

MES Major Project: Developing the Vaughan Growth Progress Report

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Acknowledgments:

Developing the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* presented many challenges. Fortunately I was not alone. I would like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues for their continuous support throughout the process. I would also like to recognize my advisor throughout my two years in the MES Program, Barbara Rahder, who also co-supervised this project and provided continuous feedback and support through its entire duration.

After completing the project, it became evident to me that I would also be capable and able to pursue a career in Policy Planning. With career goals in Development Planning, I am grateful for the opportunity given to me by Christina Bruce (supervisor) and the City of Vaughan in creating the strategic *Land Use Planning Performance Indicator Report (Vaughan Growth Progress Report)*. I was able to broaden my horizons in going out of my comfort zone and improving my researching, writing, organizational, and communication skills. I am confident in a future career in Policy or Strategic Planning with any municipality should the opportunity present itself. I would also like to recognize Esther Yan, a Strategic Planner with the City of Vaughan, who also acted as a co-supervisor for the project by providing support and continuous feedback through each editing process. Finally, I would like to thank Professor Laura Taylor for introducing me to the *Places to Grow – Towards Performance Indicators for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* document, which was used as a guide to developing the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report*.

Foreword:

I am a second-year Masters of Environmental Studies student at York University. My main focus of research is on Land Use Planning and Development, with most of my learning objectives achieved through course work and volunteer internship experience. My final piece, the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report*, will bring my time in the MES Program to an end, finalizing the achievement of every learning objective outlined in my Plan of Study.

My Plan of Study focuses on Land Use Planning and Development, with components on land use planning, urban development processes, and density and mixed-use. This major project seeks to develop performance measures on land use planning and development in the City of Vaughan in order to track the latest development applications, their effects on the City and its communities within, and create key objectives to improve the use of land in the City. In doing this project, the plan is to analyze the various land uses in the City; development processes, including municipal finance and application processes; densities permitted; and policies on built form and mixed-use. This project has enabled me to achieve most of the learning objectives outlined in my Plan of Study, as my research relates to each of the components.

Developing the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* has provided me with the opportunity to learn the urban planning process in a large and growing municipality. I gained knowledge on the initiatives and plans set out by the City and coupled them with the development of the Report. I learned the history of past development and planning processes and how they have changed from low-density suburban communities targeting families, to a high-density metropolitan centre targeting young professionals. I was able

to tailor the Report based on what the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, and other initiatives and Secondary Plans encourage. Overall, I was able to put what I learned about the City of Vaughan into action in developing the Report and believe I have achieved my overall learning objectives.

Using the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Towards Performance Indicators)* as a guide, as well as other municipal and provincial documents, such as the *Vaughan Official Plan*, *Vaughan Zoning By-law*, *Green Directions Vaughan*, *Sustainability Metrics Initiative*, *Vaughan Vision 2020*, *Greenbelt Plan*, and the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*, I was able to determine what was important to the growth of the City in terms of planning and development.

Introduction:

Working collaboratively with members of the Strategic Planning Department in the City of Vaughan, my primary role in the project was to develop performance measures on land use planning and development in the City. The goal was to set out key themes and objectives, how the city can achieve them, the indicator, why they matter, how they are measured, and the results. I have conducted all necessary research throughout the project and have illustrated findings in a creative Word document.

Developing performance measures are relatively new activities that municipalities have now implemented. Measuring the effectiveness of planning and the use of land in a city will have long-term impacts on its residents. This will enable the City of Vaughan to easily decide what themes are most important, and which ones are not working as effectively. This will improve the future planning practices and policies in the City, enhancing the quality of life and diversity within.

The *City of Vaughan Land Use Planning and Economic Growth Report (Vaughan Growth Progress Report)* sets a framework for development and environmental initiatives across five amalgamated towns--Woodbridge, Maple, Thornhill, Concord, and Kleinburg--in order to ensure the success and stability of its land, economy, and residents. The Report works together with other City-wide and provincial initiatives, including the *Vaughan Official Plan*, *Vaughan Vision 2020*, *Green Directions Vaughan*, *Greenbelt Plan 2005*, and the *Oak Ridges Conservation Plan*.

The *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* and its proposed indicators are directly linked to the themes expressed in the documents listed above, namely the *Vaughan Official Plan* and the *Vaughan Vision 2020*. The Growth Report emphasizes community

safety, environmental sustainability, growth, economic well-being, heritage protection, efficient transportation networks, and better municipal services and infrastructure.

