth are a vulnerable group, the City has undertaken several initiatives to increase youth participation within the community and to offer youth positive lifestyle choices:

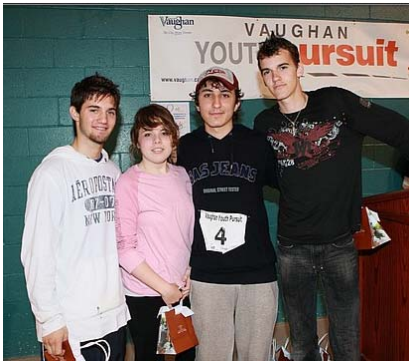
In 2005, the City implemented the Vaughan Youth Cabinet (VYC), a central body which advocates youth initiatives by facilitating communication of local youth programs and encouraging participation in youth events. Since its inception, the VYC has worked with the City to execute several highly successful youth-oriented initiatives and events, as follows.



In May 2006, BE HEARD! – a youth conference with leadership and physical activity workshops designed to develop youth skills and abilities and create awareness of community organizations with youth services – was attended by over 400 high school students.

In May 2007 and 2008 the City hosted Youth Week, a week dedicated to activities, interaction and celebration to strengthen the connection between young people and their communities.

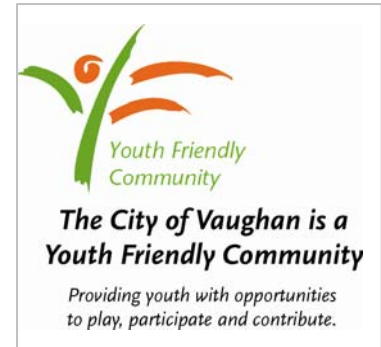




Participation in Youth Week significantly increased in 2008, and included the first annual Vaughan Youth Pursuit, a 10-kilometer race supported by local businesses, and several charity events which raised funds to provide recreation

opportunities for families in need and support special needs programming in Vaughan.

In 2007 the City of Vaughan was designated a Youth Friendly Community. This grass-roots recognition program celebrates communities that are taking steps to open their doors to youth by reinvesting in youth play through opportunities for active play, youth engagement and youth activism.



Youth continue to be one of the City's largest "untapped resources". By investing in accessible programming, outreaching to secluded neighborhoods, building services based on need and dedicating the resources of quality staff, the City of Vaughan will support youth in defining positive success and skill on their own terms. All of the leaders of tomorrow are waiting in the wings of the youth demographic. Programs and outreach that are developed, planned and delivered with participation from youth in all levels of the process instill leadership, initiative and self-sufficiency. A strong youth demographic instills pride and respect for the community.

The Recreation and Culture Department currently offers Youth programming in several tiers: community centre based youth rooms and registered programs, satellite drop in programs and special event programming. These options strive to provide both physical/active and social wellness opportunities. Youth rooms located in community centres across the City offer both lunch time and after school drop in activities. In these programs youth participate in sports and games, socialize with peers and interact with outreach groups to improve quality of life (job fairs, community involvement, fundraising



etc.). Satellite programs provide drop in activities and social time for youth who may not be able to access similar programs at a community centre. These programs function as an extension of school hours and provide opportunities in an environment youth are familiar with. Special events provide youth with the opportunity to showcase their civic pride, initiative and

voice with the community as a whole. Through *Youth Week*, 'speak outs', and community gatherings, youth continue to provide input on their needs and work together to achieve success.

The City of Vaughan's Recreation and Culture Department staff, anticipating an ongoing increase in the youth demographic over the next 5–10 years, undertook a review of programs and services to determine how best to meet the diverse needs of today's youth and plan for the youth of tomorrow. A youth needs assessment was conducted to evaluate the current level of services and to identify gaps and future needs. Students were asked to comment on various issues such as: access to public transportation, community centre youth memberships, knowledge of and participation in community centre based programs, where they like to spend their leisure time, identification of concerns for today's youth, and the use of other municipal services such as the public library. Surveys were completed and collected on site. To thank them for participating, each student received a free skate pass/swim voucher. More than 1,200 surveys were completed. Consolidated information allowed for some comparison with neighboring municipalities such as whether or not there was a formal voice for youth in the municipal process, types of programs and services offered elsewhere, applicable fees, level of participation in youth week, etc. The findings and recommendations formed the basis of the five (5) goals for this youth strategy.

