

# THE BLUE PRINT

## OFFICIAL PLAN REVIEW



# Phase 1 Survey Results

## Phase 1 Survey Feedback Summary

To gain community insight for Phase 1 of the Official Plan Review project, the Town conducted a public survey to understand key priorities and themes throughout the project phases. The public survey was available both online and through paper copies from April 4 to April 29, 2022. The survey asked questions about the Town's current vision statement, resident's vision for the Town's future, key themes, goals and objectives, opportunities and concerns, neighbourhood design, growth, the environment, transportation and agriculture. In total, the survey received **595 responses**.

Ten common themes emerged in the survey results:

- 1. Community character is paramount. It defines who we are, where we are, and what we want to become**
- 2. To preserve what has already been made to be great - environment, parks and trails, recreational opportunities, small town charm**
- 3. Manage growth and plan for the long term**
- 4. Ensure a mix of housing affordability and density**
- 5. Utilize existing amenities, servicing and infrastructure more efficiently**
- 6. Prioritize public spaces, connect neighbourhoods and strengthen active transportation networks**
- 7. Reduce land consumption, protect and enhance rural / agricultural lands**
- 8. Leverage existing tourism opportunities and attract complimentary development, industrial, rural and agricultural businesses**
- 9. Be bold in developing a strong Official Plan with clear and measurable goals**
- 10. Focus on finding a balance between height and density, and consider how height and density can fit into vacant development sites and within existing built up areas**

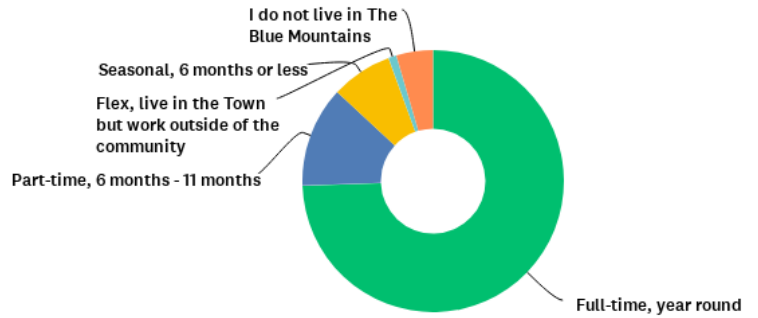
# Q1-6: Demographics

The first six questions of the survey were focused on understanding respondent demographics.

**Questions 1 and 2** asked about resident status. 95.5% of respondents were residents of the Town.

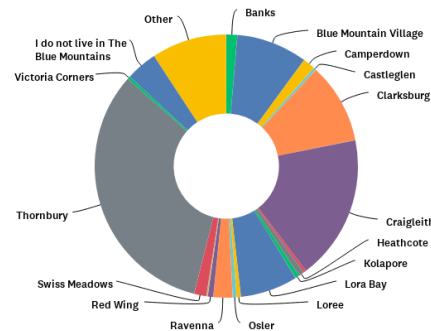
75% of respondents were full-time, year round residents and an additional 12% living in the Town between 6 to 11 months a year.

8.7% of respondents indicated they own a business in the Town of The Blue Mountains.



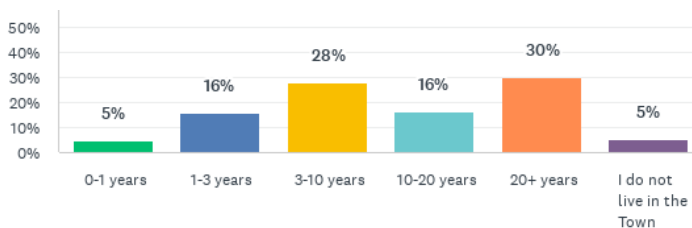
**Question 3** asked where in the Town the survey respondent lived.

The survey received strong response rates from throughout the Town representing settlement areas and rural communities.



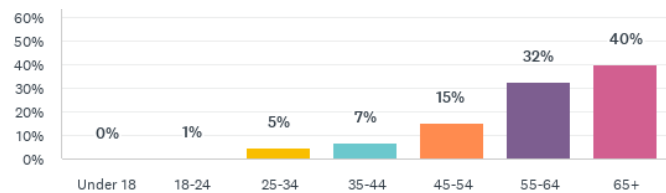
**Question 4** asked respondents how long they have lived in the Town.

The results were mixed, with the most common answers being 20+ years or 3-10 years.



**Questions 5 and 6** asked household size and age.

70% of respondents lived in a household of 1-2 people, a similar amount to those aged 55+ who completed the survey.