The Report introduces 16 proposed indicators organized under four key themes to assess the effectiveness and performance of land use planning and development in the City of Vaughan. The goal is to implement each theme into the practices of the City, while the indicators are used to monitor the progress of the implementation. The objective of the Report is for the City to consider each theme when making decisions regarding land use planning and land development. Each theme and indicator proposed in the document is consistent with the *City of Vaughan Official Plan* and *Vaughan Vision 2020*.

Background – Planning and Development in the City of Vaughan:

Land use planning has become a dominant force in creating diverse and vibrant communities in the modern world. “Land-use planning in Ontario is delivered by local and regional municipalities through the authority of the Provincial Government,” (Whitelaw, 2008: 803) and “is the process of decision-making for the management of our land and resources” (Ontario, 2013). The Planning Act enables municipal levels of government to impose regulations through official plans, secondary plans, plans of subdivision and other by-laws under the *Provincial Policy Statement* (Whitelaw, 2008: 803). Land use planning enables a city to develop goals and objectives for the growth and development of the area (City of Vaughan, 2014). Land use planning is directly interconnected with development planning in deciding how land is utilized.

Land development is the process in which raw land is converted into construction zones for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, or transportation uses. Land development is also the conversion of land from an existing use to another. Development planners and land use planners require working knowledge of the regulations, laws, and policies that govern development. “The Development Planning Department is responsible for the planning and general design of the City through the land use planning process” (City of Vaughan, 2014). The Development Planning Department also processes applications under the Planning Act, ensuring that all conform with policies related to subdivisions, site plans, zoning, and consents through all stages from “initial consultation to final assumption” (City of London, 2013). The City of Vaughan (2014) also takes Policy Planning into account when creating communities, to ensure quality, vibrancy, and diversity. Policy Planning promotes sustainable and healthy communities by providing

Council with policy tools to guide the growth and physical development of the City under the *Planning Act* (City of Vaughan, 2014). To develop these policies, the department undertakes small and large-scale planning studies. The studies consider input from consultants, corporations, government, and the public (City of Vaughan, 2014).

There may be many reasons for a municipality to monitor its services through performance measures. Municipalities often manage growth and built form through their planning processes. “The goal of planning services is the efficient and effective management of land and resources to ensure healthy and sustainable communities; economically, socially, and environmentally” (OMBI, 2012). Performance measures can be used to determine the effectiveness of a municipality’s Official Plan, the number of development applications received, or the effectiveness of other types of policies, such as environmental or urban design (OMBI, 2012).

The Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006) has outlined its performance measures for its growth plan in a 32-page pamphlet. The brochure begins with a small paragraph explaining why the study has been conducted and what the Greater Golden Horseshoe plans to accomplish. It then provides studies and demographics of the area, shown on various types of graphs, in order to give a background context. The twelve indicators organized around the four key themes are introduced in the remainder of the booklet. Each theme is explained in two to three sentences at the beginning of each section. The indicators are broken down into five main segments: the indicator, why it matters, how it is measured, results, and considerations. They are also supported by various charts and graphs throughout the pamphlet. *The Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan* was used

as a guide or template in developing new themes and indicators that are applicable for the City of Vaughan.

With increases in population and employment calling for more infrastructure and services to support it, land use planning and development in the City of Vaughan have become crucial processes. The population and employment growth in Vaughan has enabled the City to develop a mix of uses in each development, intensify growth areas, improve transit, create vibrant streets, improve community infrastructure, and generate income through development charges.

Vaughan has transformed dramatically since the 1970s, when it began changing from a rural countryside to an urban centre. Now, the City is undergoing yet another transformation, from a low-rise suburban destination, to a global city. By the 1990s, the City had a population of over 100,000 people (Vaughan, 2010). By 2014, the City of Vaughan had a population of 318,000, estimated to increase to over 416,000 by 2031, along with 266,100 jobs by that time (Vaughan, 2010). Vaughan is one of the fastest growing metropolitan centres in Canada, next to Brampton (Statistics Canada, 2011). It has become a premier destination for new and growing families, with its suburban style single-family homes at affordable prices in comparison to neighboring municipalities around York Region and the rest of the Greater Toronto Area. It is also growing its employment opportunities and will become a critical component to the economic success of Ontario and Canada in the future.

