



# Staff Report

## Planning & Building Services – Planning Division

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**Report To:** COW - Operations, Planning and Building Services  
**Meeting Date:** April 29, 2025  
**Report Number:** PBS.25.005  
**Title:** Official Plan Follow-Up Report to the February 4th COW Discussion  
**Prepared by:** David Riley, SGL Planning & Design Inc.  
Shawn Postma, Manager of Community Planning

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### A. Recommendations

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THAT Council receive Staff Report PDS.25.005, entitled “Official Plan Follow-Up Report to the February 4th COW Discussion”;

THAT with regards to Affordable Housing; Council directs staff to make the necessary edits to the Official Plan in accordance with Option 1C;

THAT with regards to Building Height; Council directs staff to make the necessary edits to the Official Plan in accordance with Option 2D;

THAT with regards to Density for the Residential Recreational Area; Council directs staff to make the necessary edits to the Official Plan in accordance with Option 3D;

THAT with regards to Parkland Dedication; Council directs staff to make the necessary edits to the Official Plan in accordance with Option 4B;

THAT with regards to Georgian Trail Crossings and Access; Council directs staff to make the necessary edits to the Official Plan in accordance with Option 5B;

THAT with regards to Tree Protection; Council directs staff to make the necessary edits to the Official Plan in accordance with Option 6A;

AND THAT Council direct staff to bring the final Draft Version of the Official Plan 5 Year Review to the May 12, 2025 Council meeting for final adoption.

### B. Overview

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This report is a follow up to two previous Staff Reports. [Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review PDS.24.141](#) presented to Committee on December 10, 2024 and [Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review PDS.25.004](#) presented to Committee on

February 4, 2025. Following thorough discussion, the Committee voted to receive the reports but did not proceed to adopt the final Official Plan draft. Instead, on February 18, Council passed the following two resolutions requesting a further staff report for Council consideration.

*Figure 1: February 18, 2025 Council Resolution*

Resolution - Majority (Voted), Recorded		
1	Moved:	Councillor McKinlay
	Seconded:	Deputy Mayor Bordignon
	Result:	The motion is Carried
THAT Council receive Staff Report PBS.25.004, entitled "Follow Up Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review" AND THAT Council direct staff to provide a further staff report that provides further information regarding:		
1. Attainable Housing - further clarity required specifically in the area of an offsetting arrangement		
2. Building Height and Density - housing density scale by height, with further clarity required		

Resolution - Majority (Voted), Recorded		
2	Moved:	Councillor McKinlay
	Seconded:	Deputy Mayor Bordignon
	Result:	The motion is Carried
THAT, with respect to Staff Report PBS.25.004, entitled "Follow Up Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review", Council direct staff to provide a further staff report to provide information regarding the following:		
1. Parkland Dedication - further wording regarding the verification of the delivery of services within the area		
2. Georgian Trail Access - vehicular crossing language could be stronger		
3. Tree Protection - further wording noting that this applies specifically to development lands		

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with responses to the above topics and to provide a suite of options that Council can consider on each topic. Planning Staff have included recommendations to Council on the recommended options. The recommended options are highlighted in the report below and tables in red-outline. Once direction is received on each topic, Planning Staff will make the necessary edits to the Final Draft of the Official Plan and provide to Council on May 12 for final adoption and authorization to forward the Official Plan 5-Year Review to the County of Grey for final decision.

## **C. Background and Analysis**

### **1. Affordable Housing**

With respect to affordable housing, at the February 4, 2025 COW Meeting, Council requested another look at the proposed affordable housing policies.