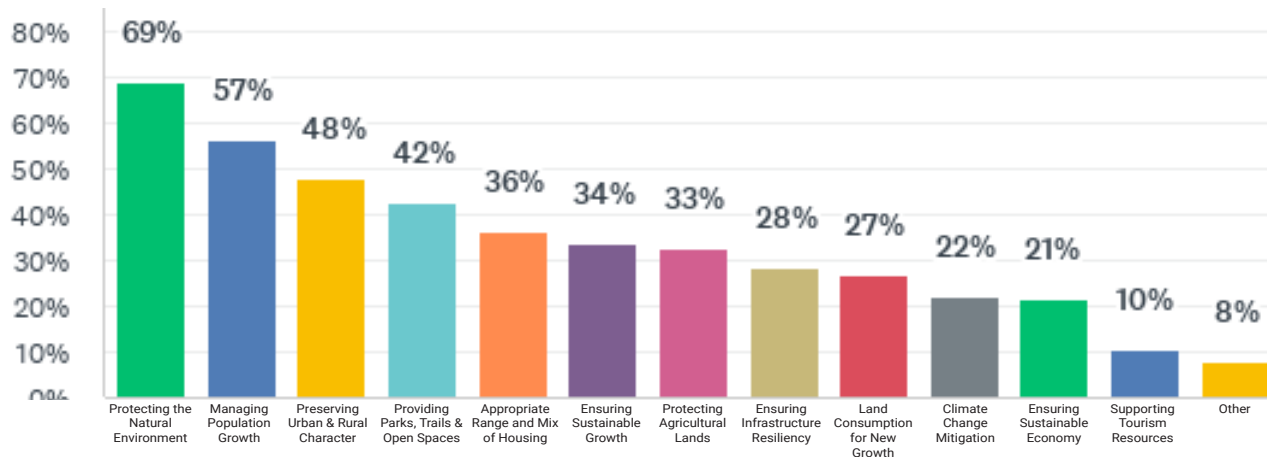




## Q9: Key Themes

**Question 9** asked respondents ‘What do you believe are the top 3 to 5 key themes currently impacting the Town of The Blue Mountains?’

Protecting the natural environment was the most popular response with 69% of respondents selecting it as an answer. Managing population growth, preserving the Town’s urban and rural character, providing adequate parks, trails and open spaces, and providing an appropriate range and mix of housing types rounded out the top 5 answers.



## Q10: 25 Years From Now...

**Question 10** asked respondents ‘If you were to pick up a newspaper 25 years from now, what would the newspaper headline say about the Town of The Blue Mountains?’

A majority of responses were positive (61%) and suggest that the Town of The Blue Mountains can be the top community/place to live in Ontario, and others recognize that it was planned and built out properly while respecting small town, character, environment, lifestyles.

Negative headlines (21%) noted common themes of over-development, destruction of the environment, growth occurring too quickly, congestion, cost of living and loss of green space.

Neutral headlines (17%) provided similar words and themes on the above topics, but did not indicate if those words/themes resulted in positive or negative change.

### Positive Headline Answers:

“A natural wonderland of mountain and lakeside activities: a community that takes care of the land, residents and welcomes visitors.”

“TBM: The Greenest, Kindest Town in Canada.”

“The little town that grew from its roots up.”

### Neutral Headline Answers:

“The most desirable and expensive Town to live in Ontario.”

“TBM still trying to build affordable housing.”

“The little town that stayed little.”

### Negative Headline Answers:

“Former all-season tourist destination unable to sustain local businesses due to housing affordability and lack of transportation.”

“Charming town has lost what brought people here.”

“Town destroyed by development.”

