



Staff Report

Planning & Development Services – Planning Division

Report To: COW-Operations_Planning_and_Development_Services
Meeting Date: January 16, 2024
Report Number: PDS.24.014
Title: Official Plan Review Update: Summary of Public Engagement Sessions and Project Next Steps
Prepared by: Rachael Magill, Communications Coordinator and
Shawn Postma, Manager of Community Planning

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report PDS.24.014, entitled “Official Plan Review Update: Public Engagement Sessions and Next Steps” for information purposes;

B. Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide a status update on the Official Plan 5 Year Review including a summary of the completed Public Engagement Sessions and project next steps.

C. Background

A series of six public workshops were held over November and December. Public engagement was initially scheduled for Summer 2023. However, at the request of Council the workshops were restructured and moved to Fall 2023 to avoid summer vacations and maximize public participation.

Two types of workshops were held: large-format sessions and drop-in sessions. All workshops were promoted through a press release, social media posts, and articles in the Town e-newsletter and business e-newsletter. Videos of the sessions and the option to submit further comments and feedback are available on the project webpage for those unable to attend.

The large format meetings were facilitated by Mayor Matrosovs, with the first 45 minutes providing a presentation/overview of the Background Papers. The following hour included a large group Question and Answer period. The final hour included breakout tables focused on specific topics with small group or individual discussions. The final large format session was facilitated by PDS Chair / Councillor Hope, and saw a change where the breakout tables were completed after the presentation and the large group Q&A session at the end.

The presentation and Q&A portions were conducted both in-person and virtually via Microsoft Teams. Recordings from the meetings are available for viewing on the project website at www.tbmbblueprint.ca. The breakout table sessions were in person only and not recorded.

Registration was required for large-format sessions with a total of 98 registrations across all three sessions.

In between the large format meetings, the Town hosted three drop-in sessions throughout the municipality that provided a more informal opportunity for residents to attend and discuss all Official Plan topics with Town staff and project consultants from SGL Planning & Design Inc. Presentation boards were also available to aid discussion.

D. Analysis

What We Heard!

Summary of Feedback Received - Official Plan Review Phase 2 Large-Format Sessions

#1 - Environment, Climate Change, Agriculture & Parks Workshop Saturday, November 4, 9:30am - 12:00pm

Background Papers considered: Environment and Climate Change, Agriculture and Rural Lands, Parks and Open Space, Source Water Protection, Cannabis Facilities

Summary of Feedback:

- Environment and Climate Change was one of the top discussed topics of the day, with strong support for committing to a sustainable future for the Town. Climate change adaptation and mitigation is not just a policy section of the Plan, concepts and direction shall be provided throughout all sections of the Plan.
- Open spaces throughout the Town are a significant asset to the Town. Open Spaces should be connected with natural linkages, trails and active transportation.
- Rural areas require special attention for long-term agricultural protection. Severances should be minimized. Trails and active transportation routes should connect our urban and rural communities as well as rural open space and parks.
- Agri-tourism and similar uses are underutilized. The Plan should consider flexibility to support enhanced uses in the agricultural and rural areas.
- The Plan needs to focus on the long-term future and how this community will be passed down from generation to generation. We need to find ways to gather an understanding of all generational needs and issues.
- The protection and enhancement of trees must be a priority.
- The future of Castle Glen needs to be reconsidered based on more current knowledge and understanding of the environmental and climate change items.
- Community infrastructure for water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater must be resilient, available, and planned to keep up with development.

Summary of Questions:

- The Town has been disproportionately accommodating new growth in the County. How does the Town feel about the overall growth rate in the community?
- The Town has previously used 'Bonusing' under the Planning Act as a tool to allow for higher densities in developments in exchange for some form of public benefit. Can the Town re-introduce bonusing into development projects?
- Craigleith has a planned commercial area and needs commercial uses to support complete communities. How will this be addressed?

**#2 - Infrastructure, Transportation, Commercial & Indigenous Engagement Workshop
Thursday, November 16, 2:00 - 4:30pm**

Background Papers considered: Infrastructure and Servicing, Transit and Transportation, Commercial Employment Lands, Indigenous Engagement, Community Planning Permit System

Summary of Feedback:

- The Plan must work with other Town documents (i.e. the Tree By-law) to dictate what will happen with existing and new trees.
- Significant discussion occurred around the potential of a Highway 26 Bypass. A desire to ensure we encourage a bypass as a long-term goal was expressed alongside concern for the bottleneck happening with traffic through Thornbury.
- The development of Craigleith as a complete community is a priority, particularly with the projected growth over the next few years. Schools, offices, social services etc. should follow.
- Concern was expressed over a lack of services in industrial development land that is shovel-ready.
- There was a suggestion of a new zoning designation to acknowledge Indigenous areas preserved from development.
- Density standards should be applied to mixed-use development in the downtown designation in the Plan.
- Stormwater Management filtering in Craigleith should be considered to address issues with erosion and runoff.
- Appropriate uses for the large commercial corridor in the west end of Thornbury should be considered.
- It was suggested that if new commercial and industrial applications have reduced parking, it could also be applied to existing downtown, mixed-used and residential areas.

