



Report
Staff Report
 The Corporation of the City of Brampton
 2/10/2025

Date: 2025-01-17

Subject: **Recommendation Report: Uptown Steeles Avenue Streetscape Improvements Feasibility Study – Wards 3 & 4**

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Report number: Planning, Bld & Growth Mgt-2024-260

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Recommendation Report from Hanu S. Dilip, Urban Designer, Development Services & Design and Rowaidah Chaudhry, Transportation Planner, Integrated City Planning to the Planning and Development Committee Meeting of February 10, 2025, re: **Recommendation Report: Uptown Steeles Avenue Streetscape Improvements Feasibility Study – Wards 3 & 4**, be received; and,
2. That staff be directed to complete a feasibility study (within the existing approved capital budget) for potential improvements to the Steeles Avenue streetscape the City's Uptown and report back with project milestones, anticipated costs, and a financial strategy to fund the improvements.

OVERVIEW:

- **An Uptown Steeles Avenue Streetscape Improvements Feasibility Study is recommended to inform how the 1.75km segment of Steeles Avenue (between Etobicoke Creek and McLaughlin Road) should be revitalized into a dynamic, pedestrian-friendly environment, enhancing safety and promoting sustainable mobility options. It would be an important complement to the significant urbanization and intensification occurring in the area and would harmonize with Brampton's Vision 2040 and the future "On the Move: Brampton Mobility Plan".**
- **The physical changes being considered for the Steeles Avenue right-of-way would improve safety and comfort for all road users and foster a "main street" design in the Uptown Urban Centre. Proposed changes include a design to reduce vehicular speeds, intersection improvements, dedicated**

pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, sustainable landscaping, and significant utility infrastructure upgrades.

- **Staff has undertaken a preliminary assessment and high-level cost estimate of three alternatives for a streetscape improvements capital project:**
 - **Alternative #1 (Do nothing) – conventional improvements with no change to hydro pole infrastructure, completed through the implementation of development applications.**
 - **Alternative #2 (Above-grade utility relocation) – Relocation of hydro poles closer to existing roadside curb (subject to exemption approval from Public Utility Coordinating Committee) and boulevard improvements (\$52.3 million)**
 - **Alternative #3 (Below-grade utility relocation) – Removal of hydro poles with below-grade relocation of existing hydro cables and boulevard improvements (\$73.4 million)**
- **Currently under the jurisdiction of the Region of Peel, ownership and maintenance of Steeles Avenue are to be transferred to the City of Brampton effective July 1, 2026 (or as determined by the Province). This transfer will grant the City controlling interest in the future design of Steeles Avenue.**
- **As recommended in this report, and prior to Steeles Avenue being transferred to the City, staff is seeking Council direction to complete the Uptown Steeles Avenue Streetscape Improvements Feasibility Study and report back with respect to project milestones, anticipated project costs, and a financial strategy to fund the streetscape improvements.**
- **There are no direct financial implications from the adoption of the recommendation of this report. Sufficient funding is available in the Planning, Building & Growth Management capital budget for conducting the feasibility study.**

BACKGROUND:

Currently, Steeles Avenue is a suburban 6-lane arterial road under the jurisdiction of Peel Region that is designed to move high volumes of inter-regional vehicular traffic at a high speed (60 to 70 km/hr). The corridor is designated as a goods movement corridor that includes a standard sidewalk or fragmented segments of multi-use paths. The corridor has not been designed to complement the significant mixed-use (commercial and residential) urban forms of redevelopment that is identified in Brampton Plan (2023).for the Uptown area.

Steeles Avenue is serviced by Züm Rapid Transit which connects with the planned HuLRT station at Gateway terminal. However, the design of the existing Steeles Avenue streetscape will not effectively support the future increased volume of commuters and pedestrians that the HuLRT and Uptown Brampton will generate. Inadequate pedestrian infrastructure and limited cycling facilities exists along the corridor.

The new proposed legislation from the Province (Bill 240, Peel Transition Implementation Act, 2024) will transfer the ownership and maintenance of roads from the Region to Brampton. This legislation, to become effective on July 1, 2026 (or as determined by the Province), will grant the City controlling interest in the future design of Steeles Avenue.

This transfer of jurisdiction of Steeles Avenue to the Brampton will allow the City to implement a new vision for this corridor that will align with the vision advancing through the “On the Move: Brampton Mobility Plan” (BMP). The BMP will recommend policies, infrastructure, and programs to create a mosaic of safe, integrated transportation choices, with a focus on walking, cycling, and transit. In line with the principles of the future BMP, staff anticipates the creation of an Uptown Steeles Avenue Urban Streetscape Improvements Plan that will prioritize multi-modal transportation, reduce reliance on vehicular traffic, and promote sustainable options by developing pedestrian-friendly spaces and cycling infrastructure that will support Brampton’s growing transit network.