## Q11: Successful Towns

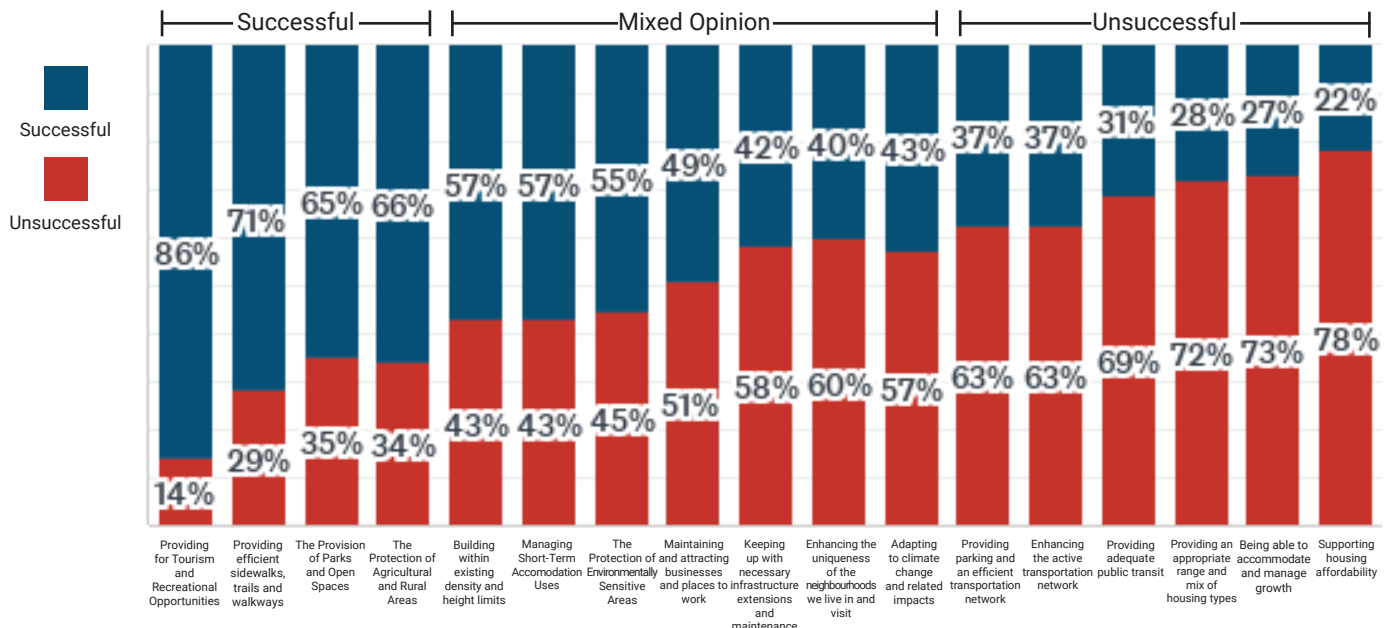
**Question 11** asked respondents ‘Considering other Towns/Cities/Rural Areas that you have seen or visited, what are the top three qualities you have seen in a successful town?’

Responses were sought after to understand what previous experiences or knowledge our respondents have on our own community, or other communities that they have visited to understand what qualities can make a great town. A word cloud was created to show the most common answers.



## Q12: Current Goals & Objectives

**Question 12** asked respondents to rate the success of accomplishing and responding to various key issues. Four were considered successful (>60% successful response rate), six were mixed opinion (40-60% successful response rate) and seven were unsuccessful (<40% successful response rate).



## Q13: Additional Key Goals & Objectives

**Question 13** asked respondents 'Do you have any other key issues that you would like to add to Question 12? Please list the issue, whether you consider them a low, medium, or high priority, and how successful the Town has been in the past.'

Listed below are a sample of responses received.

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**"Avoiding urban sprawl should be a top priority."**

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**"Ensure there is adequate commercially-zoned land for community orientated businesses... to serve adjacent residents."**

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**"High priority in the summer [is] access to the lake."**

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**"Define affordable housing."**

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**"The current Official Plan is a good plan if the Town upholds it."**

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**"The Town of The Blue Mountains is not pedestrian friendly."**

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**"Allowing higher buildings and more density in some areas could be done while keeping town character and allowing for less land use and more mixed housing opportunities."**

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**"Overdevelopment is the main issue."**

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**"Creation of more mixed-income housing options."**

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**"Protection of the escarpment from unsustainable development."**

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**"Ensuring growth patterns are fiscally sustainable."**

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**"Innovation in housing is a very high priority and a very poorly met one for the Town."**

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**"Policies should provide a community approach. Thornbury is very different than Craigeleith."**

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**"Protecting/expanding key natural assets such as watersheds, wetlands, woodlands and tree canopy."**

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**"Defining a commercial corridor, not mixing commercial with residential."**

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**"Old style parkettes for young children with swing sets, small slides. Children need an opportunity to be active outdoors very close to their neighbourhood."**