The delivery of youth programs and services is shared by several key players and stakeholders beyond the Recreation and Culture Department. One of the key players is the position of the Youth City Councilor. The City has been fortunate to have articulate and insightful students in this position, each of whom prepared a "State of the Youth" report (attached). Each Youth City Councilor had the opportunity to meet with municipal leaders through City Council, Boards of Education, community leaders, and Departmental staff with access to information such as the youth needs survey to augment their understanding of youth related issues. These contacts provided further insights, observations and recommendations relating to youth representation, communication needs, recreation opportunities, transportation issues, safety and law enforcement, the environment, and employment as they relate to youth. Their recommendations with respect to recreation programs and services have been captured within this strategy.

The youth strategy also includes recommendations from the Department's "Active Together" Master Plan on current trends in participation from youth. The Master Plan has identified that some of the more popular activities are walking, bicycling, swimming, running/jogging, and basketball. Further, the Master Plan notes that skateboarding is gaining momentum and that soccer is the most popular organized sport. The current

trend is away from structured/organized activities and towards more self-directed, self-scheduled, unorganized, unstructured, and spontaneous activities. Success for youth involves an open dialogue loop between City staff and the youth themselves. Consulting youth on plans for upcoming youth space and equipment is a key point of the Master Plan. Youth need to have a say in their future and they understand that engagement with City staff can improve design and support upcoming trends. City staff will continue to be trained to be “youth friendly” and open to suggestion and concerns. Success in meeting youth needs has always started with creating a welcome atmosphere at our youth programs and centres. The youth demographic need a place of their own to develop, socialize, build confidence and grow. With the stresses of school demands and negative peer pressure increasing annually, Recreation and Culture programs provide a positive outlet for youth to form the life long learnables and skills that shape their future.

## Summary:

The “Vaughan Youth Strategy 2009 & Beyond” is based on the findings and recommendations of four (4) documents: the Youth Needs Assessment Report, the master plan, “Active Together”, and the “State of the Youth Reports” (2) prepared by Youth City Councilors.

It outlines five (5) key recommendations with measurable objectives to implement by December 31, 2009. Several of the goals and objectives extend into 2010 and 2011. They are:

1. Develop a marketing and communications plan to promote youth programs and opportunities by March of each of the three years (2009, 2010, 2011).
2. Expand the City of Vaughan’s Recreation and Culture program selection for youth by five programs and/or events by September of each of the three years (2009, 2010, 2011).
3. Increase participation in physical activities for youth annually by 3-5% by December of each of 2010 and 2011.
4. Increase the number of City of Vaughan youth memberships by 3-5% by December 2009.
5. Launch 2 new programs in communities with limited access to recreational program opportunities by June of 2010 and 2011.

The goals are over-arching in their “recreation reach” in terms of responding to the recommendations. The initial focus of the strategy is to increase youth participation through the enhanced provision of programs and services that meet their needs. Upon completion of the objectives from the five (5) recommendations, further consideration will be required to establish a strategy for youth for 2010 and beyond to ensure a continued strive towards *Citizen’s First Through Service Excellence*.

The success of achieving the recommendations is closely connected to the development of goals and objectives at both the community centre level as well as working with the Vaughan Youth Cabinet (VyC). The strategy will be presented to all Recreation Services Supervisors, Active Living Coordinators, and the VyC. Each team will be responsible to capture components of the recommendations within their goals and objectives for 2009.

The youth strategy should be reviewed, assessed and revised on an annual basis to ensure it remains reflective of current trends and responds to the changing needs of the community. The

Community Development Coordinator and the Recreation Services Supervisors will be responsible for monitoring/modifying/assessing the implementation of the goals.

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The Recreation and Culture Department gratefully acknowledges the work of Mirella Tersigni, Community Development Coordinator.

# Vaughan Vision

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LOOKING TO OUR FUTURE

The City of Vaughan is proud to share its strategic plan and vision to make Vaughan the city of choice.





