



## CONCORD WEST URBAN DESIGN & STREETScape MASTER PLAN STAKEHOLDER MEETING SUMMARY

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DATE: 09 November 2010

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VENUE: City of Vaughan Seniors Room  
7575 Keele Street, Unit 5, Vaughan

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PRESENT: Rob Bayley, Urban Design, City of Vaughan  
Jeffrey Childs, Manager of Parks Services, City of Vaughan  
Edward Chiu, Roads-Capital Delivery Transportation Services, York Region  
Carmen Hui, Streetscaping Transportation Services, York Region  
Raphael Justewicz, JRA Landscape Architects + Urban Designers  
Leonard Ng, York Region  
Nimisha Raja, Community Liaison Specialist, YRRT  
Janet Rosenberg, JRA Landscape Architects + Urban Designers  
Christopher Scott, Roads-Capital Delivery Transportation Services, York Region  
Kathryn Webber, Project & Public Relations Coordinator, YRRT  
Moira Wilson, Urban Design, City of Vaughan

ATTENDEES: Councillor Sandra Yeung-Racco  
Gaetano Accurso  
Philip Accurso  
Daniela Bacchin  
Maria Bacchin  
Maria Bonfini  
Sandra Calderon  
Alexandra Correa  
Dr. Paulo Correa  
Natalie Dorazio  
Cathy Ferlisi  
Silvana Galloro  
Rose DiMarco  
Josephine Mastrodicasa  
Antonietta Giannotti  
Jenny Koutsaris  
Uri Salmona  
Julie Seemann  
Sandy Salerno  
Styles Q. Weinberg  
Nadia Zuccaro  
Mario Zuccaro

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### OVERVIEW

*As part of the communications strategy for the Concord West Urban Design Streetscape Master Plan Study, a Stakeholders Meeting was held for landowners fronting Keele Street and Highway 7 in the study area and residents as represented by the Concord West Ratepayers Association and the Concord West Seniors Club.*

## MEETING INTRODUCTIONS

Rob Bayley, Manager of Urban Design, City of Vaughan opened the meeting with introductions to the consultant team, Regional and City staff.

Edward Chiu, Senior Project Manager, Region of York, provided a brief timeline of the ongoing Keele Street Environmental Assessment, including timelines for public meetings, and identified that everyone invited to this meeting will also be invited to a separate meeting early in 2011 held by York Region on the transportation infrastructure improvements planned for Keele Street.

Carmen Hui, Streetscape Program Manager, Region of York, followed with a few words on the Municipal Partnership Funding Program. Carmen outlined that the streetscape master plan generated by this study will enable the city to apply for funding under the Municipal Partnership Funding Program and that the timeline is being coordinated by the City to meet with Regional transportation infrastructure and capital improvement projects.

Kathryn Webber, Project & Public Relations Coordinator, York Region Rapid Transit (YRRT) and Nimisha Raja, YRRT Community Liaison Specialist, YRRT, provided a brief summary of the Highway 7 vivaNext Rapid Transit project and indicated that the [vivanext.com](http://vivanext.com) web site contains more detailed and up-to-date information including public consultation, including the last public meeting which was held in June 2010. Kathryn asked how many meeting attendees were aware of the Regional vivaNext Rapid Transit project and only a few people raised their hands.

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## STUDY INTRODUCTION

Janet Rosenberg, JRA Landscape Architects, welcomed the audience and stated the meeting's purpose was to discuss ideas for the Concord West Urban Design and Streetscape Master Plan Study. Janet introduced Landscape Architect, Raphael Justewicz to outline preliminary landscape concepts to apply to the streetscape master plan and requested feedback.

The City of Vaughan Streetscape Master Plan was described as an added layer or "enhancement" to Regional transportation infrastructure initiatives planned for both Keele Street and Highway 7 within the study area, enabling the Concord West community to have design input into Regional streetscapes for their community. JRA added that they want to bring a landscape architecture lens to the engineered works.

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## JRA PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

JRA introduced a landscape architectural design concept based on substantial tree planting on public lands along Highway 7 and Keele Street, including within the centre medians. It was proposed that new tree planting technologies, such as sub-surface structural cells, could be considered for this project to enable healthier and longer-lived growth of urban trees even in hardscaped areas. It was proposed that the increased urban tree canopy would make a strong connection with the Bartley-Smith Greenway.

