

REPORT

Planning, Design & Development Committee

Standing Committee of the Council
of the Corporation of the City of Brampton

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Subject: Downtown Urban Design Vision Study Report

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OVERVIEW

- Staff has produced an Urban Design Vision Study for the City of Brampton Downtown and the Central Area which outlines a comprehensive and realistic vision for the redevelopment and indicates models of redevelopment for each Character Area proposed. The Vision Study (attached as *Appendix 2*) is a highly graphic, image-focused document that is intended to clearly identify the future development character and potential of the Downtown. The Vision deals with the entire Central Area in general terms but focuses on the Downtown and represents the culmination of extensive public/stakeholder consultation. It is now time to aggressively pursue the implementation and an effective communication and marketing program.
- Brampton's Central Area is composed of three distinct Precincts – the historic Downtown, Queen Street Corridor and Bramalea Centre, each of them with special characteristics and distinct redevelopment models. The Central Area is a major designated growth area in the GTA, an important Regional node, includes significant civic, institutional, cultural and entertainment facilities as well as important commercial, employment and residential areas.
- The Vision for the Downtown Precinct is as a destination, a civic and cultural centre, a liveable place with emphasis on quality, transit oriented, pedestrian friendly, based on mixed use, mid-rise, street oriented built forms with a strong urban character and high level of design with coherent, traditional based forms and details.
- Special Character Areas in the Downtown Precinct are identified with specific models of development, illustrated through images selected from successful case studies from

Ontario, North America and the world. The Vision document will be presented to stakeholders and public and be the basis of a Downtown Symposium and a public communication process.

- **The Central Area Planning and Design group has been formed, will be guided by the Central Area Steering Committee and will setup a Technical Team from all departments to coordinate activities related to this area.**
- **The Vision, Character Areas and proposed models and typologies will form the basis of detailed studies and policies as outlined in the comprehensive Work Plan for 2005-2006.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THAT** this Report be endorsed and the “Vision for the Central Area and Downtown” be adopted for public information and Secondary Plan formulation and implementation;
2. **THAT** Staff be directed to present the attached documents to the stakeholders and BDDC and organize a Public Information Session and a Downtown Symposium;
3. **THAT** staff be directed on the basis of this Report to proceed to draft detailed guidelines and policies required to implement the Vision and Report back to Council.

1. BACKGROUND

Brampton Central Area was subject to intense studies and a number of policies in the last 10-15 years. In 2002, the Central Area Study was initiated with the work performed to date currently considered to be a Background Study. In April 2005, staff was directed to initiate a Visioning Study and the result was presented successfully to the Central Area stakeholders group in June 2005. The attached document includes, as directed by the Committee a Vision Statement and a Business case as well as ample illustration to give Council, stakeholders and public a much clearer indication of the anticipated forms development should take.

The Vision Study is a highly graphic, image-focussed document that is intended to clearly identify the future development character and potential of the Downtown. The Vision represents the culmination of extensive public/stakeholder input and is meant to guide the stage of implementation as well as support a communication and marketing program.

The document deals with the entire Central Area in general terms but focuses on the Downtown. For the other two main components – Queen Corridor (between Kennedy and Dixie) and Bramalea Centre, staff will develop a Vision for these areas similar to the detail for the Downtown over the next months.

2. VISION STATEMENT FOR THE CENTRAL AREA AND DOWNTOWN

The following represents a summary of the Central Area Vision statement and Downtown Business case. The full document is attached as *Appendix 1*.

2.1 Central Area's Role, Function And Character

Brampton has a unique urban structure with a large Central Area with very important roles to play at the regional and city scale:

- Major designated growth area in the GTA as per the draft Places to Grow Provincial policy;
- Important Regional node located at the intersection of major transportation routes;
- Includes significant civic, institutional, cultural and entertainment facilities as well as important commercial, employment and residential areas.

The Central Area has an essential role in establishing and enforcing the city's character and identity within the region and has three major distinct Precincts:

- An established Downtown Precinct with distinct heritage image and character;
- The Queen Corridor Precinct (between Kennedy and Dixie) that will transition to a mixed-use, transit oriented, pedestrian environment;
- Bramalea Centre Precinct which has significant potential to develop into a Urban Centre model.