Given the drastic growth in population and jobs, it is crucial that the City of Vaughan plans in a manner that will accommodate future expansion and take advantage of its many opportunities to gain global recognition. Planning for resource and land uses

to accommodate future growth is critical to the success of the City on social, economic, and political scales. If the City does not manage its resources and land uses effectively, it will experience more congestion, more pollution, challenges with infrastructure growth and housing supply, and potentially a decrease in the number of jobs.

The City of Vaughan has already developed many strategic plans and initiatives to guide future growth.

Green Directions Vaughan:

Green Directions Vaughan is the City's Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan (Vaughan, 2015). This is a long-term plan developed to guide the City to a more sustainable future environmentally, culturally, socially, and economically (Vaughan, 2015). The plan is designed to establish key principles of sustainability, which will be used in the development of other initiatives and master plans to achieve a healthy natural environment, vibrant and diverse communities, and a competitive economy (Vaughan, 2015).

Sustainability Metrics Initiative:

The *Sustainability Metrics Initiative*, which is considered in the review of development applications across the City, meets a specific objective of *Green Directions Vaughan*, to create a City with sustainable built form (Vaughan, 2015). The main purpose of implementing the initiative in the development review process is to reduce the overall ecological footprint of new development or redevelopment projects (Vaughan, 2015). The City of Vaughan, in partnership with the City of Brampton and the Town of

Richmond Hill, developed the initiative as a tool to achieve healthy, complete sustainable communities (Vaughan, 2015). The tool presents the City with a sustainability scoring system by using a set of Metrics to quantify the sustainability of new developments (Vaughan, 2015).

Vaughan Vision 2020:

The *Vaughan Vision 2020* is the City of Vaughan's Strategic Plan, which sets out a vision and direction for the City to the year 2020 (Vaughan, 2015). The three major strategic goals outlined in the vision are Service Excellence, Staff Excellence, and Organizational Excellence (Vaughan, 2015). The Plan also outlines Priority Strategic Initiatives, which include developing the plan required to build a dynamic Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, further evolving performance indicators, developing and implementing a Corporate-wide Asset Management System, and additional operational/business reviews (Vaughan, 2015).

Until recently, Vaughan has mostly offered suburban-style single-family homes to its residents. Also, in many of these subdivisions, there are no job opportunities, as most of the employment exists in growth areas across the City. Until recently, the City has also lacked efficient public transit. Even with the Spadina subway extension, only one small portion of Vaughan will be served, leaving communities like Thornhill, Maple, and Kleinberg still without any efficient transit lines. Finally, although the City does have many sidewalks and trails for residents to enjoy nature walks, bike lanes are not prominent in the City.

The *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* focuses specifically on sustainability in Theme 4, complementing *Green Directions Vaughan*. Both documents hope to promote more convenient access to a variety of jobs, a full range of housing types, and convenient access to public transit, as well as opportunities to bike and walk.

The *Sustainability Metrics Initiative* also supports Theme 4 of the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report*, as it is a joint collaboration with neighboring municipalities that enforce the *Greenbelt* and *Oak Ridges Moraine Plans*. One flaw is that it may prolong the approval process, which can hinder economic opportunities and revenues to be made from developments in the City.

The *Vaughan Vision 2020* also complements the Report, as it focuses on performance indicators, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, the economy, and community infrastructure. This initiative sets out an ambitious list of goals and priorities that may cost the City a large amount of money. However, achieving the goals that are prominent and important to the City currently, such as a new hospital or the VMC, will be time and money well spent in the long-term.

Methods:

Working with Vaughan City planners, I have conducted research and designed performance measures for land use planning and development in the City. I used information from the City of Vaughan performance measurement dashboard, ClearPoint Strategy, as well as using performance indicators developed by other regions as a guide. I required information relating to Vaughan's planning and development policies and regulations, along with the number of applications submitted and the types of density permitted. The project began with a literature review, data collection, separation of the various types of applications, analysis of the data, development of the key themes, the creation of a pamphlet, and the final written report on the experience.

Beginning in January 2015, the first 1-2 months were strictly used for research and data collection required to develop the performance measures (eg. data on the number of development applications received, analyzing the Vaughan Official Plan, etc). I worked closely with my supervisor to obtain data and photos for the final report. First, studying the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Towards Performance Indicators)* to gain an understanding of performance indicators and their functions was a key tool in creating the report. In reading the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, I noticed that the Plan works in tandem with various other documents. I made it a priority to first learn about the *City of Vaughan Official Plan* and *Zoning By-law*, as well as the Secondary Plans for the various growth areas across the City.