(Refer to Figure 1 and Figure 2 in Attachment 3, which depict examples of boulevard treatments that support the vision for Uptown Brampton).

CURRENT SITUATION:

Brampton’s Uptown Urban Centre is planned to become a significant nodal area in the City that will accommodate high-density mixed-use development forms, as identified in the Council approved Brampton Plan (2023). The area is already starting to undergo dramatic change with new high-rise construction occurring along the Steeles Avenue West corridor in proximity to Hurontario Street, while other development proposals for major high-density projects in this area are being processed by staff. These development projects are expected to create approximately 14,000 new residential units along the segment of Steeles Avenue between McLaughlin Road to the west and Etobicoke Creek to the east. The development activity that is occurring in the City’s Uptown area provides a great opportunity for the City to commence a transformation of the Steeles Avenue corridor from its suburban character into a vibrant, business-friendly environment, that supports safe, sustainable and active living.

Uptown Steeles Avenue Streetscape Improvements Feasibility Study

To facilitate the transformation of the corridor, staff intend to complete an Uptown Steeles Avenue Streetscape Improvements Feasibility Study, as is recommended by this report. The Study is recommended due to the significant capital costs that are associated with different design alternatives being considered within the Steeles Avenue corridor. The Feasibility Study would identify:

- key infrastructure to be included within an updated Steeles corridor;
- expected timing of project milestones and completion;

- technical details associated with various design alternatives;
- costs of implementing the various design alternatives;
- financial strategies to pay for the improvements.

Once completed staff will report back to Committee and Council with the results of the study, to seek direction on a preferred design.

This study will also inform the planned future review of the Steeles Avenue corridor which will examine and evaluate potential higher-order transit alternatives, together with the supporting transportation, land use, densities, and urban design characteristics. It could also establish a City-wide urban approach for implementing streetscape changes in area focused intensification.

Hydro Pole Infrastructure – Alternatives

The most significant challenge to implementing the vision for Uptown Brampton Steeles Avenue is the scope and cost to remove or relocate above-ground hydro infrastructure. Hydro services along Steeles Avenue are generally provided above ground via overhead wires. The existing hydro poles are owned by Alectra and shared between Alectra and four additional service providers, namely, Rogers, Bell, PSN (Public Sector Network), and Acronym Solutions (formerly Hydro One Telecom). Streetlights are mounted on hydro poles in some locations, and streetlight poles in others. The existing hydro poles and guy wires occupy valuable space that could otherwise be allocated to dedicated pedestrian and cycling infrastructure that support transit-oriented development. Furthermore, these aerial obstructions limit the potential for planting large canopy trees, hindering alignment with the City's Urban Tree Canopy goals.

Staff has assessed three boulevard improvement alternatives in consultation with internal stakeholders and utility companies.

Alternative 1 (“Do-Nothing”)

Description:

- Conventional development application-based frontage implementation, resulting in no change to hydro pole infrastructure, which relies on (re)development to dictate the timeline for boulevard improvements.

Total Municipal Cost:

- \$0

Assessment/Implications:

- May lead to a disjointed appearance over time, as changes occur in a fragmented manner rather than as a coordinated effort.
- Opting out of initial below-grade utility relocations to avoid costs now could result in increased expenses in the long run, due to potential future relocations and the lost opportunity to potentially recoup costs through the redevelopment process.

Moreover, the physical space occupied by the current hydro poles and guys wires could otherwise be used to facilitate critical urban improvements, such as the expansion of sidewalks and the addition of dedicated cycle tracks, enhancing the overall urban experience.

- In Attachment 3, Figure 3 illustrates the current conditions along Steeles Avenue and Figure 4 depicts an example of fragmented streetscape infrastructure along the City owned portion of Queen Street East. This alternative involves retaining the existing hydro poles and aerial cables, which could restrict planned enhancements to the boulevards and adherence to the City's Complete Streets guidelines.

Alternative 2 (“Above-grade utility relocation”)

Description:

- Relocation of hydro poles closer to the existing roadside curb (which is subject to exemption approval) along with the boulevard improvements.

Total Municipal Cost:

- \$52,343,000

Assessment/Implications:

- Will result in sub-standard pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, which may lead to safety concerns and hinder active transportation options, potentially impacting the accessibility and livability of the area.
- Cost savings compared to Alternative #3 could present short-term financial benefits, however, may result in long-term drawbacks.
- Refer to Figure 5 in Attachment 3. This alternative involves shifting hydro poles closer to the roadway alongside corresponding improvements to the boulevard. Though it is less expensive than Alternative #3, despite some incremental improvements, it does not fully resolve the limitation of space for pedestrian and cycling infrastructure due to the presence of pole guy wires, nor does it allow the expansion of the urban tree canopy, key to the City's environmental and sustainability aspirations.

