

**YONGE-STEELES WORKING GROUP
MEETING MINUTES
August 2, 2007**

Attendees:

Yonge-Steeles Working Group Members

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

Consultant Team

Bob Allsopp, duToitt Allsopp Hillier
Joe Lobko, duToitt Allsopp Hillier
Brent Raymond, duToitt Allsopp Hillier
Jim Bacchus, Cansult Limited
David Butler, Butler Consultants

Town of Markham

Jim Jones, Regional Councillor
Valerie Burke, Ward 1 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
Sabrina Bordone, Planner, West District

Ron Blake (Town of Markham staff) began by thanking everyone who was in attendance and asked attendees to introduce themselves. Ron Blake gave a brief presentation, which provided an overview and update on the Yonge-Steeles Corridor Study (what has been done to date and the study work program), the roles and responsibilities of the Yonge-Steeles Working Group (YSWG) Members, and of future meeting dates. The second YSWG meeting will be held on September 18, 2007 at 7.00 PM in the Canada Room. Ron Blake advised that Members will be notified of this meeting once again by way of letter. A copy of Ron Blake’s presentation is available at:

http://www.markham.ca/NR/rdonlyres/78C7564E-3569-484C-8E6D-CD7527CAAD42/0/YSWrkGrp_Staff_070803.pdf

Ron Blake then introduced Bob Allsopp (du Toit Allsop Hillier), lead consultant for the study. Mr. Allsopp began his presentation by providing an overview on the definition of density and the proposed land-use strategy envisioned for the Yonge-Steeles Corridor (70-75% residential, 20-25% non-residential). He advised that sites which are south of the CN Rail line should contain as much street-related retail as possible; whereas, street-related retail should be discouraged for sites north of the CN Rail line. Bob Allsopp also spoke about building types and the built form transition from the redevelopment site to the existing single-family residential on Dudley Avenue (which will be facilitated by way of park buffer). Also discussed was a strategy for dealing with traffic on local streets. Options such as street closures and traffic calming measures (for example, traffic circles) were discussed. Strategies for dealing with parking were also highlighted. All attendees agreed that parking should not be accommodated in large surface parking lots. Modified parking standards were raised as a strategy to foster a more transit supportive environment. Options for providing additional public open space in the study area were also discussed. A series of demonstration plans, which incorporated the items discussed, were provided for review and commentary. A copy of Mr. Allsopp's presentation is available at:

http://www.markham.ca/NR/rdonlyres/85D672E6-CB18-4B3D-AF25-A5047E73184C/0/YSWrkGrp_070803.pdf

Members of the Working Group were then presented with the following five questions. The discussion was moderated by Joe Lobko (du Toit Allsopp Hillier):

- 1) What is the appropriate area of redevelopment?
- 2) How should the targeted 2.5 FSI density be distributed on blocks?
- 3) How should new parks and open spaces be provided?
- 4) How should parking in the redevelopment area be addressed?
- 5) How should traffic on local streets be controlled?
- 6) Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

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

1) What is the appropriate area of redevelopment?

- YSWG Member: Has anyone taken into consideration the prominence of the intersection of Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue as a potential “Gateway” into this community? I think we all want people to have a sense that they are leaving Toronto and entering Thornhill when they cross this intersection. We should really give it a sense of place. We want something different. We do not want a repetition of what is provided at Yonge Street and Sheppard Avenue and at Yonge Street and Finch Avenue.
- Consultant Team: We understand that variety is the essence of the Yonge Street corridor, even beyond the Yonge-Steeles intersection. We want to

know if you believe we have the boundaries for redevelopment defined correctly?

- YSWG Member: Proposed the idea of going through each discussion question individually and allocating approximately 10 minutes to each question.
- YSWG Member: Wants to know how long study will last and expressed concerns that study area is too small. Thinks that study boundary should extend further east.
- YSWG Member: Concurs that study area is too small and that boundary should be extended to Willowdale Avenue.
- YSWG Member: Study area should not be extended at all and believes that the area for redevelopment is enough as is.
- YSWG Member: Thinks that focus should be placed on area that is currently being proposed and that consideration for blocks east of Dudley Avenue should be ancillary for the time being.
- Consultant Team: Advised that consideration will be given to extending the study boundary eastward, however, reminded that focus is Yonge Street first and foremost.

2) **How should the targeted 2.5 FSI density be distributed on blocks?**

- Consultant Team: Thought needs to be given, re: concentrating the density at the corner of Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue and at the Liberty site (northeast corner of Yonge Street and Doncaster Avenue) or if density should be more evenly spread out along the entire Yonge Street corridor.
- YSWG Member: Likes the idea of spreading the density and the idea of having a transition at the CN Rail line (mixed use retail-residential south of the CN Rail line, residential north of the CN Rail line).
- YSWG Member: Would like to see more site coverage with lower building heights.
- Consultant Team: Believes that the preference is to have density evenly distributed, but higher densities at key locations, i.e. intersection of Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue.
- YSWG Member: There is a need for high quality Urban Design standards in this area.
- Regional Councillor: Does not think we should assume that subway is coming. Basis of study should not focus solely on the notion of the subway being extended north of Finch Avenue to Highway 7.
- YSWG Member: Residents are very concerned about the Liberty sites and the densities that are being proposed. The proposal does not fit with the existing community and context and it is at the highest topographic point in the area - people will be able to see it from all over.
- Consultant Team: Due to the fact that the Liberty site is at the highest topographic point in the area, careful consideration must be given to the quality of its design.