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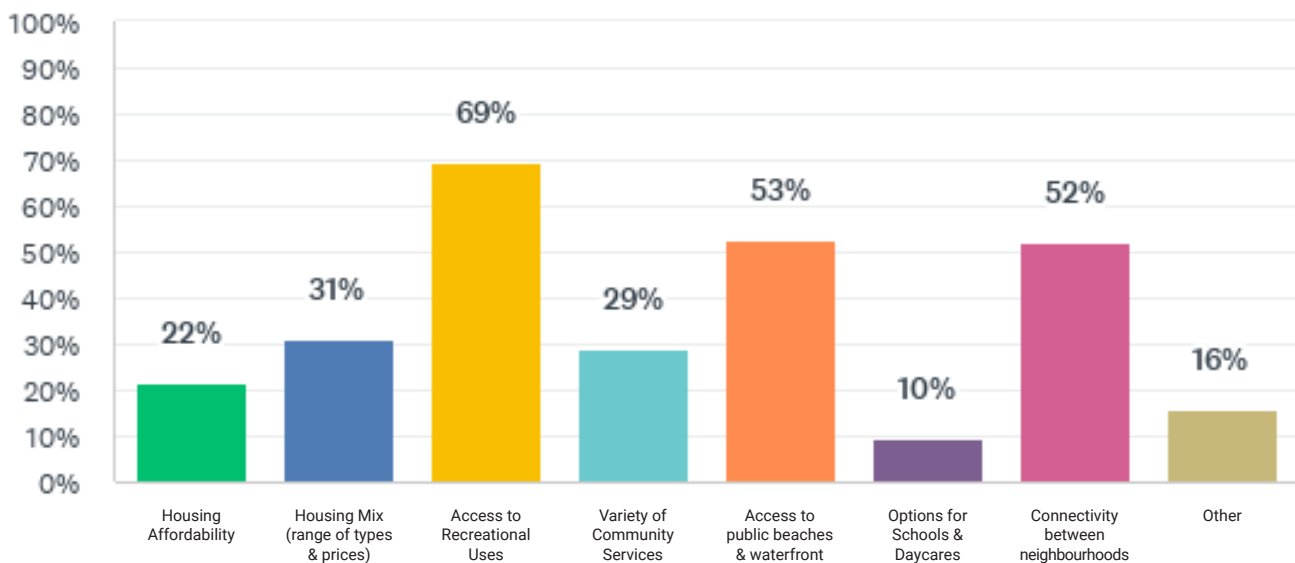
**"High priority items should include ensuring architectural standards are maintained and enhanced, our natural assets are respected and made accessible and we continue to focus on a work to live approach to development."**

## Q14: Neighbourhood Elements

**Question 14** asked 'For the area that you live in or visit, what are the top three most important neighbourhood elements to you?'

Access to recreational uses (parks, facilities, trails) was the most popular response with 69% of respondents choosing it as an answer. Access to public beaches and public waterfront and enhancing connectivity between neighbourhoods were the second and third most popular responses at 53% and 52% respectively.

This data shows that for where you live, being connected to an active lifestyle and local amenities is important. Having pride in your community is a key factor for respondents.



78 respondents chose 'Other', and listed elements such as traffic, parking, roads, safety and access to high speed internet as important for their neighbourhood. Other neighbourhood elements were identified as needing protection from noise, crime, and excessive tourism and short term accommodations.





## Q15: Community Growth

**Question 15** asked respondents 'Different areas of the community will experience growth over the next 25 years. Please describe what you would like that growth to look like in the areas listed below.



**Lora Bay**

Responses provided a mix of opinions from stopping growth to maintaining existing growth and density levels to increasing density, housing types, height and provide varying price points. All recognize the golf course as an important amenity to the community, and support that the public green space is a key feature. Responses indicated that the addition of neighbourhood commercial conveniences and cafes could benefit residents without having to leave the immediate area.



**Thornbury**

Respondents emphasized that the small town character of Thornbury must be maintained. Charm and heritage were commonly used to describe Thornbury. Opinions were mixed on height and density, but increasing housing options and providing more housing types was a recurring theme throughout the answers along with preserving green space. Responses indicated a strong support to grow the commercial core and ensure that complimentary design considerations be considered as part of a future Community Design Guideline Update.



**Clarksburg**

Respondents indicated that the lack of municipal water and sewer is a significant restraint to Clarksburg growing and redeveloping. Respondents also indicated a desire to maintain the unique features that distinguish the community. Surveys indicated a positive sentiment towards the commercial core built on the arts and theatre background and with further enhancements respondents believe cafes and restaurants could flourish. Municipal services and a master plan were identified as needs to guide growth and development.

## Q15: Community Growth Continued

**Question 15** asked respondents 'Different areas of the community will experience growth over the next 25 years. Please describe what you would like that growth to look like in the areas listed below.



**Camperdown**

Respondents indicated that Camperdown is highlighted by its prominent escarpment features, natural setting along Highway 26 and lack of commercial and non-residential uses. Consideration should be given to protect the Highway 26 corridor, maintain the rural character, and seek opportunities for waterfront access, trail connections and public parkland.