Once this stage was completed, I moved along to developing some key objectives/themes. Using the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Towards Performance Indicators)* as a guide, as well as information from the *Vaughan Official*

Plan, I developed four main themes that I thought were important to the growth of the City. Both the *Growth Plan* and *Official Plan* encourage density, safety, diversity in communities, economic growth, environmental sustainability, and infrastructure improvement. Using the knowledge I gained from both documents, I began to organize these thoughts into four key themes. Once the themes were developed, I began searching for more municipal or provincial documents that could complement the Report. The *Vaughan Vision 2020* was a good start, as it outlines growth, economic well-being, environmental sustainability, and community safety as some of its goals. Since I had dedicated an entire theme to environmental sustainability, I began to research what the City and Province have developed to date with regards to environmental initiatives. During my research, I found *Green Directions Vaughan*, the *Sustainability Metrics Initiative*, and the *Kleinburg Heritage Study*. I also studied the *Greenbelt Plan* and *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*, as I had previous knowledge that both ran through parts of Vaughan.

Once the themes were developed, I created indicators to meet the objectives of those themes. All themes and indicators met larger goals outlined in the *Official Plan* and other complementing documents. I then proceeded to examine why the indicators are important and how they can be monitored. Again, using the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Towards Performance Indicators)* as a main guide, I began to develop indicators to complement the ideas outlined in each theme. In creating some of the indicators, I also studied some of the Secondary Plans across the City, as well as regional plans, including the *Vaughan Metropolitan Centre Secondary Plan*, *Vaughan*

Mills Centre Secondary Plan, Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan, York Region Transportation Master Plan, and the York Region Employment Survey.

Keeping in mind that each indicator must relate to planning and development in some aspect, I acknowledged what may be important to the growth of the City. Also using the *Vaughan Official Plan* as a guide, I came to the conclusion under Theme 1 that achieving intensification in a growing city is important, approving development applications without diversion to the OMB was also significant to growth, concentrating residential and employment growth in City centres such as the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre is crucial, density along major transit routes to make use of infrastructure investments, having a mix of land uses to create diversity in communities, having publicly accessible space and community infrastructure, and creating vibrant and walkable streets. Theme 2 was developed under the knowledge gained from a course called “Global Cities.” Using the knowledge I gained from this course, as well as the *Official Plan*, I concluded that planning for population and employment growth, especially in intensification corridors across the City, was crucial. I also argued that building large-scale municipal infrastructure, such as hospitals, as well as having world-class transit, was also important to making Vaughan a globally recognized City. The indicators for Theme 3 were again created under the guidance of the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* and the *Vaughan Official Plan*. In order to achieve a stable and competitive economy using planning and development, I felt it was important to generate large revenues from development charges, create more jobs in the City through development, and make use of existing attractions and local centres. Finally, the indicators for Theme 4 were created to complement various other documents. In

achieving growth while maintaining a sustainable environment, the City must uphold the legislations that have been in place for the last several years in the *Greenbelt* and *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plans*. I also felt it was important to preserve local heritage in small communities, such as Kleinburg, as well as reducing land consumptions while also still being able to support population growth.

The final stage was to produce a report outlining the themes and indicators. Again, using the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* as a guide, I began creating the Report with a similar layout. I started with an introduction on what the Report was about and listed all the themes and indicators. I proceeded with some background information on Vaughan and why it was important to plan ahead for future growth. Giving a description of the Report, along with some other initiatives the City has already developed, I began to list and expand on all themes and indicators. Each theme has a paragraph description and each indicator has descriptions as to why it is important, how it can be measured, the results, and any considerations. The results for most indicators came from ClearPoint Strategy, a City of Vaughan performance measurement dashboard, which holds information relating to all departments. Other information was gathered from various sections of the City of Vaughan website (eg. the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre section) and from various sections of the York Region website (eg. the *York Region Transportation Master Plan*, the *York Region Employment Survey*, or the *York Region Growth and Development Review*). Some statistics were also used from the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Towards Performance Indicators)* document. Supporting images were gathered from Google searches, the City of Vaughan website, York Region website, the various Secondary Plans, the *Vaughan Official Plan*,

the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*, Statistics Canada, ClearPoint Strategy, York Regional Police, and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust.