- YSWG Member: 20+ storey buildings are simply too high and have negative impacts, such as wind tunnel effect.
- Councillor Burke: If buildings are too high along the Yonge Street frontage, then the streetscape will not be pedestrian friendly. Thinks that the “Gateway” concept at the Yonge Street and Steeles Avenue intersection is important and will work to give the area a strong sense of place.
- Consultant Team: Advised that in several instances, having tall buildings at key locations work to create a “Gateway” and sense of place.
- YSWG Member: Tall buildings should be provided in the study area and open parks should be provided as a component of redevelopment.
- YSWG Member: Wants to know where pedestrians will go in the winter? Will there be opportunities to create underground connections/walkways?
- Consultant Team: Thought needs to be given to underground connections/walkways - who is going to pay for them?
- YSWG Member: Presumably it would be the developers who would pay for these.
- Consultant Team: Having the developers pay and build these underground connections/walkways could be problematic, as developers could say they will pay and build these only if more density is given.
- YSWG Member: Thinks it is important to look at what Vaughan has already done. North of CN Rail line there is an existing 5-6 storey building with grade related retail that cascades downwards creating an appropriate transition with the existing residential to the west.

3) How should new parks and open spaces be provided?

- YSWG Member: Likes the proposed locations of parks shown in the consultant’s presentation. Believes that parks should be built so that all feel free and welcome to use them, not just the residents who live close by.
- YSWG Member: Opportunity for more green space should be provided along Yonge Street.
- Consultant Team: Wants to hear feedback on the concept of the linear park as the proposed buffer from redevelopment site to existing low density residential on east side of Dudley Avenue - should this park be narrow or wide?
- YSWG Member: Believes that park is a great resource and that it should be narrower with larger focal points provided throughout.
- YSWG Member: Parks and open spaces are good if they are useful and inviting - we want active and useful parkland, not dead green space.

4) How should parking in the redevelopment area be addressed?

- Consultant Team: Due to time constraints this evening, we will save the issue of parking for our next meeting. However, members should be giving some thought to how the increase in parking can be accommodated in order to avoid

large surface parking lots - one idea that the consultant team has is a revised (reduce) parking standard for all redevelopment sites.

- YSWG Member: Wants to know whether there are any future plans to widen Yonge Street in the future.
- Town Staff: Is not sure what Region of York's plans are at the moment with regards to widening Yonge Street.
- Consultant Team: Believes it is important to deal with parking at this time. While the advent of the subway line will alleviate some parking demand in the area, it is not going to be built tomorrow.

5) How should traffic on local streets be controlled?

- Consultant Team: This was a topic that came up a number of times at the last Open House Meeting, so it is something that needs to be addressed. There are two approaches that can be taken to deal with traffic on local streets. The first is road closures (advantage – limits through traffic access to local streets, disadvantage - diminishes accessibility for local residents and creates excess volume on limited number of designated collected roads). The second approach is through traffic calming. Our sense is that this is the way to go. One example is traffic circles to slow things down.
- Councillor Burke: In previous redevelopment schemes (i.e. North York), ring-roads were developed. Have these been successful?
- Consultant Team: Does not believe that the ring road approach should be replicated; however, is open to more comments on the issue.
- YSWG Member: Traffic circles are a nice idea, but should be designed carefully. Increases in density will mean an increase in traffic.
- YSWG Member: Traffic circles are definitely favoured over street closures.
- Consultant Team: We need to keep in mind that we can actually make issues better through redevelopment.

6) Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

- Town Staff: With the predicted 4,000 more people and 2,000 additional jobs, we need to carefully consider how we are going to deal with the issues discussed at today's meetings. One of my main concerns is providing a range of housing types.
- Consultant Team: One good thing about redevelopment is that as people get older they can relocate in the existing community in their later years. Redevelopment allows for evolution in an area with old and new provided and accounted for.
- YSWG Member: If you (Consultant Team) are predicting an increase of 2,000 jobs, what kind of jobs will be provided?
- Consultant Team: We have not done an employment analysis as part of the Yonge-Steeles Corridor Study.
- Consultant Team: Thanked everyone for attending and provided a brief summary on what was heard in the discussion:

- Consider the notion of expanding the study boundary eastward beyond Dudley Avenue;
- Density should be more evenly distributed throughout the entire redevelopment site;
- Traffic calming measures, such as traffic circles, are preferred over street closures;
- Notion of maximizing parking - stay away from large surface parking lots.

Next Meeting: September 18, 2007 @ 7.00 PM in the CANADA ROOM

Meeting Adjourned: 9.47 PM