**Craigleith**

Craigleith received positive comments regarding its parks, trails and open spaces. Survey responses indicate that protection of the escarpment, Nipissing Ridge and other open space lands should continue. Respondents believe growth should be carefully managed with a desire for additional housing types beyond single detached dwellings. A commercial core that includes neighbourhood scale uses and businesses was indicated as a need as well as connectivity to ensure non-motorized access to public spaces and surrounding neighbourhoods anchored by the Georgian Trail.



**Rural Hamlets/Villages**

Respondents indicated the need to continue to protect and enhance. Hamlets and villages play an important role for the rural community and offer opportunities for minor growth and as local destinations for tourism and cycle traffic. Planning for innovation and long-term growth would be beneficial for the Hamlets and Villages.

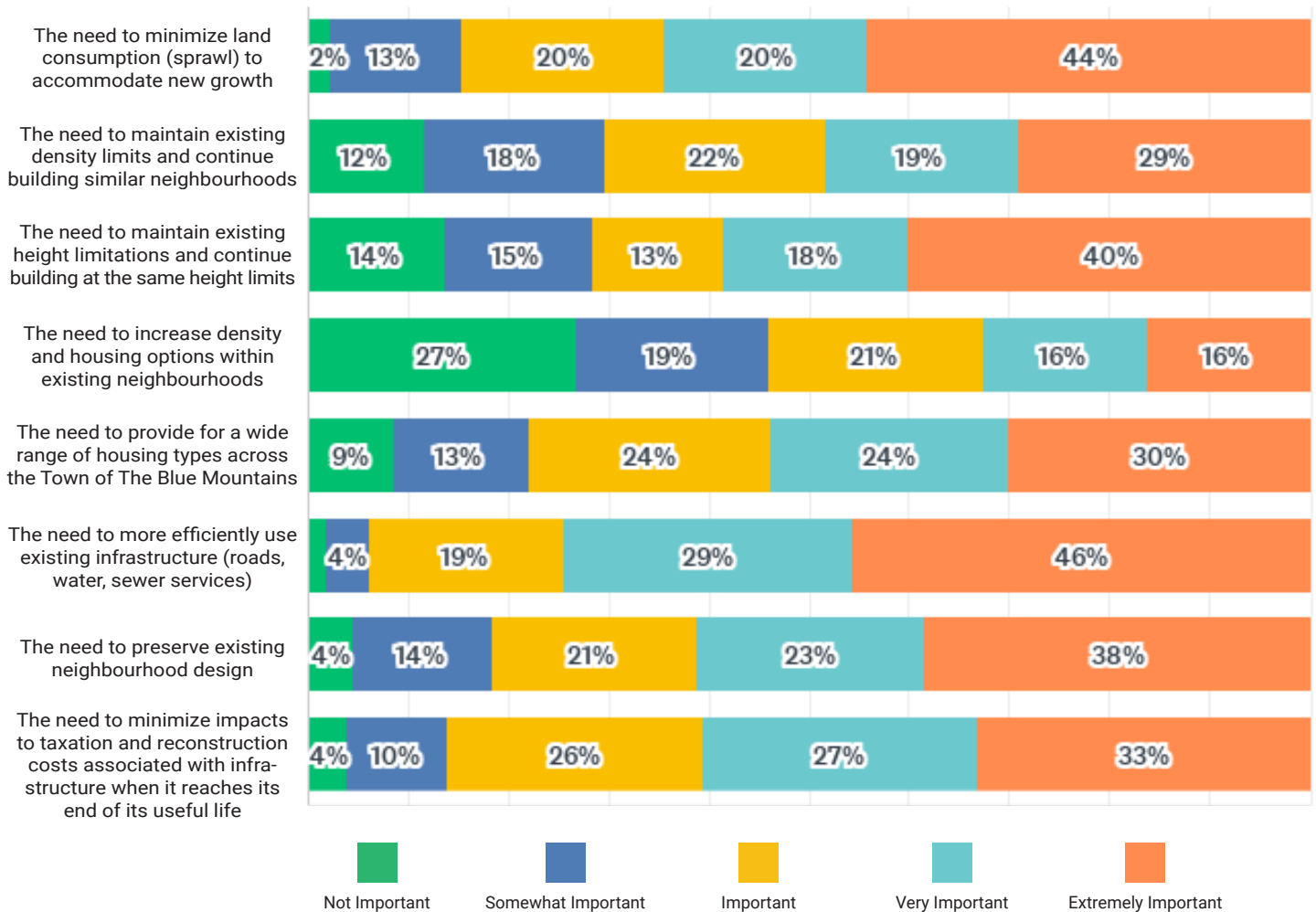


**Other Rural Areas**

Rural areas were identified as a significant asset within the Town. There is strong support among respondents to protect agricultural land, environmentally sensitive land and wooded areas. Respondents indicated that there should be very limited development opportunities, however consideration should be given to enhancing farm businesses and continuing to make public spaces and trails accessible.