# GOALS

**Goal One: Develop a marketing and communications plan to promote youth programs and opportunities by March, of each of the three years (2009, 2010, 2011).**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Year 1 2009</b>	<b>Year 2 2010</b>	<b>Year 3 2011</b>
Establish a yearly schedule of promotional displays/events with the Active Living Coordinators (ALC'S), Vaughan Youth Cabinet (VyC), and the Vaughan Public Library (VPL). [State of the Youth Report 2007] in September of each year	✓	✓	
Enhance the annual City of Vaughan Youth Week profile of activities and opportunities by collaborating and partnering with 2 youth serving agencies and 2 community groups by February 2009.	✓	✓	✓
Partner with 2 organizations to seek funding opportunities, partnerships for youth initiatives and assistance with marketing materials by March 2009.			
<b>MEASURABLES</b>			
Confirm location and dates for venue(s) to promote youth programs and track number of visitors.	✓	✓	✓
Obtain approval from secondary school principals for three (3) in-school announcements to be followed by two (2) in-school visits from respective centre ALC's to promote new opportunities.	✓		
Provide information and materials to 2 community organizations as well as community events to increase outreach.	✓	✓	
Addition of female youth in print materials and the presence of female youth staff to do outreach as a means to motivate and target girls' participation with youth programs and initiatives.			
Distribute youth poster to schools, Vaughan staff, Vaughan youth and community organizations.	✓	✓	
Report by March 2009 on funding opportunities to assist with support of youth programs.	✓	✓	

**Goal Two: Expand Vaughan’s Recreation & Culture program selection for youth by 5 programs and/or events by September of each of the three years (2009, 2010, 2011).**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Year 1 2009</b>	<b>Year 2 2010</b>	<b>Year 3 2011</b>
City of Vaughan youth staff will advocate to current youth program participants to develop program concepts and activities for their respective areas.** This is ongoing effective January 2009.	✓	✓	
Deliver 2 programs/workshops identified as youth trends and feature workshops that reflect cultural diversity (cultural foods, dress, dance) in Fall & Winter 09/10 Recreation Guide.	✓	✓	✓
Develop two (2) new partnerships with community agencies to facilitate outreach and skill building workshops by December 2009.	✓		
<b>MEASURABLES</b>			
Schedule two (2) annual youth meetings to gather input.	✓	✓	
Track participation at three (3) city events that offer physical activity component (WinterLights, Youth Week) and summarize feedback from participants.	✓	✓	
Two (2) new programs implemented by Fall 2009.	✓		
Youth schedule of programs/workshops posted in City of Vaughan youth rooms, libraries, schools (minimum 3 at each location).	✓		

\* Ref: 4.3.3 State of the Youth Report (2007)

\*\*Objective will continue into 2010 -2011 to ensure activities continue to meet the growing needs/requests of each area

**Goal Three: Increase participation in physical activities for youth annually by 3-5% by December of each 2010 and 2011.**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Year 1 2009</b>	<b>Year 2 2010</b>	<b>Year 3 2011</b>
Partner with and secure agreement with Community Use of Schools Program (CUSP) to facilitate extra-curricular activities in new communities where access to programs is a barrier by December 2009.	✓		
Develop a schedule for school physical activity workshops within each community centre area by December 2010.	✓		
Highlight events and school initiatives that include active components: i.e. Youth Week, VYC-Be Heard Conference, WinterLights-WinterPLAY!, PA Days, Peace Tree with promotions to youth by October 2009.	✓		
Coordinate and develop opportunities for unstructured 2 outdoor activities i.e. trails, skateboarding, cycling, Youth mall walks.		✓	✓
Hire 1 female youth staff/mentor to assist with outreach to increase female participation in all-female programs initiatives at centres/schools.		✓	
Publicize the Physical Activity Strategy to schools, community organizations and staff by December 2010.		✓	
<b>MEASURABLES</b>			
Three (3) school visits by March 2009 from Active Living Coordinators from each community centre to book activity workshops.	✓		
Pilot two (2) new outdoor activities for Youth Week 2009 along with summer and winter initiatives (i.e. Winterlights, Schools in Bloom, Peace Tree).	✓		
Track number of female participants with scheduled activities, such as WinterPLAY!, mall walks (walk and shop), etc.		✓	
Develop/integrate WinterPLAY! and SummerPLAY! into youth events, City initiatives (i.e. VYC, WinterLights, Schools in Bloom, Peace Tree) by December 2009.	✓		

