



Staff Report

Planning & Building Services – Planning Division

Report To: COW - Operations, Planning and Building Services
Meeting Date: February 4, 2025
Report Number: PBS.25.014
Title: Follow-Up Report re: FAF.24.089 and Grey County Housing Report
Prepared by: Adam Smith, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report PBS.25.014 entitled “Follow-Up Report re: FAF.24.089 and Grey County Housing Report”;

AND THAT Council approve the 2025 – 2026 Action Plan to support affordable and attainable housing projects in community.

B. Overview

This report serves as follow-up to the Council direction confirmed at the January 27th Council meeting respecting [PBS.25.006](#), entitled “Follow-up Report Re FAF.24.089 and Grey County Housing Report PDR-CW-57-24”. The Action Plan provided within this report has been prepared based on a number of sources. This includes a review of the materials submitted by the Blue Mountains Ratepayers Association, current initiatives underway and future priorities identified through the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment and feedback received by proponents exploring opportunities for affordable housing projects.

C. Background

At the January 27th Council meeting, Council passed the following resolution:

“THAT Council receive for information Staff Report PBS.25.006, entitled “Follow-up Report Re FAF.24.089 and Grey County Housing Report PDR-CW-57-24”;

In the recent Residential Satisfaction Survey Fall 2024, the cost of living in general, housing affordability and housing attainability was the most frequently mentioned issue;

AND THAT Council direct staff to provide a staff report back to Council to the February 4, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting, outlining the resources needed to navigate the complexities required to deliver affordable housing underlined by an action plan with measurable goals as

outlined in the January 13, 2025 deputation by Jim Torrance, Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association (BMRA) Re: The Blue Mountains Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing.”

The BMRA Housing Strategy Working Group emphasized the affordability challenges facing the municipality and offered several recommendations to address the gaps identified via its membership and the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment.

In response, Town staff have prepared an Action Plan that is responsive to many of the recommendations put forward and offers commentary on those items not captured within the Plan.

D. Analysis

The Action Plan below outlines various actions either underway, planned or envisioned to expand the affordable and attainable options in the Town. Not only is it informed by input from community groups such as the BMRA but also by the Town’s Organizational Review and the plans formulated and initiated by the Town of Collingwood and the County of Grey. Fortunately, staff believe many of the priorities can be pursued in the absence of additional budget. Measuring success is proposed to be a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. For example, actions under the Communications category can be measured on the basis of input received via the PBS Customer Service Survey. Whereas actions under Financial Incentives and Policy are designed to collectively reach the 30% target of new housing being affordable in nature.

Action	Cost	Desired Outcomes	Timeline
Policy			
Official Plan Review	\$410,000*	Collectively new policies requiring proponents to produce affordable housing reports, increased density provisions, and height subject to controls are intended to have 30% of new housing be affordable in nature. <i>Aligns with BMRA recommendation #4</i>	2025
Water and Sewage Allocation By-law	\$27,000*	Subject to on-going review, the by-law is designed to employ a strategic approach to water and wastewater allocation that prioritizes affordable housing projects. <i>Aligns with BMRA recommendation #3</i>	2025
Community Planning Permit System	\$50,000	CPPS By-law is intended to replace the Town’s Zoning By-law and provides additional flexibility in expanding	2025/26

		affordability in areas subject to the by-law. <i>Aligns with BMRA recommendation #5</i>	
Parkland Dedication By-law Review	Staff Time	Previously reviewed in 2003, the by-law needs to be amended in light of new legislation. However, staff also believe there is an opportunity to have an affordable lens to parkland requirements.	2025
Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan	\$200,000	This strategic document will set growth-related goals, objectives, and priorities for municipal infrastructure related to water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, stormwater management and transportation management. It has the potential to identify priority capital projects with a lens to sustainable development and community priorities such as attainable and affordable housing.	2026
Financial Incentives			
Community Improvement Plan Review	\$100,000	The CIP review will reflect upon feedback received on the programs during the two years of implementation and seek to adjust programming to meet the current economic climate impacting affordability. The goal is to increase uptake beyond the one submission received during the two-year implementation period. <i>Aligns with BMRA recommendation #6</i>	2025
Municipal Capital Facilities By-law	\$5,000	The goal of this project is to create a framework governing municipal capital facility agreements including but not limited to entrenching the definition of affordable housing and forms of relief that can be offered via agreements.	2025

