

**YONGE-STEELES WORKING GROUP  
MEETING NOTES  
November 5, 2007**

**Attendees:**

Yonge-Steeles Working Group Members

Jerry Ambrozic  
Mara Canale  
Evelin Ellison  
Scott Harris  
Chi Hing Ma  
Marion Matthias  
John O’Gorman  
Rod Snyder  
Jeff Stone  
Lance Taylor

Town of Markham

Jim Jones, Regional Councillor  
Valerie Shuttleworth, Director of Planning and Urban Design  
Ron Blake, Development Manager, West District  
Elizabeth Wimmer, Senior Landscape Planner, West District  
Prasenjit Roy, Senior Transportation Engineer  
Allen Wu, Senior Development Engineer  
Sabrina Bordone, Planner, West District

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Ron Blake (Town of Markham Staff) began by thanking everyone who was in attendance and relaying regrets from Ward 1 Councillor Valerie Burke who was unable to attend the meeting. Ron Blake gave a brief presentation, which provided an overview of the work that has been done to date, the three demonstration plans (Option A, B, and C), and the items for discussion. A copy of Ron Blake’s presentation is available at:

[http://www.markham.ca/NR/rdonlyres/136A58EE-C8B8-4639-A7B8-7E89877CA58F/0/071105\\_YongeSteeles\\_Mtg3\\_TS.pdf](http://www.markham.ca/NR/rdonlyres/136A58EE-C8B8-4639-A7B8-7E89877CA58F/0/071105_YongeSteeles_Mtg3_TS.pdf)

The following discussion took place immediately following Ron Blake’s presentation:

- YSWG Member: Before we get into tonight’s discussion questions, can you please outline how the feedback from the Working Group has been incorporated into the Study?
- Town of Markham Staff: This is not the only group that has a say in the outcome of the study and I can assure you that all views and opinions are being taken into consideration.
- Regional Councillor Jim Jones: Can you please review the goals and objectives of the study?

- Town of Markham Staff: Policies in the Thornhill Secondary Plan are essentially old and outdated and the development proposal submitted by Liberty Developments for the Hy & Zels site (7161 & 7171 Yonge St.) has provided an opportunity for the Town to look at these policies in a new and updated way. The redevelopment area is identified as an intensification corridor in the Regional Official Plan and, as a result, staff wanted to look at redevelopment and intensification options.

Following this brief discussion, Members of the Working Group were presented with the following seven questions. The discussion was moderated by Valerie Shuttleworth (Town of Markham Staff):

- 1) What are your comments on the proposed densities?
- 2) What are your comments on the proposed setbacks?
- 3) Which demonstration plan do you prefer and why?
- 4) Which traffic infiltration measures would you like to see implemented and why? Which do you dislike and why?
- 5) What is your opinion of reduced parking standards in the redevelopment area? What is your opinion of on-street parking in the redevelopment area?
- 6) How should redevelopment be phased in the context of your concerns about servicing and transportation?
- 7) What were your impressions/thoughts about the North York Centre walking tour?

The following is a summary of the discussion that took place regarding each of the questions that were presented:

**1) What are your comments on the proposed densities?**

- YSWG Member: I am concerned that the proposed densities are too low. I think density bonusing is needed to kick-start redevelopment. This would also help in facilitating the “Gateway to Thornhill” that we have been discussing on the block at the northeast corner of Yonge St. and Steeles Ave. (Block 9). Have to increase FSI densities in order to get this.
- YSWG Member: Concurs with the sentiments. FSI targets are too low in my opinion and should be revisited.
- YSWG Member: In my opinion, a better quality of life calls for low-to-medium density developments. Densities, as proposed, are good and could even perhaps be lower. Thinks a “Gateway to Thornhill” is important, but this can be achieved without increasing proposed FSI targets.
- YSWG Member: I am still bothered by not knowing what is happening with the City of Vaughan and the City of Toronto. If we want higher densities, then study area should be larger. Still believes that traffic infiltration problem into neighbourhood to the east has yet to be resolved.
- Town of Markham Staff: Wants feedback from Group on the proposed infiltration measures. This study cannot address infiltration measures on its

own. We have to have a separate study to deal with the issue. We should keep these in mind when discussing Question 4.