## Q16: Neighbourhood Buildout

**Question 16** asked respondents 'The Official Plan Review will be considering various neighbourhood build-out scenarios based on future growth forecasts. Density, Height, Land Needs, Financial Impacts, and other factors will be considered. On a scale of not important to extremely important, please rank the following:



Extremely important was the most common response for all of the questions except for the need to increase density and housing options within existing neighbourhoods.

Questions regarding sustainability received the highest weighted averages, with respondents answering that it is most important to minimize sprawl, efficiently use existing infrastructure and minimize the impacts of taxation and reconstruction costs.

The need to increase density and housing options within existing neighbourhoods was ranked as the least important among respondents, but the second least important was the need to maintain existing density limits and continue building similar neighbourhoods that exist today. This indicates there is an appetite for increased density in the Town among respondents, but not in existing neighbourhoods.

## Q17: Neighbourhood Design

**Question 17** asked respondents 'Based on your answers to the previous question, do you have any further comments? What specific neighbourhood design considerations do you see as important for new development?'

Listed below are a sample of responses received.

**"Retain the small town, outdoor living, feel."**

**"Higher density, more efficient use of services."**

**"Very important to fully utilize and further develop existing neighbourhoods while preserving currently undeveloped, rural and agricultural areas."**

**"Maintain 3 stories limit."**

**"Need for more affordable housing even if it needs to go 5 stories to keep a smaller footprint."**

**"Increase Town density, build smaller houses, more low-rise apartments, make builders conform to net-zero standards."**

**"We now need to be more creative than ever before."**

**"Walkable Density."**

**"Housing for the people that are going to work for the businesses that will be needed to sustain the population."**

**"The area has a small-town feel. It's why people come here!"**

**"Town history needs to be preserved."**

**"The need to build into and expand active transportation in all our neighbourhoods."**

**"Fewer monster homes."**

**"We should not start with density and height goals but rather what character we want in the larger sense for our communities."**

**"Promote and encourage walking over driving. Walkable neighbourhoods with easy access to every necessity and green spaces."**

**"Large lots use a lot of land. Higher densities are needed."**

**"Green space and trails. Mixture of density and housing types. Encourage development of high-density areas."**

**"Building more densely on existing services benefits taxpayers greatly. Providing diverse housing options (and lots of it) close to amenities is more important than preserving all aspects of a neighbourhood character."**

**"Mixed housing types in a smaller community style."**

**"We must allow higher buildings to make our community more affordable."**

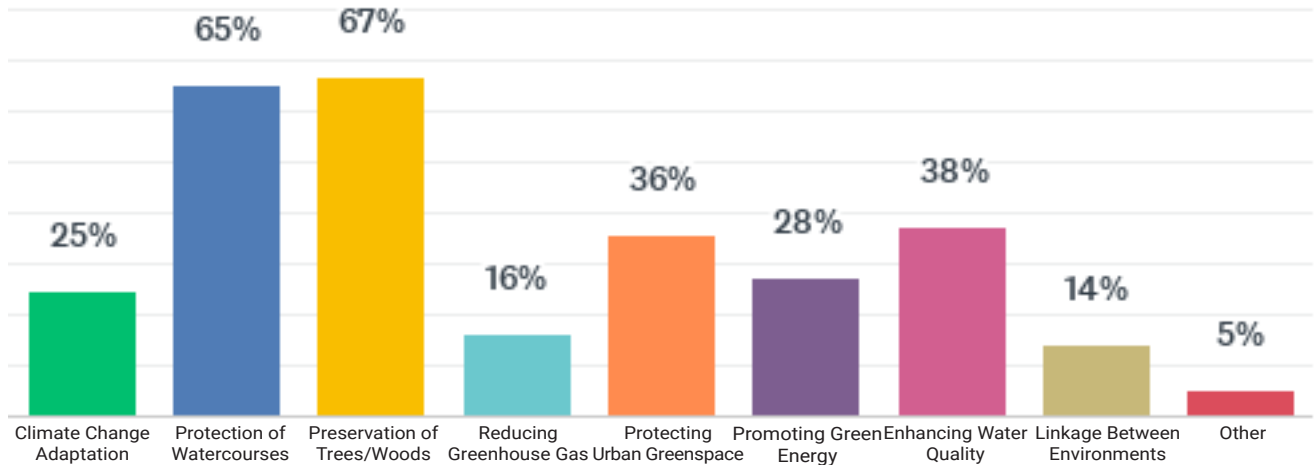
**"Single family homes can't be the only option anymore. My wife and I have very good jobs but we would not be able to buy a house here now. I don't know where our kids will live in the future."**