The process required the review and analysis of various documents and data, the compilation and synthesizing of the information, and the creation of visual aids and facts to support the themes and indicators. Once the first stage was complete, the rough draft containing the preliminary information was sent to my supervisor for the first review stage. Once the review process was completed, I proceeded to create the first rough draft of the final Report, separating the information and data under the appropriate indicators, as well as providing all visual aids. After four rounds of reviews and edits, the Report was ultimately approved for final submission.

Reflection on the Process of Developing the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report*:

The *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* is made up of four key themes and 16 indicators:

Theme 1: Achieving dense, safe, and diverse communities

- Indicator 1: Achieving Intensification
- Indicator 2: Approving more development applications at the municipal level
- Indicator 3: Residential and employment density at the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre
- Indicator 4: Density along major transit routes
- Indicator 5: Mixed-land uses
- Indicator 6: Publicly accessible space and community infrastructure
- Indicator 7: Creating lit, vibrant, and walkable streets

Theme 2: Making Vaughan a global city

- Indicator 1: Planning for population and job growth in intensification areas
- Indicator 2: Building infrastructure to connect Vaughan to the world on global and regional levels
- Indicator 3: Participating in the planning of regional transit linkages

Theme 3: Achieving a stable and competitive economy

- Indicator 1: Generating income through development charges (approvals)
- Indicator 2: Creating more jobs in the City
- Indicator 3: Emphasizing the use of local centres and attractions

Theme 4: Achieving growth while maintaining a sustainable environment

- Indicator 1: Preserving the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt
- Indicator 2: Heritage – preserving local communities and neighborhoods such as Kleinburg
- Indicator 3: Reducing land consumptions while still supporting population and employment growth

The creation of Theme 1 is based on what we have seen in Toronto in recent years. The City has achieved dense and intensified corridors, along with community safety, diversity, and a mix of uses in neighborhoods. Vaughan has begun taking a similar route, approving various high-rise mixed-use development applications, keeping crime levels at similar numbers over the last five years, and achieving diversity through new mixed-use developments. Overall, this theme provides a realistic approach to what Vaughan can

achieve in the coming years. The City must continue supporting intensification in its growth corridors, concentrated near transit and commercial uses, as well as approving development applications for mixed-uses, rather than strictly low-density residential subdivisions as it has in the past. Although Toronto was able to achieve this in recent years, Vaughan has concentrated so deeply on low-rise suburban style family homes in the past that it must continue to learn from what Toronto has done successfully over the last decade. Although the *Growth Report* was for Vaughan and not Toronto, I was still able to develop an understanding of the urban development processes and legislation that governs the process in a growing municipality and in Ontario, generally.

Developing the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* enabled me to gain insight into the involvement of politicians in the planning process. I learned that Vaughan has some involvement from its politicians in the planning department. I also learned that being able to liaison with politicians and be able to effectively communicate and negotiate with them can be crucial in gaining approval for private and municipal developments. For example, I was aware of various meetings at Vaughan City Hall regarding the recent approvals of the many high-rise mixed-use developments along Highway 7, including Centro Square, Goldpark, the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, and Expo City.

The City of Vaughan is in a transition stage from a low-density sprawling suburban City to an intensified, mixed-use metropolitan/urban centre. The *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* recognizes this transition, and indicators were developed to monitor the progress of change in densities and the mix of land uses. The *Growth Progress Report* has allowed me to gain knowledge on what is being encouraged in the *Vaughan Official Plan* and various Secondary Plans in growth centres across the City. I

was able to put this knowledge into action when creating the indicators to measure progress of change and growth in the City.

Developing the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* also allowed me to gain knowledge of the various high-density mixed-use projects under construction in the City. It enabled me to gain knowledge on total construction values in the City, development charge revenues, and building permit revenues. With this information, I was able to provide recommendation on approving more development applications, within reason, for high density, mixed-use buildings at the municipal level, without appeals to the Ontario Municipal Board. In doing so, the City will not have to spend money and time preparing for hearings and attending them, but can rather generate revenue from developments, while improving the quality of life and look of the City.

