

**YONGE-STEELES CORRIDOR STUDY
MEETING NOTES FROM OPEN HOUSE
October 3, 2007**

PRESENT:

Community Members at Large
Hon. Mario G. Racco, M.P.P. – Thornhill
Regional Councillor Jim Jones
Councillor Valerie Burke (Ward 1)
Members of Markham Planning Staff
Consultants/Study Team for Yonge-Steeles Corridor Study

Attendees at the October 3, 2007 Open House Meeting were asked to provide comments on the following discussion questions:

- i) Do you agree with the proposed densities (i.e. 3.5 FSI at Yonge/Steeles, 2.0 FSI for block East of Dudley, 2.5 FSI for blocks along Yonge)?
- ii) Do you agree or disagree with the proposed setbacks on Yonge Street (i.e. 10 m build-to-line with retail at street level south of railway and 15 m build-to-line with predominantly residential uses north of the railway)?
- iii) Which demonstration plan do you prefer (i.e. linear open space with low built form, 3 parks with moderate built form, or 5 parks with high built form)?
- iv) Which traffic infiltration measures would you like to see implemented? Which ones do you dislike?
- v) Do you support reduced parking standards? Do you support the provision of on-street parking in the redevelopment area?
- vi) Should the Town restrict all redevelopment proposals in the study area until a servicing and stormwater management strategy has been developed for Thornhill?
- vii) Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

The comments received are provided below:

- i) Do you agree with the proposed densities (i.e. 3.5 FSI at Yonge/Steeles, 2.0 FSI for block East of Dudley, 2.5 FSI for blocks along Yonge)?
 - Attendee: Growth will happen one day, we now have a chance to give our input. We (residents/property owners) should be a part of it and be open minded. We should not push people away. We need to give redevelopment of the area some thought today, rather than in the future.
 - Attendee: We need to accommodate density on Yonge St. where it can be handled, rather than on our agricultural lands.
 - Attendee: Concern regarding the emphasis on residential north of the railway line. Will there be any opportunity for shopping? We need a walkable

- commercial area. We have existing apartment buildings in this part of the redevelopment area with residents who need access to amenities and services. I am afraid that if there is no commercial, then people will use their cars more to access these amenities.
- Attendee: Also concerned about traffic in the existing residential area. Will there be new residents in the redevelopment area driving their children to school down the existing residential streets?
 - Attendee: I think roads should be shut off so traffic isn't drawn into existing community.
 - Consultant: We are not saying no to commercial north of rail, but rather suggesting that there be 25% commercial south of railway line and 10% commercial north of railway line.
 - Attendee: Will there be a required setback so that buildings are not pushed back away from Yonge Street?
 - Consultant: Yes, we have discussed the provision of incorporating a required build-to-line in the Zoning By-law Amendment.
 - Attendee: My understanding is that the Places to Grow Act requires municipalities to build an average of 2.5 FSI. The proposed densities are all at this required number, or above. This community should be given a break in density.
 - Consultant: There is one block with a proposed density target less than 2.5 (block north of Steeles Ave., east of Dudley Ave. at 2.0 FSI) and one block with a proposed density target greater than 2.5 (block at northeast corner of Yonge St. and Steeles Ave. at 3.5 FSI). This means the average for the whole study area is 2.5 FSI.
 - Attendee: But why do we have to meet the 2.5 FSI target here and not somewhere else?
 - Staff: Places to Grow Act is legislation. Growth Plan says that by 2015, 40% of growth must be within the current built-up area. The 2.5 FSI target is from the Region of York Official Plan. Together, these direct intensification to corridors and nodes. The 2.5 FSI is a target over the transit corridor, not the whole municipality.
 - Attendee: I understand the layers of legislation and policies, but I am still not happy with the proposed densities.
- ii) Do you agree or disagree with the proposed setbacks on Yonge Street (i.e. 10 m build-to-line with retail at street level south of railway and 15 m build-to-line with predominantly residential uses north of the railway)?
- Attendee: I agree with the proposed setbacks and think that any redevelopment in this area is better than the strip malls that are there now.
 - Attendee: I agree with the proposed densities, but also believe that blocks north of the rail should have access to retail.
 - Attendee: Has any consideration been given to putting some commercial development along the side streets in order to make them more walkable? I think retail should be integrated into the areas off of Yonge Street?