**"Intensification is possible and desirable, but only with good design and guarantees that community services and infrastructure are adequate and sustainable."**

## Q18: Environment

**Question 18** asked respondents ‘Considering the environment, what are the top three most important elements to you?’

Respondents ranked the preservation of existing trees/wooded areas, watercourses and natural heritage features as the most important. Protecting urban green space, promoting energy efficiency and green energy, and enhancing local water quality were also noted as important factors.



**Respondent Comments:**

“Protect vast expanse of natural features, wooded areas, escarpment.”

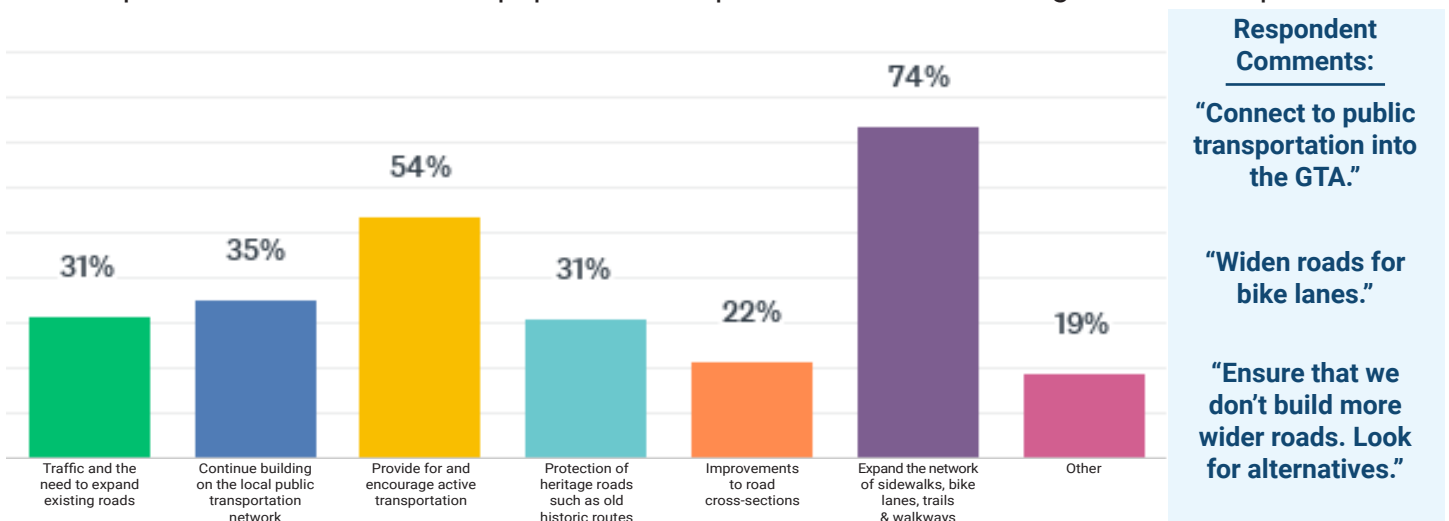
“Environmental protection for our night sky.”

“Connected natural areas for wildlife and trails.”

## Q19: Transportation

**Question 19** asked respondents ‘For the area you live in or visit, what do you see as the top three transportation priorities for the Town of The Blue Mountains?’

Respondents ranked expanding the network of sidewalks, bike lanes trails and other walkways as the most important. The second most popular was to provide for and encourage active transportation.



**Respondent Comments:**

“Connect to public transportation into the GTA.”

“Widen roads for bike lanes.”

“Ensure that we don’t build more wider roads. Look for alternatives.”

## Q20: Agriculture

**Question 20** asked respondents 'What ideas, concepts, or concerns do you have on how to support our agricultural areas?'

**Priorities:** Respondents indicated development and non-farm land uses need to be kept out of rural and agricultural lands. Farmland protection needs to be prioritized. On farm diversified uses should be encouraged.

**Support:** Survey respondents indicated the Town needs to support the agricultural community and agricultural tourism businesses. Farms and supported uses can become location destinations. Balance between rural tourism development and agricultural farm practices was indicated as a key goal.