As mentioned, Vaughan is in a state of transition from a low-density suburban City, to a high density urban centre. With existing low-density single-family homes and some mid-rise residential and office buildings, there has been an increase in demand for high-rise office and residential living. High-density developments allows for a mix of uses, decreases in land consumption, and an increase in revenues generated form each development. As Vaughan already has a variety of low-density living options, diverting to more intensified forms of development will allow densities to be concentrated in City growth centres near transit and highways and will also enable residents to live, work, and shop in one area.

As many low-density residential subdivisions in Vaughan have small-scale commercial components near them, some residents are not within walking distance, which in turn increases car trips and causes inconvenience. The Report supports and

recommends high-density developments for the simple reasons of having a mix of uses so that residents can live, work, shop, and play all in one area, which improves the quality of life and is convenient. As Vaughan has long been a suburban City targeting growing families, the addition of transit has played a major role in transitioning it into an intensified metropolitan centre targeting young professionals.

The development of Theme 2 was based again on what we have seen in Toronto in recent years, as well as an undergraduate course I took several years ago called “Global Cities.” Based on what I learned in that course, I believe Vaughan can reach Global City status through the development of large-scale infrastructure projects. The recent approval of the new City hospital at Highway 400 and Major Mackenzie Drive is a significant step in achieving this goal. The recent transit connection to Toronto (Spadina Subway), as well as the Bus Rapid Transit connection along Highway 7 to Markham are also extremely significant in putting Vaughan on the map. Recent approvals for high-rise development and the plan for the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre are also important to Global City status. I believe that this theme provides a realistic approach to what Vaughan is capable of achieving on a global level. Although Vaughan does not have its own airport, and according to Esther Yan, it is highly unlikely that it ever will, easy Highway 427 connection to Toronto’s Pearson International Airport is also significant to Vaughan. The construction of the City’s own International Airport would be crucial and greatly benefit Vaughan in terms of worldwide recognition and connections.

The development of Theme 3 builds on Theme 2 of making Vaughan a Global City. Based on what I learned in the “Global Cities” course, competitive economies are crucial to a city achieving this status. According to Saskia Sassen (2005), a Global City

functions as a key point in the global world economy, has prominent business and financial services, knows the importance of global communication for the exchange of information, and has a developed global culture. Global Cities also have a flow of information and capital, fulfill coordinating roles and functions rather than competing against each other, have large populations, international financial institutions, corporate headquarters, advanced communication infrastructure, a major international airport, and an advanced transportation system (Sassen, 1991). Toronto is currently regarded as a Global City, with a competitive economy, a large and busy airport, transit linkages, high density growth corridors, and hospitals. In this sense, Vaughan can again learn from its neighbour, Toronto. With already existing large-scale industrial and commercial employment areas, Vaughan must simply continue using and expanding its already existing money-makers. The development of new office buildings and commercial buildings along Highway 7 and in other growth centres across the City, Vaughan is building and strengthening its economy, as outlined in its Official Plan.

The *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* enabled me to gain a better understanding of land economics and how they impact urban development in the City. I learned about property values across the City, as well as construction values and the importance of development charge revenues in recent years. I concluded that more revenue generated from development would lead to stronger and more sustainable economy. I provided recommendations for mixed-use and environmentally friendly developments in Vaughan in order to sustain healthy living conditions for City residents.

Similarly, the Report allowed me to gain an understanding of development charges and the types of infrastructure they are used for. I was able to draw the

conclusion that more development in the City will lead to more revenue, which in turn will improve infrastructure and overall living conditions through the addition of public transit, water and road improvements. Overall, the Report enabled me to broaden my knowledge on municipal finance in the City of Vaughan and its relation to urban development and urban growth.

The creation of Theme 4 builds on Theme 1, as growth must be achieved, but must be environmentally friendly. As this theme may seem like rhetoric, achieving it is still very possible and realistic. As we have seen in Toronto in recent years, intensification has been encouraged and growth has been concentrated in growth centres and near transit. Buildings, although having some negative impacts such as shadowing, have also been positive in Toronto. They have reduced sprawl, encouraged transit use, provided diverse and vibrant mixed-use communities where people can live, work, and play in one area, reduced land consumptions, and most are now built to meet LEED standards. Similarly, Vaughan can achieve growth while maintaining a sustainable environment through its Sustainability Metrics Initiative checklist, whereby each building must meet the environmental requirements on the checklist in order to obtain approval to begin construction.