2.2 The Vision for Downtown Precinct

The Vision for the Downtown core builds on a well-established area with a strong character, based on its urban tradition. Downtown development emphasis will be on quality and not quantity (scale, height and mass) and will share the following goals:

- Reinforce the Downtown's role as a destination, with the most important civic, institutional, cultural and entertainment facilities supported by residential, commercial and employment.
- Downtown as a creative centre, a liveable place for entertainment, leisure, civic activities, to offer a variety of experiences, niche market retail, varied residential.
- A transit oriented, pedestrian friendly area, with easy access, for transit, cars, pedestrians and supportive built forms.
- Integrate built, natural and heritage elements with new development of mixed use, mid-rise, street oriented built form with a strong urban character and high level of design.
- New development shall be balanced, coherent development with traditional forms and details. Appropriate forms and building heights should be encouraged in the larger downtown area and beyond with denser forms at key locations.

- A complex network of public spaces in urban context shall complement built form.
- Quality streetscapes, gateways, comprehensive wayfinding and signage, public art.
- The reintroduction of Etobicoke Creek as a major character element integrated with the surrounding built form and open space system.

2.3. Downtown – the Business Case

There is extensive experience all around the continent in terms of Downtown Redevelopment and revitalization and a clear trend to focus on this type of complex but rewarding type of development. Downtown development presents itself as a strong business case with very significant advantages.

Why focus on Downtown development?

- Crucial element in a Smart Growth and Sustainable Development of the City
- Takes advantage of existing infrastructure and resources
- Provides for support of transit and efficient land use
- Benefits from a great location within the City and Region and easy access
- Presents development opportunities with great access and exposure
- Responds to an increasing market demand
- Could be more efficient and cost effective than greenfield development
- Creates a synergy of uses, where the sum is larger than the parts
- Creates a destination for the citizens and visitors alike
- Enhances the City's character and identity
- Uses creatively the city's traditions and heritage

3. DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN VISIONING STUDY

The Visioning Study is attached in full version as *Appendix 2*.

In terms of the approach and material organization, the entire Central Area and each Precinct as well as each Downtown Special Character Area are dealt with in terms of current role, function and character, analysis (strengths/ opportunities, weaknesses/ constraints), Vision goals and design principles, initiatives, programs, policies and projects and next steps, action items.

Following is a summary of its content:

The **Queen Corridor** Precinct between Kennedy and Dixie is seen as a destination area that will undergo a transformation from a car-oriented strip retail to a transit oriented, pedestrian friendly corridor. At this time it is foreseen that a gradual change towards mixed use developments (including affordable housing), up to 6-8 storeys and street-related commercial will be encouraged. The emphasis will be towards creating model projects at key intersections to set out this form of development.

The **Bramalea Centre Precinct** has been developed around the existing '60s modernist style large commercial centre. This area has the potential to transition to an Urban Centre with a variety and mix of uses being encouraged. This Urban Centre will allow for significantly higher densities, function as transit oriented inter-modal transportation centre and will function as a key anchor at the Easterly limit of the Central Area.

The **Downtown Precinct** Vision builds on a well-established area with a strong character, based on its urban tradition and will house the most important civic, cultural institutions and public spaces. The Downtown Precinct consists of a number of well established and Special Character Areas, each of them with their own image and identity. The area will be accessible through high quality boulevards and gateways for all transportation modes including cars, transit, pedestrians, bikes. Major Redevelopment Areas at key locations will have higher intensity, transit-oriented and mixed-use, street related buildings consisting of a range from 2-3 storey to medium and high rises. Existing stable residential neighbourhoods and heritage areas will be dealt with as incremental growth areas with small scale growth and preservation areas (stable, well defined, protected) where new development may occur only in very strict conditions.

11 Special Character Areas are identified for the Downtown Precinct with specific models of development, illustrated through images selected from successful case studies from Ontario, North America and the world.

The Character areas analysis and vision will allow further detail policies and guidelines to be developed and include:

- 1. Four Corners Study Area** will continue to be the physical centre of Brampton, location of main civic and cultural facilities, will preserve and enhance the existing heritage character in pedestrian-scaled type of development with strong urban character, consistent with the existing heritage character and image.
- 2. George Street Study Area** has potential of intensive development arising from the land available and the proximity to the Four Corners, transit and car access and is envisioned to get development in a 2-3 storey podium with towers format with active uses at grade including restaurants and parking screened
- 3. Train Station And Surrounding Area** has potential due to the high level transit as transit oriented, mixed use development that could include a convention centre, hotel, office and residential complemented by the heritage restoration and adaptive reuse of "The Castle" (Davis House) and grounds.
- 4. Main Street North Study Area** redevelopment will be based on building types integrating with the

current form and higher intensity developments at the end complemented by strong streetscape including streetlights and other street furniture and the restoration of the canopy of trees and vegetation.