Section D.7.4 is a new proposed section of the Official Plan, with policies addressing affordable housing and attainable housing. The proposed policy states:

*“The Town will plan to achieve and provide for affordable housing and attainable housing by:*

- a) requiring all development proposals with more than 10 residential dwelling units to demonstrate how affordable housing units can be provided;*
- b) planning to achieve a minimum target of 30% of new housing, or units created by conversion, to be affordable;*
- c) utilizing incentive programs, Community Improvement Plans, community planning permit systems, supportive zoning by-laws, strategic reductions of development fees, and/or alternative site development standards (either offered through the County or Town) that reduce the cost of construction and maintenance of services for affordable housing units;*
- d) requiring all development proposing ground-related housing, including single-detached, semi-detached, and street townhouse dwellings to consider design options that provide purchasers the ability to have up to two residential units within the main building and/or an additional dwelling unit in an ancillary structure;*
- e) encouraging the use of innovative building methods (such as prefabricated housing or modular housing) to help to reduce the cost of housing, and consider adopting pre-approved designs for certain housing typologies (including additional residential units and single, semi-detached and townhouse units) to accelerate the planning approvals process;*
- f) requiring the submission of an Affordable/Attainable Housing Report as part of a development application, demonstrating how the application provides the type, size and tenure of housing required to addresses affordable housing needs and meet the affordable housing target of this Plan;*
- g) maintaining an inventory of viable surplus Town-owned properties to be sold or leased that have been deemed appropriate for the development of affordable housing at or below market value; and*
- h) working with the County to identify and pre-zone sites, including vacant or underutilized sites, for affordable housing”.*

Within the current legislative planning framework in the Town, there is currently no legal mechanism through which the municipality can require the provision of affordable housing units. That being said, the Town’s Official Plan must be consistent with the Provincial Planning Statement, which requires planning authorities to provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options by establishing minimum targets for affordable housing. To achieve this target, it is appropriate for an Official Plan to contain policies supporting the provision of affordable housing. Planning Staff are of the view that the proposed policies noted above are appropriate and will require proponents of development applications with more than 10 residential dwelling units to demonstrate how affordable units can be provided. This policy invites a

conversation with Town Staff and Council in order to assist in finding solutions to work towards achieving the affordable housing target. In response to Council's request, Planning Staff have considered expanding this policy to include a menu of options for proponents of development applications with 10 or more residential dwelling units to consider in the context of assisting the Town in achieving its affordable housing target.

Such options could include:

- A contribution to the CIP to increase the funding available for offsite housing; OR
- A requirement to construct homes that can be easily converted to accommodate future ADU's (Additional Dwelling Units), such as basement rough-ins for plumbing and/or appropriate ingress and egress for basement units; OR
- The development of affordable housing units; OR
- A combination of the above options; OR
- Any other option to the satisfaction of Town Council.

With respect to Affordable Housing, Planning Staff offer the following options for Council's consideration. Staff recommended option is highlighted in red:

*Table 1: Affordable Housing Policy Options*

Option	Policy Modification
1A	Remove the requirement for Development proposals of 10 units or more to demonstrate how affordable housing can be provided under policy D.7.4 a), and renumber subsequent policies accordingly
1B	Maintain the requirement for Development proposals of 10 units or more to demonstrate how affordable housing can be provided, along with the remaining policies within Section D.7.4 as currently drafted and proposed
1C	Expand Section D.7.4 a) to also include the sample menu of affordable housing options that could be considered by Council

## **2. Building Height**

Staff Report PDS.25.004 was presented at the February 4, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting, which proposed a number of options for consideration with respect to Building Height. For clarity, additional information is provided within this report to help visualize each option presented.

It is noted and understood that the Town is trying to achieve a broader housing mix to ensure that there is flexibility in housing options for existing and future residents. It is also understood that there is a desire to maintain the character and feel of the Town, while recognizing that there is a need to grow. By designating areas within the Town that permit taller building

heights than other parts of the Town, intensification can be directed and encouraged within these designated areas to help diversify the housing stock in the form of higher density and taller building form, consistent with and conforming to Provincial and County policies. The proposed Official Plan recommends the Town:

- 1- Maintain the maximum building height of 3 storeys across the Town,
- 2- Maintain the maximum building height of 5 storeys at Blue Mountain Village,
- 3- Insert a new maximum permitted height along the Highway 26 corridor in Thornbury, which would permit a building height of 4 storeys, with the potential to increase the height to 5 storeys without amendment to the Plan only where a community benefit (such as affordable housing or other benefit to the satisfaction of Council) is received as part of the project.