- YSWG Member: What are the density targets for Markham Centre?
- Town of Markham Staff: Densities vary within Markham Centre – some sites net out at 4.5 FSI, while others net out at 2.5 FSI. The limiting factors in Markham Centre relating to density are height and built form.
- YSWG Member: We do not want to duplicate what has been done at Yonge St. and Finch Ave., in North York City Centre, and at Yonge St. and Eglinton Ave. (densities there are too high). Believes that a happy medium is out there and can be achieved.
- Town of Markham Staff: But are you satisfied with the proposed densities?
- YSWG Member: Yes, in principle, but the stormwater management is not in place in order to support future development. We have a very severe problem in this community.
- Town of Markham: Secondary Plan for North York City Centre is very prescriptive. We want to have a plan in place that is defensible at the Ontario Municipal Board. Markham has a good reputation for strong Official Plan and Secondary Plan policies.

**2) What are your comments on the proposed setbacks?**

- YSWG Member: Thinks that they look good. We were able to experience the proposed setbacks, how they look and feel on our walking tour of North York.
- YSWG Member: Does not want all buildings to have the same setback, due to the wind tunnel effect. I think that some relief along the streetscape is a good idea.
- Town of Markham Staff: We can address this by establishing minimum and maximum setbacks from Yonge St.
- YSWG Member: I do like the proposed setbacks and support them. The only thing I am worried about are the trees proposed to be situated within the setback area and their proximity to any new infrastructure.
- YSWG Member: Thinks that setbacks north and south of railway line should be the same.

**3) Which demonstration plan do you prefer and why?**

- YSWG Member: I like Option B (three larger parks). I do not think the smaller, linear parks (Option A) will be used by area residents.
- YSWG Member: I like the parks, but my question is who will maintain them?
- Town of Markham Staff: This will have to be addressed in our Implementation Strategy. They may be maintained by the Town or they may be privately maintained, we will have to give that some more thought.
- YSWG Member: I generally agree with Option B, but I have some concern re: the parks. We are looking for social activities within these parks. Does the Town know whether these parks will be passive or active?

- Town of Markham Staff: None of the parks in Option B are large enough to accommodate more than a tot lot/play structure. We will involve members of the community when we decide on the design.
- Town of Markham Staff: Work done by the consultants demonstrates a need for park space in the redevelopment area. We envision the parks as passive areas. Sometimes open green spaces are best, because they allow for a flexibility of uses.
- YSWG Member: I prefer Option A (smaller linear parks) because the building heights are kept lowest in this demonstration plan.
- YSWG Member: I prefer Option C, because it provides the heights that I would like to see in the redevelopment area.
- YSWG Member: I think Option B is the best. In my opinion, Option C is just too aggressive.
- YSWG Member: I am torn between Option B and Option C. I realize that the densities are the same in all three options and that it is only the heights of the buildings that change from each demonstration plan.
- YSWG Member: Would higher buildings increase the wind tunnel effect?
- Town of Markham Staff: We could ask for wind tests as part of the approval process. We could also use design elements to reduce the impacts.
- YSWG Member: Option A is best. I think that lower heights are better visually. I have also seen several smaller parks (and parkettes) that are very successful.

**4) Which traffic infiltration measures would you like to see implemented and why? Which do you dislike and why?**

- YSWG Member: Having lived in the neighbourhood for years now, I would love to see Dudley Ave. be extended northward (across the CN Rail Line), especially if the Liberty development is approved.
- YSWG Member: Problems associated with traffic infiltration are not just caused by people living in Thornhill. I think it is important that we think of other forms of transportation (i.e. bicycle). I would be afraid if Dudley Ave. was extended. I think it would just create the same kinds of problems we see along Willowdale Blvd. Just another traffic corridor...this is a bad thing.
- YSWG Member: What about the idea of having one-way streets, i.e. making Highland Park Blvd. as one-way?
- Regional Councillor Jim Jones: I was told that a high percentage of traffic infiltration in this neighbourhood is caused by people getting to the commuter lots at Finch Station. This is one of the many reasons why we need a plan for getting the subway.
- YSWG Member: I dislike the idea of speed humps/speed bumps.