The JRA team proposed that a distinctive design vocabulary was needed for the Highway 7 and Keele Street streetscapes to define a clear visual identity for the Concord West community. To inform the materials palette, JRA proposed highlighting landscape elements already existing in the Concord West area. JRA outlined the visible presence of the West Don River tributary on both the north and south sides of Highway 7 and suggested it could influence streetscape design features with respect to form and function. A more sustainable, naturalized approach to planting was proposed, and images of perennial wildflowers and trees were shown. The presentation from the JRA team concluded with photos of the community gateways, along with the proposed palette of materials: trees, perennial flowers, gabion and stone wall.

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## DISCUSSION

The following is a summary of stakeholder comments recorded throughout the meeting, grouped according to topic:

### Who is a stakeholder?

- “My question is this is a stakeholders meeting and who is in attendance today?”
- Concern was expressed that residents for the entire Concord West community were not mailed invitations, followed by a discussion of who is a Stakeholder.
- A resident suggested that more members of the community [who are not in the Ratepayers Association] would like to contribute to a Stakeholders Meeting. It was asserted that the entire Concord West community should be included in a Stakeholders Meeting rather than consulting only business owners and the Concord West Community Streetscape Committee or Ratepayers Association as resident representatives.
- “Regarding the gateways (nodes at Baldwin, Hillside, Rockview), the community should be considered Stakeholders because these are gateways into our community.”
- “Basically you are designing a fancy sidewalk. The question is who is it being designed for - residents, landowners or the people driving through it?”
- “There is a big disconnect. We don’t know what’s happening in our community. Can we change the process to include us.”
- Question was asked if a separate meeting for Stakeholders was going to be held because some felt that they have not had the opportunity to express their views as landowners.

### Meeting Format

- Would like this Stakeholders meeting to be in a different format, as a roundtable discussion, 10-15 people.
- The next meeting should be at a different venue, in a workshop format, grouped at tables.
- It was suggested that the next meeting is held as two separate groups – business owners and residents.

### Private vs. Public Land

- A question about public vs. private land – where is this design going? How do people get to gathering places, is it through private lands?
- “For new development there needs to be a strip to allow for a boulevard and sidewalk.”

### Need to See a Plan (including Regional initiatives)

- “Like the concept of trees and flowers but unless you say where you are going to put them it is not useful. No [public] land exists to plant them.”
- “It would benefit if the planting is moved to the east where there is more land.”
- “My concern is there is a small sidewalk between Jardin and Hwy 7. Will there be room for a boulevard and a sidewalk?”
- “At Keele and Rockview (east side) there is currently a very narrow sidewalk and berm with no space for planting. Where do we plant trees here?”

- “Design has to work within existing constraints.”
- “We need to incorporate engineering plans and landscaping together. It is very difficult to visualize and grasp it all without this. You have to combine your design concept with vivaNext, GoTransit etc.”

### **Study Area Boundaries**

- “We are establishing a language for Highway 7 – if you extend it eastward then they can incorporate the language further. “

### **Regional Transportation Initiatives**

- “I would like to express that my concept is to preserve our community, not to beautify it or build a transportation hub.”
- “Regarding the work that rapid transit [vivaNext] has done through the environmental assessment process – what does the environmental assessment cover? Do you have to expropriate land? No one understands what will happen with the rapidway.”
- The meeting would have been easier to digest if we had read the environmental assessment first.

*Note: In response, a Regional representative outlined two regional environmental assessments in the study area: the Keele Street Class Environmental Assessment Study (ongoing) and the Highway 7 + Vaughan N/S Environmental Assessment (completed). He outlined that both environmental assessments have public consultation as part of the study schedule. Residents were directed to the York Region website or vivanext.com website to find more information on the Environmental Assessments. Regional representatives requested that residents contact them directly if they have any further questions or concerns they would like to discuss pertaining to regional initiatives.*

- “I fail to understand the concept and who it’s for. Why are you calling us Vaughan and not Concord West? What is the problem with Highway 7 right now? You want to increase traffic, squeeze us out and tax us.”

### **Provincial Transportation Studies**

- “How will the proposed GoStation affect this project?”