Some of the performance indicators developed in the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* required me to have working knowledge of not only municipal legislation, such as the *City of Vaughan Official Plan* and *Zoning By-law*, but also Provincial initiatives such as the *Greenbelt Plan* and the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*. Theme 4, as mentioned, has a specific focus on maintaining a sustainable environment, with Indicator 1 focusing specifically on preserving the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt. In

developing this theme, I studied the two Provincial Plans and used them to form the relevant indicator.

In studying the two Provincial Plans, I came across a significant issue called “grandfathering” of development application approvals. This process occurs when an application is submitted before the legislation came into place, giving the owner of the land the right to revive the application and potentially bypass the law and gain approval. For example, in February 2015, Riteland Holdings Inc. revived a 16-year old application to build 28 luxury homes on protected Moraine lands in Caledon (Caledon, 2015). The grandfather clause that allows all development applications submitted before November 16, 2001 to go forward, means that the subdivision will most likely be built (Oved, 2015). Activists have called on provincial and municipal levels of government to put an end to the grandfathering of development in the Moraine (Oved, 2015).

Overall, Vaughan can attempt to mitigate the effects of these loopholes in the legislation on Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine lands. The City of Vaughan can vote to reject any applications and force them to the OMB, where the City and residents can voice their opinions and attempt to have the revived development proposal rejected. The City can also negotiate with the Province to implement “sunset clauses” on development proposals after legislation is passed, meaning that landowners who submitted applications before the legislation was passed have a specific amount of time to revive them before the law comes into full effect for their property as well.

Cases like this also gave me time to reflect on the planning profession in general. As planners, we are sworn to work in the best interest of the public, whether in the federal, provincial, municipal or private sectors. Applications similar to the one described

above, in which private planners are hired to obtain approval, and municipal and OMB planners most likely to provide approval, allowed me to reflect on whether planners are taking the public interest into consideration. Although I empathize with the landowner, who submitted his application before the legislation came into effect, there must be a reasonable time period where he is allowed to revive it before it expires, rather than 16 years later.

Developing the *Vaughan Growth Progress Report* for the City of Vaughan has allowed me to expand my academic horizons from Development Planning to Strategic/Policy Planning. In doing this project, I have learned about the City and what is needed, as well as the policies and initiatives already in place to achieve these goals. It has also allowed me to broaden my research, writing, and communication skills. This project enabled me to conduct research and writing in a professional, rather than academic setting. I was also able to communicate in a professional setting with Strategic Planners, such as Christina Bruce and Esther Yan, as well as with Development Planners, such as Mauro Peverini, to explain my research and how I planned on proceeding through each step. Christina Bruce and Esther Yan (supervisors) worked closely with me throughout the Winter and Summer semesters and provided guidance on the research and compilation of the project. Through each editing period, I learned how to write and visually present my work more professionally. I learned how to properly and efficiently organize thoughts, information, and data and communicate them cohesively. The project also enabled me to gain extensive exposure to the City's intensification corridors, transit initiatives and plans, development application system, community infrastructure, development charge system, employment sector, population and employment forecasts,

sustainability initiatives, and heritage corridors. I was able to research the past and present development trends in the City and make recommendation for the future in order to make full use of land and infrastructure in Vaughan. Overall, this was extremely beneficial, as I learned how to research and understand various documents and synthesize information in order to provide recommendations on how the City can improve, similar to what planners in every municipality do on a daily basis.

Conclusion:

Overall, this project enabled me to gain hands on experience in developing a strategic policy/plan for a municipality. It allowed me to strengthen my research, writing, and communication skills, as well as broaden my horizons and interests from Development Planning to Strategic and Policy Planning. I learned the various municipal and provincial legislations that bound planning and development in Vaughan and was able to make recommendation based on those policies and regulations. I believe that the project helped me achieve all learning objectives set out in my Plan of Study and I am confident that I have mastered Land Use Planning and Development in the way I set out to in the beginning of the MES Program. I am also confident in a future career in the planning or development field, whether it be with a municipality or with a private firm, as I have developed the necessary skills to be successful over the course of the two years in the MES Program. I hope to have contributed something useful to planning in the City of Vaughan. At the beginning of the project, there were talks about possibly publishing the Report. My aspiration is to one day have my work published and on the City of Vaughan website, which will give me the satisfaction of knowing that I contributed a valuable piece of work to the City.

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