Staffing			
Growth Management Specialist	\$128,298	Identified through the Town's Organizational Review, the desired outcome of this staff position is to facilitate practices that assist in streamlining and incentivizing affordable housing projects in the community. <i>Aligns with BMRA recommendation #1</i>	2026
Communications			
Creation of a Dedicated Webpage to Affordable Housing in the Town of The Blue Mountains	Staff time	Staff would seek to consolidate resources designed to support affordable/attainable housing projects through a singular webpage including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARU Building Permits and Approvals Guide; • Housing Within Reach CIP • Relevant policies in both the Official Plan and Zoning By-law • Highlighting success stories 	2025
Develop additional resources to guide proponents seeking to pursue affordable and attainable projects.	Staff time	Complementary to the webpage are the development of other guides in a manner similar to the ARU Building Permits and Approvals Guide which may include incentives available across agencies and levels of government for affordable housing projects.	2026
Investigate the creation of roundtables with developers and regional municipalities to	Staff time	Closing the gap on affordable housing requires the involvement of the private sector and the development of solutions sensitive to their limitations. Scheduling quarterly and/or biannual roundtables with industry representatives can build	2025/26

collaborate on joint solutions.		relationships and foster innovative partnerships. The same perspective holds true with regional municipalities such as the County of Grey and member municipalities as well as the County of Simcoe. <i>Aligns with BMRA recommendation #9</i>	
Advocacy			
Expand the use of inclusionary zoning subject to certain conditions.	Staff/Council Time	Currently, the use of inclusionary zoning under the Planning Act is restrictive for small, rural municipalities. Opportunities exist to broaden the authority in return for relief from policies that may impact financial viability.	2025
Explore opportunities in the Development Charges Act to support attainable projects while still making municipalities whole.	Staff/Council Time	Previously, there has been provincial efforts to provide exemptions under the Development Charges Act for attainable housing projects but were revisited given the projected impacts on the fiscal sustainability of municipalities. There may be the ability to pursue avenues with the Province to support these projects in return for alternative funding sources for growth-related infrastructure.	2025
Review the potential for a provincial and/or regional top-up program for housing-based CIPs.	Staff/Council Time	The Town has benefited from funding through Grey County for the Town's CIP program. Based on limitations to the funding envelope under the Housing Within Reach CIP, advocating for a province-wide fund to support efforts such as DC relief could increase uptake and maximize impact.	2025

Development Review			
Partnering with non-profits to offer opportunities for developers to offer diverse housing options.	Staff Time	Staff will be seeking to formalize relationships with non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity to support market-based developments in meeting the Town's 30% affordable housing target. This could be through the provision of land/units for the purpose of management or ownership by groups that could secure affordability over the long-term.	2025
Prioritize efficient decision-making in relation to affordable and attainable housing projects	Council Time	Approvals for Planning Act applications within statutory timelines and subject to minimal change (ie. Conditions to approval, lot fabric adjustment etc..) minimize risk on behalf of proponents seeking to develop affordable/attainable projects particularly when pro-formas are increasingly tightened due to carrying costs for land, fees and development charges and economic conditions.	2025/26
Embedding a community benefit lens to the application of Engineering Standards.	Staff Time	The Town's Engineering Standards are designed to ensure that development-related infrastructure and municipal capital projects are designed in a manner that offer the best value to the Town in terms of lifecycle and maintenance. The deviation process for the Standards could be further modified to ensure that proposals seeking to deviate offer community benefit such as meeting Town affordability criteria.	2026
Institutionalize MOUs such as with MacPherson Builders to leverage municipal lands and other assets to secure affordable	Staff Time	Prioritizing the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MacPherson Builders and succeeding in delivering on proposed attainable units can be a model to be employed elsewhere	2025/26

and attainable housing projects		where there is the opportunity leverage municipal lands and/or other assets.	
Standardizing Draft Plan Conditions	Staff Time	The creation of a standard, simplified template to conditions governing subdivision files can reduce uncertainty in development review and streamline clearances making the contemplation of affordable/attainable projects more attractive with reduced timelines.	2026

****Projects that have previously received budget approval.***

Through the table above, staff have sought to demonstrate alignment with BMRA recommendations where possible. Commentary is offered below on actions not identified within the Action Plan table.

#2 Establish a strategic action plan with measurable goals for purpose-built rentals, both at market rate and attainable rates.

This staff report alongside the 30% affordable housing goal within the Town's Official Plan serves to satisfy the intent of the recommendation.

#7 Prepare an inventory of under utilized Town-owned lands which could be made available on a long term leased basis for affordable housing.

The Town has limited lands available at the appropriate size and suitability to support attainable and affordable housing projects.

#8 Explore revenue tools which could fund affordable housing.

Revenues from the sale of land are currently being directed toward the CIP program. Revenue from the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) could potentially be used towards supporting affordable housing projects given the linkage to sustaining the tourism industry. At this time, it is premature to assume MAT revenues and assign to the affordable housing portfolio.