*Note: The urban design guidelines and streetscape master plan will be developed according to the City of Vaughan Official Plan. The proposed GoStation will not be included in the streetscape master plan.*

### **Access to Green Space**

- “How do we get to the Bartley Smith Greenway? How do we access it? We access across the CN tracks to the Eco-Green lands. At this point we would like to read you a report written by Julie Seemann about waking through the Langstaff Eco-Park to which we in the Concord West Community are denied direct access.” (A copy of the letter was provided to the City of Vaughan).
- Residents of Concord West want access to the Langstaff Eco-Park directly from their community across the CN rail lines, not via Highway 7.

### **Tree Planting**

- “Concord West is an undeveloped area. In the older developments rent is low. Need to help increase value. There is a lot of land in the area to plant trees – especially along watercourses – and this will help landowners increase land value.”

- “The cost of maintaining flower pots and hanging baskets is high. It is better to spend the money to plant trees, perennials and bulbs that last forever.”
- “The average lifespan of urban trees is seven years, how will a tree survive in this streetscape? “

### **Streetscape Master Plan**

- “The existing community was built 30 years ago – we would like to see a comprehensive plan.”
- “There is a 100-150 foot high oak tree off Baldwin Avenue which should be preserved.”
- “Does the Streetscape Master Plan include light standards?”

*Response from City staff: The vivaNext project includes roadway light standards and the Concord West Streetscape Master Plan can include enhancements to standard regional streetscape design, such as pedestrian lighting.*

*Response from York Region/ vivaNext representatives: If [the study] provides a design direction to include enhanced streetscape lighting. There has to be some consistency to the delivery of the vivaNext project but we recognize that creating distinct community areas is also important and we are also trying to respect and respond to that.*

### **Urban Design Guidelines**

- Suggest that urban design guidelines address parking areas in front of businesses.
- Encourage planting trees that survive and will enhance the streetscape.
- Suggest that the City provided a bonus for people who plant trees on private lands as a financial incentive.
- Suggest a reduction in front yard setbacks.
- Suggest that parking is put at the back of commercial buildings to enhance the streetscape.

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## **SUMMARY**

The following summary highlights the key discussion points during the meeting:

1. Issues and opportunities for the urban design guidelines and streetscape master plan:
  - Tree planting could help land owners improve visual quality of the streetscape and increase property values, especially where there are larger areas for planting on the north side of Highway 7.
  - It is better to have a low maintenance and sustainable planting strategy (trees, perennials, bulbs) because the cost of maintaining flower pots and hanging baskets is high.
  - The urban design guidelines need to address parking areas in front of businesses.
  - The city should consider the idea of providing a bonus for people who plant trees on private lands as an incentive to promote tree planting on private lands.
  - The urban design guidelines should include reduced front yard setbacks to improve the

streetscape.

- The urban design guidelines should put parking at the rear of commercial buildings to improve the streetscape.
- A concern about a lack of space for tree planting within public lands was expressed by residents who live in the low density residential community of Concord West.
- There is a 100-150 ft high oak tree off Baldwin Avenue which should be preserved.

2. A concern with the study process and timing was voiced by members of the community:

Some community members feel that they are not represented by the Concord West Ratepayers Association.

Regional transportation initiatives for Highway 7 and Keele Street need to be presented in a detailed plan showing boundaries before a discussion of the urban design or streetscape study can take place.

Landowners of properties fronting Keele Street or Highway 7 and "SaveConcordWest" community members both requested separate meetings to be able to discuss their issues and ideas.

3. A resistance to the urban design and streetscape study itself was communicated by a faction of the community:

Some community members asserted that they did not want any changes – streetscape beautification, transit, capital road works or otherwise, and want Highway 7 and Keele Streets to stay the same.

Others communicated that they did not want the Regional vivaNext or City of Vaughan Concord West Urban Design Streetscape Master Plan Study to proceed until their issues with proposed GoStation land use south of Highway 7 directly east of the rail line are resolved with the Province.

4. Other community members voiced support of the study moving forward in order to provide community design input into Regional transportation initiatives already in progress.

5. Direct access from the low residential community to the Bartley Smith Greenway and Langstaff Eco-Park is a very important issue for some residents of the low density residential community in Concord West. A new public access to the Bartley Smith Greenway off Highway 7 was not accepted as a solution by these residents.