**5) What is your opinion of reduced parking standards in the redevelopment area? What is your opinion of on-street parking in the redevelopment area?**

- YSWG Member: I think the idea of a reduced parking standard in the redevelopment area is a good idea in practice, but I have doubts as to whether it really works. For example, in Thornhill Woods (residential subdivision in Vaughan), they tried this by only providing single car garages and then the residents ended up paving their entire front yards so that additional parking could be accommodated.
- YSWG Member: If the Town does proceed with a reduced parking standard in the redevelopment area, then it has to be accompanied by a strong commitment to providing enhanced public transit in the redevelopment area.
- Regional Councillor Jim Jones: The commitment to enhanced public transit is already there. One of our objectives for Planning is to get at least 50% modal split.
- YSWG Member: What is the plan for parking in the area of Yonge St. and Steeles Ave. if (and when) the subway comes?
- Town of Markham Staff: At this point, we do not know.
- YSWG Member: I would imagine that parking would be provided on the Centrepoint Mall site. I agree with what is being said, we need to encourage people to use public transit. The bus needs to be more frequent though for people to use it.
- YSWG Member: What is the current parking standard for an apartment?
- Town of Markham Staff: Currently the standard is 1.25 parking spaces per dwelling unit plus 0.25 parking spaces per dwelling unit for visitors. We would obviously have to come up with an appropriate (revised) standard. Most developers are okay with a reduced parking standard for high density residential when public transit is provided. It is a completely different situation for commercial development though. It is very tough to sell a reduced parking standard to commercial developers. We would have to carefully consider this option.
- YSWG Member: What kind of parking are we looking for in the redevelopment area?
- Town of Markham Staff: We are generally looking for underground parking. Our experience is if they (drivers) cannot see the parking, then they will not use it. Underground parking also improves the streetscape and makes better use of at-grade real-estate.
- YSWG Member: If you want underground parking, then you might have to bonus the densities in order to get it.
- Regional Councillor Jim Jones: Changes to MPAC would also help. Right now MPAC taxes underground parking, but does not tax at-grade parking.
- YSWG Member: What about providing “Green P” parking lots in the redevelopment area?
- Town of Markham Staff: The Town does not have an established parking authority, but we do have a whole parking strategy for Markham Centre.

**6) How should redevelopment be phased in the context of your concerns about servicing and transportation?**

- Town of Markham Staff: From previous meetings, it is apparent that you do not want to see any redevelopment occur until the issues associated with servicing and transportation are addressed. I can confirm that the Town's Engineering Department have dedicated resources to an in-depth traffic impact/infiltration study for the redevelopment area, above and beyond what is being done as part of this study. We cannot promise that we will solve all of the problems, but we will have a strategy in place.
- YSWG Members: The subcontractors who are doing work along Steeles Ave. are doing a terrible job.
- YSWG Member: What added protection are residents in the area going to get when it comes to traffic infiltration?
- Town of Markham Staff: We can ensure an increase in the number of By-law Enforcement Officers and Property Standards Officers.
- YSWG Member: This Traffic Study that you are talking about, will it be a new one or a continuation of previous ones? I can tell you now that an increase in By-law Enforcement Officers is not the answer. We need a detailed implementation plan.
- Town of Markham Staff: It will be a new study. We know that signage has been used in the past to mitigate traffic infiltration, but without enforcement it is very hard to implement.
- YSWG Member: Is servicing not a priority for the Town? I have heard that Liberty Developments cannot get servicing allocation until 2011.
- Town of Markham Staff: Additional servicing allocation will be made available in 2011. Whether or not Liberty gets allocation will be up to Council, who assigns it.