**Protection:** Responses indicated that protection limits such as buffers between agricultural and non-agricultural uses should be considered. An increase in height/density limits in settlement areas to avoid sprawl in rural and agricultural areas was suggested. A common concern among respondents was how the Town will protect farmland from development as settlement areas reach full build out.

## Q21: Community Design

**Question 21** asked respondents 'Considering community design, are there specific examples or characteristics that exist, or need to be added when considering the design of new neighbourhoods and buildings? What ideas or examples can you share?' Listed below are common answers received.

- Integrated walkways and non-motorized transportation throughout and linking communities
- Include residential uses above commercial stores
- Housing should be planned to incorporate all income brackets in the same development
- Beautiful design
- Low density
- High density units - only 3+ stories tall
- Neighbourhood amenities (convenience, cafe)
- Mixture of housing types - not just single detached dwellings
- Building height/size/mass needs to be limited
- Increase the amount and quality of green space areas, and addition of trees
- Each settlement has their own unique character qualities. The uniqueness needs to be maintained
- The community is eclectic. Need to enable as wide an architectural format as possible
- We need to promote more medium density housing
- Stop allowing large homes on small lots
- Consider multi-generational development
- Narrower road cross-sections. Add low impact development to right of way
- Consider development options on large portions of unused residential lots
- Consider streetscape and neighbourhood cohesion, characteristics to flow from one neighbourhood to another
- Walkable communities
- Consider design reviews/approvals prior to construction

## Q22: Concerns

**Question 22** asked respondents 'What concerns you most about the future of the Town of The Blue Mountains?' Responses generally fit into three themes. The economy, development and the environment.

The Economy	Development	The Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable housing.</li> <li>Who will be able to afford to live in the Town and work in the local tourism and service sector?</li> <li>Increased Taxes</li> <li>Managing Tax Dollars</li> <li>Well paying jobs &amp; industry to attract young workers</li> <li>High food &amp; water costs</li> <li>Retirement Community vs. Balanced Community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growing too fast</li> <li>Infrastructure won't keep up</li> <li>Overdevelopment</li> <li>Excessive Urbanization</li> <li>Overcrowding</li> <li>Sprawl</li> <li>Facilities to support growth (schools, recreation facilities, etc)</li> <li>Lack of range of housing types</li> <li>Too much density</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased Traffic/Congestion</li> <li>Loss of rural / agricultural lands</li> <li>Loss of environmentally significant lands</li> <li>Protecting trees, forests, watercourse, animal habitats</li> <li>Lack of greenspace in urban environments</li> </ul>

## Q23: Opportunities

**Question 23** asked respondents 'What opportunities do you see for the Town of The Blue Mountains?'

Respondents indicated 'going green', tourism, and local heritage as key opportunities.

Going Green	Tourism	Local Heritage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developments include cycling lanes and trail networks</li> <li>Capitalize on outdoor living with active population</li> <li>Agritourism, orchards, wineries</li> <li>Setting an example for sustainability</li> <li>Leading-edge green community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourism was listed in more than 60% of responses</li> <li>World class destination</li> <li>Natural abundance of features</li> <li>Public access to waterfront &amp; scenic views</li> <li>Unique community</li> <li>Maintain &amp; enhance lifestyle &amp; cultural opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Become a model Ontario community</li> <li>Plan for a Town, not for a City</li> <li>Take advantage of rich and unique history</li> <li>Clarksburg servicing &amp; growth potential</li> <li>Ensure villages &amp; hamlets retain their heritage, charm and culture</li> <li>Preserve the past and bring elements into the future</li> </ul>

## Q24: Final Thoughts

**Question 24** asked respondents 'Do you have any additional thoughts, comments or concerns you wish to share?'

Answers indicated that respondents are generally optimistic about the Town and its current trajectory. Positive words such as 'love', 'hope', 'beautiful' and 'opportunity' were commonly used by respondents in their answers. Growth and overdevelopment remains the predominant concern in the community. Respondents would like growth to be controlled and well thought out for the long-term in order for the Town to retain its character and charm.

Respondents cite natural beauty as a reason for living in or moving to the community and green space must be protected. Development of rural and agricultural lands should be avoided and infrastructure needs to keep pace with growth to help sustain a healthy community.

Sustainability and being on the forefront of climate change mitigation and adaptation frequently appeared in comments and concerns. Respondents see enormous potential in getting ahead of the curve and protecting the natural features that make the Town a world class destination.

The Town would like to thank all those who completed the survey. All responses have been reviewed and will be instrumental in the development stages of the Official Plan Review project. Stay connected by subscribing to the notification list on the project website and by using the contact information below.



### Official Plan Review Contact Information



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