Alternative 3 (“Below-grade utility relocation”)

Description:

- Removal of hydro poles with below grade relocation of existing hydro cables along with the boulevard improvements.

Total Municipal Cost:

- \$73,436,000

Assessment/Implications:

- Conversion of a vehicle-oriented corridor into a sustainable multi-modal corridor.
- Support to address space constraints to provide dedicated pedestrian and cycling infrastructure for a Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- Alignment with Urban Tree Canopy goals
- Refer to Attachment 3, Figure 6 that provides an illustration of this preferred alternative which encompasses a comprehensive redesign, involving the removal of hydro poles and the relocation of hydro cables below grade, in conjunction with boulevard upgrades. Despite its higher cost implications, this alternative commits to a complete transformation of the streetscape into a sustainable, multi-modal corridor that also aligns with Brampton’s urban tree canopy ambitions. It effectively eliminates previous spatial constraints, paves the way for robust pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and supports the evolution of a transit-oriented community. This forward-thinking approach aims to elevate the goods movement corridor into a more sustainable and pedestrian-friendly environment, thus reinforcing Brampton’s strategic urban development goals.

Attachment 2, High Level Comparison Matrix, provides the cost estimate of each alternative along with its opportunities and constraints.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications from the adoption of the recommendation of this report. Conducting the feasibility study of Uptown Steeles Avenue Streetscape Improvements Plan will cost approximately \$50,000 and will be funded from the following projects:

Capital Project	Amount
207840 - 001 – <i>Urban Design Standards Manual</i>	\$10,000
247840 – 001 - <i>Urban Design Standards Manual</i>	\$40,000

The implementation of Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 may require municipal funding of \$52.3 million and \$73.4 million, respectively. These figures represent the estimated costs for each option based on the preliminary analysis. To ensure that these funding requirements align with the City’s financial capacity, a detailed funding strategy will be developed as part of the recommended feasibility study.

The funding strategy will be presented to Council for consideration and will provide an in-depth assessment of the financial impacts to the City. It will also require prioritization of these alternatives in relation to other ongoing and upcoming City projects to ensure that financial resources are allocated efficiently and effectively. This strategy will help guide decision-making on how to best fund the proposed alternatives while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Note, Steeles Avenue is currently under the jurisdiction of the Region of Peel and would need to be transferred to the City for the City to undertake this project. Ownership and maintenance of Steeles Avenue are to be transferred to the City of Brampton effective July 1, 2026, or as determined by the Province. This transfer will grant the City controlling interest in the future design of Steeles Avenue. Until such time, however, there remains a risk to the City were it to invest in a feasibility study without having ownership of the road.

Should additional funds be required for this initiative, staff will report back to Council through the budget process or a budget amendment.

Other Implications:

Postponing the study could result in the City missing opportunities for establishing a complete streetscape program, considering there are approximately 14,000 units identified under various types of development applications.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA:

The initiative aligns with the below noted City's strategic focus areas.

- **Health & Well-being:** The transformation of Steeles Avenue will promote the health, wellness, and safety of residents by creating a safer and more accessible environment.
- **Transit & Connectivity:** By providing comparable options to the private vehicle, the transit-oriented community will encourage residents to explore modes other than the private vehicles thus decreasing pollution. Increased active transportation usage will also promote physical and mental well-being by helping residents stay active and socially connected. Secondly, enhancing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and supporting public transit supports the goal of creating a safe, convenient, efficient, and sustainable transportation network.
- **Growing Urban Centres & Neighbourhoods:** The revitalization of Steeles Avenue is integral to the growth and vibrancy of Uptown Brampton, nurturing strong, connected communities.
- **Environmental Resilience & Sustainability:** By focusing on green development, urban forestry, and sustainability principles, the project contributes to Environmental Resilience & Sustainability. Moreover, it exemplifies service excellence, innovation, and effectiveness in urban planning and design, ensuring accountability and transparency.

CONCLUSION:

The Uptown Steeles Avenue Urban Streetscape Improvements Plan is a transformative project that aligns with Brampton’s vision of a sustainable, safe, and integrated transport system. This initiative reaffirms the City’s commitment to reducing reliance on vehicular traffic by fostering the development of pedestrian-friendly spaces and cycling infrastructure, thus reinforcing multi-modal transportation as the backbone of Uptown Brampton’s vibrant urban fabric.

Staff conducted preliminary research which included the consideration of opportunities and constraints of the three alternatives outlined within this report in the context of current and forecasted population. Staff is, through this report, seeking Council direction to advance the feasibility study of the recommended alternative.

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Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Supporting Policy Framework
- Attachment 2 – Comparison Matrix
- Attachment 3 – Reference Images