- Councillor Valerie Burke: I agree that there is a need for a live-work balance in the area.
- Consultant: It is possible to provide some retail along side streets, but it may not be commercially viable. I think commercial development will be better captured along Yonge Street.
- Attendee: Once redevelopment is completed, will there be an opportunity to discuss the feasibility of an open community space other than a park, like a Mel Lastman Square? There is nothing like that in the area now, I think we would all like to see something like that in the community.
- Councillor Valerie Burke: I think that is a good idea.
- Staff: As we move through this [redevelopment exercise], at the development application stage, we may get smaller open spaces along Yonge Street, but nothing compared to the size a civic square.
- Attendee: I think that the Farmer's Market site would be ideal for a civic area joined with parks.
- Attendee: I like the proposed setbacks. My only concern is that, in the future, the Region will chose to widen Yonge Street and we will lose the pavement, which is what happened on Avenue Road.
- Attendee: How do you prevent the Region from future road widening though?
- Consultant: You have to be tough. Plant trees within the boulevard and then put measures in place to protect them. Good suggestion to have a civic area at the Farmer's Market site.
- Attendee: It seems to me like planning is in the hands of York Region. What is being proposed here has taken place in the U.S. and it has been a failure. We are following the same pattern. This [redevelopment plan] is based on the interests of others.
- Councillor Valerie Burke: This study came forward in response to the Liberty application for redevelopment of the Hy & Zel's site. This is our opportunity to shape future development.
- Attendee: I like the idea of proposing lots of green space, but what is the real value of the setbacks along Yonge Street? How can we use these spaces effectively?
- Consultant: We've chosen these setbacks along Yonge Street, because that is the focus of this community. It is the location of both transportation and pedestrian systems. We see this as an area for a double row of trees, with street furniture, outdoor cafes, etc. Along Yonge Street we want to encourage pedestrian activity. If there is not enough going on, then people will not want to walk there. This activity will create the sense of a "Grand Street". Yonge Street will become a destination, not just a passage. We need the City of Vaughan to agree to a similar cross-section though.
- Councillor Valerie Burke: We have invited both staff from the City of Vaughan and the City of Toronto to participate in this study. The City of Vaughan is embarking on its own study and City planners from Toronto are involved in this study.

- iii) Which demonstration plan do you prefer (i.e. linear open space with low built form, 3 parks with moderate built form, or 5 parks with high built form)?
- Attendee: Is there any provision for entertainment uses?
 - Staff: We do not intend on precluding entertainment uses in the area. Through zoning, we will include permissions for theatres and other entertainment uses. The consultants are also looking at community services needs.
 - Consultant: Community services will come as development proceeds.
 - Attendee: Clearly the three demonstration options trade off park space for height. At first cut, I would like to see buildings kept lower, but then what kind of park space will be provided? I am also concerned with the Option C. How do we ensure that we do not get 20 storey buildings with no park space?
 - Attendee: We will be mandating the width of park space for each block?
 - Consultant: We want to know what you think of the amount of park spaces proposed for each block. We think, in the end, that there will be a mix of narrow and larger parks. The Plan would specify the amount of park space we would like per block.
- iv) Which traffic infiltration measures would you like to see implemented? Which ones do you dislike?
- v) Do you support reduced parking standards? Do you support the provision of on-street parking in the redevelopment area?
- Attendee: Anything that will keep traffic out of the existing community. The community is saturated with traffic. We do not want new traffic in our area. I also think it is important that all required services are in place prior to approval of the Liberty application. I would definitely support a reduced parking standard in the area. I also think that the Town should restrict all redevelopment proposals in the study area until a servicing and stormwater management strategy has been developed for Thornhill.
 - Attendee: I have noticed that the study does not include John Street, which has the most traffic. I think the new development will use John Street and traffic in the area will get even worse. I too am also concerned that the sanitary sewers are too small. Residents are concerned that holding tanks will flood our basements. Before any redevelopment goes forward, a lot of the old pipes will need to be widened. Stormwater management is critical, because we have major flooding in the area.
 - Attendee: It upsets me that consideration is being given to opening Dudley Avenue (north of the CN Rail line). I do not want transport trucks coming from Doncaster Avenue infiltrating the residential streets. We already have a problem with traffic infiltration in spite of the existing signage.
 - Consultant: We have provided a number of options, including one showing Meadowview Avenue as a cul-de-sac. Trucks would be prohibited through signage. Traffic calming has costs. We need a public forum, outside of this study, to identify what the community is willing to accept.