**7) What were your impressions/thoughts about the North York Centre walking tour?**

- YSWG Member: One thing that I noticed in North York is that they have public space. North York Centre is home to the municipal offices, there is the ice rink, entertainment, etc.
- Town of Markham Staff: That is because it is home to their civic centre.
- YSWG Member: Thornhill has absolutely nothing in terms of public amenities, except for the Thornhill Heritage Area. I think some public amenities would be great.
- Town of Markham Staff: I think that is a fair comment and we can definitely take it into consideration.
- YSWG Member: I thought the walking tour was great! It gave me a real appreciation for the various heights of the buildings. I was not scared of the building heights – the transition was very useful to see.

- YSWG Member: What I noticed, and they (staff from North York Planning Dept.) even admitted it, the small narrow parkettes just did not work.
- YWSG Member: The walkabout was great! It gave me an understanding of the transition and a huge appreciation of transportation (i.e. getting the roads widened). I do not think they pushed wide enough east and west of Yonge St. though.
- YSWG Member: This week I went on a walking tour of Northern Heights (high density residential development at the intersection of Yonge St. and Bantry Ave. in Richmond Hill). This might be another area we would want to take a tour of, because a lot of the buildings are similar to those being proposed in the redevelopment area.
- YSWG Members: One thing that was mentioned on the walking tour of North York Centre was their difficulty in getting office development in the area. For instance, what are the odds of the Esso gas station at the northeast corner of Yonge St. and Steeles Ave. ever redeveloping? Could the Town expropriate these lands for office development?
- YSWG Member: I have also heard that this Esso station is considered one of their most successful ones.
- Town of Markham Staff: There is no denying that one of the toughest things to do is to get a gas station to redevelop.
- Town of Markham: We also have concerns about getting office development. There may be incentives/density provisions to get it though. As for expropriating lands for office development, we have never done anything like that. It is a little extreme, not sure if we are ready to do something like that.
- YSWG Member: I was not able to go on the walking tour, but I have been in the area before and I do not like it.
- YSWG Member: One of the things that caught my eye on the walking tour was the centre medians they have in place at certain locations. It made a real difference to the pedestrian environment. As you moved north along Yonge St., the absence of these medians made for a completely different environment and it was noisier too.

Additional question added by Yonge-Steeles Working Group Member:

**8) Potential subway stop locations (particularly at Yonge-Steeles intersection)?**

- Town of Markham Staff: All I can tell you right now is that I have heard rumours of potential stops at Yonge St. and Steeles Ave., Yonge St. and Clark Ave., Yonge St. and Royal Orchard Blvd. and Yonge St. and Langstaff Road. Nothing is definitive though, this is only based on what I have heard.
- Regional Councillor Jim Jones: I am a fan of a holistic plan for Yonge St. A plan that incorporated Richmond Hill, Markham Vaughan and Toronto. But we should not assume that the subway is coming. All we can do right now is plan for it.
- YSWG Member: I travel down Yonge St. (south of Hwy. 407) every day and I already see a lot of buses. When I travel further south of Yonge St., to areas

where there is the subway, I notice a real positive difference. I think adding more buses is a mistake, we need something more than buses, we need a commitment to the subway.

- YSWG Member: Buses also give off so many fumes. The air quality in the redevelopment area is so bad.
- YSWG Member: We have to think environmentally to support a subway.

Ron Blake (Town of Markham Staff) concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and outlining the next steps. He advised that there will be a presentation made to Development Services Committee on November 27, 2007 in order to get their input on the three demonstration plans. Ron Blake also added that both the next Yonge-Steeles Open House and Yonge-Steeles Working Group meeting would be held sometime in January 2008.

**Next Meeting: Date TBD (anticipated date: January 2008)**

**Meeting Adjourned: 9.15 PM**