5. Rosalea / Etobicoke Creek Area Study will be based on the hidden treasure of the river, the reconfiguration of the channel and evolve in an urban park with attractive riverwalks, water features, bridges, heritage gardens, public art bordered by high quality institutional and residential development.

6. Hospital Area Study represents a major redevelopment opportunity envisioned in a campus, pedestrian friendly environment, built on health care, educational and complimentary development (commercial, residential), open space and triggering the redevelopment of the outlining areas.

7. John Street Area will be a major pedestrian link from the City Hall to the river and the Hospital Area and its development will gradually intensify to the West but keep a contextual character of mid and low-rise residential drawing on the strong heritage character and image of the area.

8. Main Street South Area represents the quintessential character for Downtown Brampton, with a high quality of heritage architecture and landscaping and a recognizable image that needs to be preserved and cherished.

9. The Gum Factory And Fairgrounds Area has redevelopment potential which will focus on its integration with the surrounding neighbourhood and integration of high quality infill housing for seniors and lofts as well as urban type of recreational and institutional development of the grounds.

10. Queen Street West to McLaughlin is a key access corridor with long term potential for redevelopment on the larger industrial sites, incremental type of development along the corridor with strong streetscape and higher intensity development in transit use, mixed use forms at the gateway.

11. Queen Street East to Kennedy has long term potential to become a major Boulevard through gradual urbanization, intensification and transition from car-oriented to transit oriented, mixed use, pedestrian friendly with key nodes at main intersections and reconfiguration of streetscape.

Key issues are also identified in order to implement the Vision and they include: land availability and value, access and parking, development types and costs, transit oriented development, active uses at grade as well as resources allocated (funding, staffing, timing and organization)

The Character Areas and proposed models and typologies will form the basis of detailed studies and policies as outlined in the comprehensive Work Plan for 2005-2006.

4. CENTRAL AREA WORK PLAN AND ORGANIZATION

Following the Council decision to form a dedicated Central Area group to deal with planning and design issues, as described in the July 04, 2005 PD&D Report, staff proceeded with the hiring process. This is now complete and the new group including Gabe Charles as the Central Area Planner and Anthony Wong as the Central Area Urban Design residing in the Urban Design and Public Buildings

Section of the Community Design Division is now functioning and complemented by dedicated staff in the Economic Development Department. As discussed and approved at the Central Area Steering Committee on September 06, 2005 the Central Area Planning and Design Group will be guided by the Central Area Steering Committee and will setup a Technical Team from all departments to coordinate activities related to this area. (see *Appendix 3*)

A detailed Work Plan has been developed and will be used as a major tool to monitor and coordinate Central Area work (see *Appendix 4* as illustration). This include Planning and Design work, studies and special projects, development applications, capital work as well as communications and economic development initiatives.

It is important to note that staff is ensuring that while the Vision and subsequent policies are being developed and finalized the important projects undergoing are treated as priority in terms of resources and coordinated through the work plan and the organization being setup.

A number of development applications and capital projects are on their way in the Central Area. As the Technical Coordination Team will be setup, the Work Program will be further developed and will become a permanent tool to monitor and coordinate projects and initiative in the Central Area.

As an example, the work around the Theatre Precinct and the upcoming City Hall Expansion will represent an opportunity to demonstrate to the public and to the development community the City's leadership role, to act as catalysts and set out an example for the entire Downtown development.

4. NEXT STEPS

Based on the recommendations of this Report and Council suggestions staff will proceed to the implementation work and the communication and marketing program including the following:

- The presentation of the Vision in the final format to the Central Area stakeholder groups
- The presentation of the Vision to a Public Information Session
- The organization of a Downtown Symposium with the participation of the main stakeholders, developers as well as invited experts in Central Area and Downtown Redevelopment.

Concurrently staff has initiated the implementation documents required including the detailed Urban Design Guidelines (Built Form and Open Space), the Secondary Plan, updated Zoning By-Law and Signage By Law (see summary of the process and deliverables attached in *Appendix 5*) as part of a comprehensive implementation framework.

The most important steps and initiative will be subject to subsequent reports to PD&D Committee and Council.

Respectfully submitted,

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Concur,

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Approved,

John Corbett,

Commissioner, Planning, Design and Development

DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN VISIONING STUDY REPORT – APPENDICES

- Appendix 1* **Central Area Vision statement and Downtown Business case**
- Appendix 2* **Downtown Urban Design Visioning Study**
- Appendix 3* **Central Area Governance and Organization Chart**
- Appendix 4* **Detailed Work Plan**
- Appendix 5* **Comprehensive Planning and Design Framework**