- Attendee: I have lived north of the study area for 40 years now. How do we get traffic out of the existing residential area and onto Yonge Street? During peak hours you cannot even drive in the area. In the morning, there is a line at Henderson Avenue to get onto Steeles Avenue. Traffic is like water, it needs an outlet. Any plan implemented to calm traffic must take the whole area into consideration, from Centre Street to Steeles Avenue and from Yonge Street to Henderson Avenue or Bayview Avenue. I also think that the 50 year old storm sewers in the area cannot accommodate any additional development than what we have now.
- Consultant: I agree. Traffic calming needs to be comprehensive and community-wide. It also needs to include the sources of traffic.
- Attendee: I can already tell you that people using the roads are from outside of this community.
- Attendee: I am working on promoting the Yonge subway line expansion. My question to the consultants is why aren't you looking further into the future, to 2021, when the subway comes? You should come out and see what people are saying about bus lanes. There is talk about restricting movement across Yonge Street with a boulevard running down its centre. This means that trucks will have to find alternative routes. Will there be too many trees on Yonge Street if this happens? Will it be the same as St. Clair Avenue? You should come to our meetings. Our web address is www.subwaynow.ca
- Attendee: The reality is that traffic has to flow. Consultants should look at how to improve the flow of traffic on Yonge Street.
- Attendee: There are three schools on Henderson Avenue and in the morning and afternoon, when there is pick-up and drop-off, the traffic in the area is horrendous. For this reason, I think that traffic should be diverted away from here and onto other streets.
- Consultant: Agree that we need to provide mobility. Older schools in the area were not built to accommodate the current levels of pick-up and drop-off. That is why we need a traffic calming strategy in place that addresses these issues at a community level.
- Attendee: I have traffic humps on my street and they have been successful at reducing speed in the area, from 100 km/hr to 60 km/hr. I would encourage the use of these to control speed.
- Attendee: With regards to street closure, this is only a good idea if you have a place to push the traffic onto. Yonge Street, Steeles Avenue, Centre Street, they are all already choked.
- Consultant: There are also costs to street closures and diversions. They may be very restrictive to residents' mobility in the area. We also need repetitive measures in place. Whatever measures are put in place need to be reflective of the neighbourhood's character.
- Attendee: Proctor Avenue also suffers from a lot of traffic pressure.
- Consultant: The traffic infiltration study that is going to be done in the future needs to be comprehensive. Preliminary findings suggest that 80% of the traffic at Grandview Avenue and Henderson Avenue is generated from non-residents.

- Attendee: I am happy to hear that the traffic issue is being addressed. Infiltration is being forced off of Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue. New residents in the area will exacerbate traffic. That needs to be addressed in the study.
- vi) Should the Town restrict all redevelopment proposals in the study area until a servicing and stormwater management strategy has been developed for Thornhill?
- Attendee: I am interested in knowing what maintenance has been done on storm pipes to handle storms?
 - Councillor Valerie Burke: The Town is taking steps to improve the storm water management in the area. Also residents may disconnect downspouts. Town has just approved a storm water management study.
 - Staff: Council has approved a new study to look at backflow problems in the area. A total of \$500,000 has been earmarked for this study, which is to commence in 2008.
 - Attendee: There are also problems with water pressure in Thornhill. There is no water pressure at 5:00 AM.
 - Attendee: Consideration should also be given to reducing demand, not just increasing the size of infrastructure. For example, the use of low flow plumbing fixtures and appliances or recycling of stormwater.
 - Attendee: I hear that Liberty is proposing to use holding tanks for their proposed development. How does one manage the smell associated with holding tanks?
 - Consultant: Sanitary sewage holding tanks would not be entertained by the Town as an option.
 - Attendee: There is a relationship between rainfall and the amount of impervious land. Stormwater must be dealt with prior to new development.
 - Consultant: Liberty site is currently paved entirely. If redeveloped, some improvements could be made to stormwater drainage from the current situation.
 - Attendee: I think we need a clear understanding from York Region as to what type of transit is going to be provided along Yonge Street. Will there be phasing based on transit? What is the timing?
 - Consultant: We will be developing a Phasing Plan in our next steps. We need to assume bus rapid transit (BRT) as a potential enhancement. If subway is introduced, more person capacity would be available. Timing is a tough issue.
 - Attendee: Would there be an agreement not to allow new development until a commitment to rapid transit has been made?
 - Staff: In Markham Centre, we have introduced phasing plans with density caps linked to the delivery of infrastructure. We also pre-zone sites with a holding provision in place until certain criteria (i.e. provision of infrastructure) are met.
- vii) Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?
- Councillor Valerie Burke: Additional comments can be submitted via the Town's website or you can fill out the comment sheets that have been provided.

- Regional Councillor Jim Jones: I do not agree with some of the comments. I want the public to know that this study is not just a reaction to the Liberty application. This study should look at Yonge Street comprehensively. In June, the transit announcement was made. We need to know where the subway stations are going to be. We need to plan for Yonge Street as a whole, including the City of Toronto, City of Vaughan, and Town of the Markham. If we want a station at Clark Avenue, John Street or Royal Orchard Boulevard, then we need to plan for that in conjunction with the City of Vaughan. Same goes for the Langstaff station, we need to plan this with the Town of Richmond Hill. Population growth needs to be accommodated and that is why we need a comprehensive plan for the area. I also agree with the comments regarding traffic infiltration and servicing. The subway can handle 40,000-42,000 persons per hour. The proposed extension needs to be able to accommodate some of the trips from the other lines. Province plans to shorten the EA process down to 6 months. Hopefully this will mean building the subway within five years. The subway could go other places if we do not set up a long term plan.
- Councillor Valerie Burke: I would like to thank everyone for attending this evening. Thank you to staff and the consultants for their hard work and thanks to all residents who took the time out to attend.

Meeting was adjourned at 9.15 PM