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

N/A

G. Financial Impacts

Exclusive of actions that have been subject to previous budget approval and/or require staff resourcing, the initiatives noted within the action plan carry a cost of \$478,000 between 2025 and 2026. A combination of funding sources including the taxy levy, Development Charges and user fees are anticipated.

H. In Consultation With

Tim Hendry, Director of Strategic Initiatives

Tim Murawsky, Manager of Building Services/Acting Director of Planning and Building Services

Shawn Postma, Manager of Community Planning

Brian Worsley, Manager of Development Engineering

Lauren Potter, Planning and Building Services Communications Coordinator

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Adam Smith, directorplanningdevelopment@thebluemountains.ca

J. Attached

1. B-6-1-Jim-Torrance-BMRA-re-TBM-Housing-Strategy-Presentation

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Smith
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:
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Blue Mountain Ratepayers' Association (BMRA)

TBM Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing

Presentation to Committee of the Whole

January 14, 2025

Acknowledging our Town's Housing Problem

- TBM's last two Councils have expressed a commitment to addressing our housing challenges:
 - Dramatically skewed housing mix
 - Lack of Affordable Housing (AH) and Market Rental Units
 - Absence of community clarity and acceptance of AH needs
 - No sense of an integrated TBM Growth Strategy
- *Clear recognition of problem – Housing Emergency Declaration*
- A Committee of Council is being formed to focus on Housing
 - Will this entity effectively fill the void left by the dissolution of the Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation?

Current Housing Market and Demographics

- The Town's own Housing Needs Assessment Study clearly identified our significant challenges:
 - Housing mix is dramatically skewed with single detached homes at 80%
 - Just 13% of residents rent, compared with 31% for the Province
 - Income levels – there is a large proportion of high-income households, but 50% of households have incomes below \$100K
- And there has been little discernible progress over the past 6 years

Gaps identified in the Housing Needs Assessment

The Housing Needs Assessment identified the following gaps:

- Affordable housing
 - Purpose-built rental housing
 - Smaller housing
 - Seniors housing and long-term care
 - Workforce housing
- Comment from the TBM Chamber of Commerce – “Our members continue to consistently report significant challenges in the areas of talent acquisition and retention as a result of the limited housing options available to prospective employees within the Town... the vast majority of members support municipally led initiatives to incentivize development of affordable housing in the Town”

Housing Strategy Working Group

Formed in 2024, the Housing Strategy Working Group includes:

- Blue Mountains Ratepayers' Association
- Institute of Southern Georgian Bay
- The Blue Mountains Chamber of Commerce
- Members of the housing development community

Why the Working Group was formed

- To provide input and recommendations to help realize progress on affordable as well as market rental housing
- **What we want to share today:**

Our summary of housing opportunities and approaches

Housing Strategy Working Group – Input to Council

- The Housing Strategy Working Group develop a series of recommendations:
 1. **Dedicate a portion of a senior staff position as an Affordable Housing point person – could this responsibility be part of the proposed Growth Management Specialist?**
 - Expedite AH Planning and Building Permit approvals
 - Advocate for Public interest in Affordable Housing
 - Connect and promote interested parties in AH development
 - Track progress and results
 2. **Establish a strategic action plan with measurable goals for purpose-built rentals, both at market rate and attainable rates.**
 3. **Implement a Service Allocation Bylaw that prioritizes AH developments**

Housing Strategy Working Group – Input to Council

- 4. Embed housing affordability in the updated Official Plan and make any necessary changes to the Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw.**
- 5. Make zoning changes as necessary to implement a Community Planning Permit system, will provides access to tools such as inclusionary zoning.**
- 6. Review the Community Improvement Program with local stakeholders to determine how it can best incentivize affordable housing.**
- 7. Prepare an inventory of under utilized Town-owned lands which could be made available on a long term leased basis for affordable housing.**

Housing Strategy Working Group – Input to Council

8. Explore revenue tools which could fund affordable housing, such as:

- Portion of Municipal Accommodation Tax proceeds
- Sale of surplus Municipal properties unsuited to residential development
- Cash or land donated to Town for tax receipts
- Grey County contributions
- Additional lands for the construction of large homes
- Community bonds guaranteed by the Town

9. Engage with other Municipalities in Southern Georgian Bay to work collaboratively towards realizing affordable housing objectives

Thank you

- On behalf of all the the members of the Housing Strategy Working Group, thank you for this opportunity to share our views.
- We believe that it is time for the Town of the Blue Mountains to take definitive steps to address the declared housing emergency, and work towards meeting our affordable housing needs