Cross reference youth memberships with participants in programs data base from December 2008 through to December 2010.	✓	✓	✓
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**Goal Four: Increase the number of City of Vaughan youth memberships by 3-5% by December 2009.\***

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Year 1 2009</b>	<b>Year 2 2010</b>	<b>Year 3 2011</b>
Provide value added features (e.g. gift packs and incentives) to existing memberships by September 2009.	✓	✓	✓
Draft criteria for membership gift pack/and school incentive packages by March 2009.			
VyC to assist in the delivery of information through website info page and with outreach regarding City of Vaughan youth programs and upcoming events by October 2009.	✓	✓	✓
<b>MEASURABLES</b>			
2. Secure sponsors for memberships and implement added services/opportunities.		✓	✓
2. Youth news announcements in schools created by youth rep or student council.	✓		
3. Integrate outreach and posting on website with VyC schedule of events.	✓	✓	✓
2. Review and compare increase of memberships with previous year data and gather email addresses for distribution of youth news and program info.			

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\* Ref: 4.3.3 State of the Youth Report (2007)

**Goal Five: Launch 2 new programs in communities with limited access to recreational program opportunities by June of 2010 and 2011.**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Year 1 2009</b>	<b>Year 2 2010</b>	<b>Year 3 2011</b>
Secure space in 2 community schools to be used as a place to provide drop-in youth programs for newer communities without access (e.g. Teston Rd, N, Weston to Keele St, Kirby, Carville) by December 2009.	✓		
Partner with 2 youth serving agencies (e.g. YMCA, Girls on the Run, Boys/Girls Club) in the program development and implementation by December 2009.	✓	✓	
Develop a business case for alternative service delivery by March 2010.		✓	✓
<b>MEASURABLES</b>			
Youth staff evaluate program delivery and feedback from participants.	✓	✓	✓
Recruitment and training strategy in place with 6 successful graduates.	✓		
Develop a business case for alternative service delivery.		✓	✓
Confirm youth engagement by tracking numbers of participants.	✓	✓	✓
To have one youth representative at each student council.	✓		
Report by March 2010 on funding opportunities to assist with supporting youth program.	✓	✓	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Vaughan has seen significant growth over the past 10 years and has become one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada. With this rapid growth has come a demand for new and improved services to a changing community.

In 2003 the City of Vaughan launched the Vaughan Vision 2007 with a new mission of “Citizens First Through Service Excellence”. In October 2005 the Recreation and Culture Department underwent a departmental restructuring going from a decentralized system to a centralized community based system to adapt and meet the needs of changing communities.

The youth needs assessment was created as the first step in evaluating current youth services and identifying needs and preferences of youth in relation to recreation programming, targeting youth in communities across the City of Vaughan. The youth needs assessment will be used to develop an overall framework and plan of action in the delivery of youth services that will assist the City of Vaughan in addressing the needs and preferences of youth.

Some of the barriers that have been identified are low participation rate in physical activity (including lack of female participation ), lack of variety of services available to youth, barriers to accessible programs at some of our community centres, low numbers with youth memberships, and lack of awareness regarding programs, services and opportunities available for youth citywide.

Studies show a marked drop-off in all forms of recreational activity by youth over the age of 13, which sets the stage for falling levels of physical activity throughout the rest of adult life. The drop-off with young girls starts at age 12 (Hay, J. and Donnelly, P., 1999)

This report will review community demographic information, current programs and services, trends and research related to youth and recreation, as well as data analysis of first hand information from over 1200 Vaughan high school students. This report will also provide a highlight on the impact of the arts on youth as it was identified as the surveys identified this area as a need.

Knowing and understanding the needs, preferences and trends of today’s youth will help us in achieving our mission of Citizens First Through Service Excellence and

provide us with direction in the development of youth programs and services offered by the Recreation and Culture Department.