Summary of Questions:

- Considering the high cost of construction, is there a system that can rank or change the order in which development is approved according to where affordable infrastructure exists or can be built? The CPPS may be a potential vehicle to match development with what the Town can afford to do. Though we may not be able to prevent development, at the very least, we can make sure it is as efficient as possible and allows for future connections (i.e. infrastructure across the entire frontage).

#3 - Growth, Density, Housing, Building Height, Character and Community Design

Thursday, November 30, 2:00 – 5:00pm

Background Papers considered: Housing Needs Assessment, Building Height, Character and Community Design Guidelines

Summary of Feedback:

- The possibility of ensuring parking lots are permeable was suggested as a climate-friendly option.
- Though variety and diversity in housing are needed, the Plan should consider neighbours and nature.
- A focus on active transportation in Craighleith is necessary, including trail connectivity.
- The continuity of trail maintenance in all four seasons would ensure community connection.
- There is an interest in mechanisms that allow the Town to enforce conformity to character with developers.
- Concern about the cost of infrastructure was expressed, along with a desire to focus on planning for needed infrastructure as much as possible.
- It was suggested that intensification criteria be developed, rather than goals and objectives. This would ensure that it is not a debate.
- Intensification should be defined as an alternative to sprawl. It is essential to strengthen control of the sprawl of development to protect our natural assets.

Summary of Questions:

- Concern was expressed around the intensification in Craighleith. While there are natural assets, there is no grocery store, school, library, park, etc. How can a distinct community feel be created there, as it has been in Thornbury and Clarksburg? How can a sense of connectedness be created (i.e. via trails) to neighbouring communities?
- How can we achieve appropriate growth opportunities and maintain Thornbury's low-rise character? The importance of housing diversity and integrated transportation will be critical. Consideration of vegetation buffers, setbacks, permeability, and the possibility of growing up in certain areas (i.e., along the Highway vs. in Thornbury) was suggested.
- It is noted that most new and existing homes are single-family homes. Can density standards be introduced to undeveloped land to create more homes with multiple units to aid affordability? Will we be able to achieve greater attainable housing if we go higher? The “why” must be a part of the conversation to ensure growth meets needs.

Project Next Steps

The Official Plan 5-Year Review is now moving into the policy writing stage. This stage of the project will consider all information collected through the Survey, Background Papers, Public Engagement Sessions, and Comments Received so far to date. New policies will be developed and incorporated into the existing Official Plan through a series of modifications. As seen in

Phase 1, the modifications will be included in Recommendations Summary Matrix that will provide an overview of the proposed changes and rationale behind those changes, plus a Track Changes and Clean Version of the updated Official Plan Document to provide a final version of the updated Official Plan.

An opportunity is available to each Council member to meet one-on-one directly with SGL Planning who are the lead consultant on the Official Plan Review project. These meetings provide a 1-hour opportunity for Council to discuss community vision, policy direction, or other items related to the Official Plan Review. These individual meetings can be kept confidential to allow Councillors to speak freely on the Project. One-on-one meetings with Council members also occurred prior to finalizing the Terms of Reference for the project back in September 2021 and proved beneficial to focus on those items that Council raised as important issues. Should Council be interested, meetings can be scheduled before the end of January to facilitate these discussions.

The Project Team anticipates that the policy updates will be completed by late winter / early spring, and will be immediately followed up with a Public Open House and Public Meeting to share the new policy direction with the general public and Council. Formal comments on the Draft Policies are requested at the Public Meeting so that those comments can be shared with Council to ensure they are comprehensively considered before final revisions are made to the document. From there a Final Draft will be prepared with a recommendation report to Council for decision.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

Environmental policies will be updated and enhanced to current Provincial Policy, Provincial Plans, and the County of Grey Official Plan. Consultation is inclusive of the Grey Sauble and Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authorities. More detailed environmental impacts will be considered in future staff reports.

G. Financial Impacts

The current upset fee limit for the project is \$235,000 which includes contingency fees. The enhanced public engagement plan proceeded with an estimated additional \$23,000 in expenses related to Phase 2. The project contingency fee will be utilized to cover these costs with a new contingency total of approximately \$13,000 remaining. The project is anticipated to remain within upset limits as established at the beginning of the project.

H. In Consultation With

Rachael Magill, Communications Coordinator, Planning & Development Services
Adam Smith, Director of Planning and Development Services

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has been subject to significant public engagement and remains to be subject to a future Public Open House and Public Meeting to be scheduled in the Spring of 2024. Notice will be provided once a date for both events are determined. Any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Shawn Postma, planning@thebluemountains.ca

J. Attached

NIL

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Postma
Manager of Community Planning

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

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Attachments:	
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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

No Signature - Task assigned to Shawn Postma was completed by delegate Adam Smith

Shawn Postma - Jan 4, 2024 - 4:03 PM

Adam Smith - Jan 4, 2024 - 4:06 PM