The recommended approach prioritizes intensification along Highway 26 in Thornbury through a slight maximum height increase from 3 to 4 to 5 storeys. Planning Staff Continue to recommend this option (shown as Option 2D) below.

With respect to Building Height, Planning Staff offer the following options for Council's consideration. Each option considers:

- The maximum building height in storeys,
- The location for increased building heights, and
- The requirement to also provide community benefit (or not) in exchange for increased height.

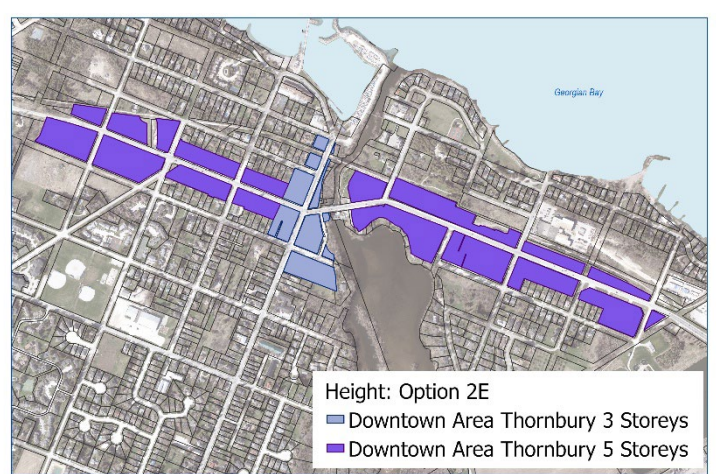
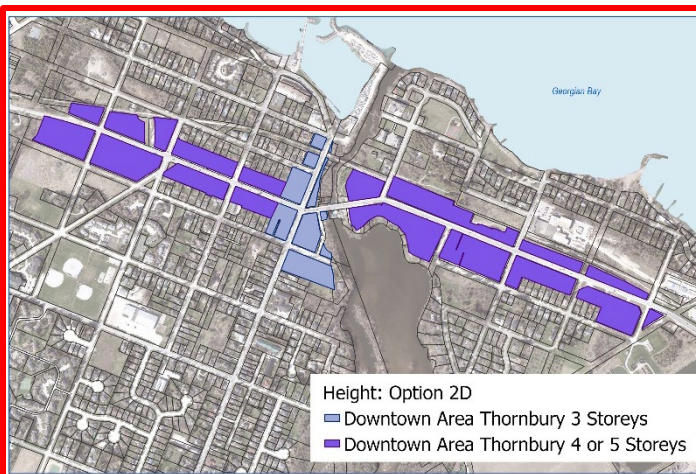
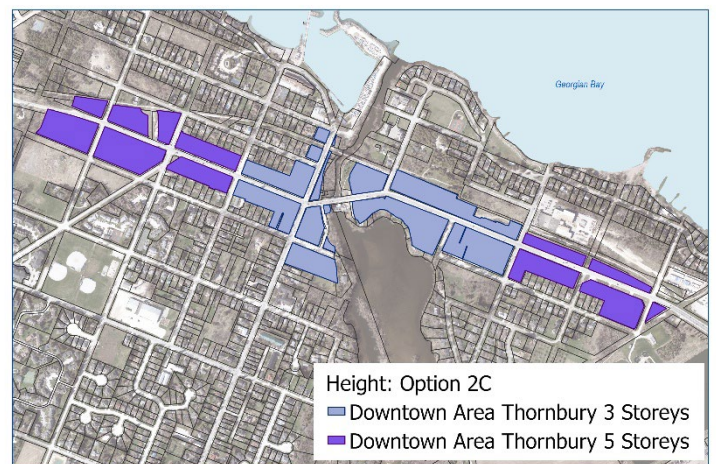
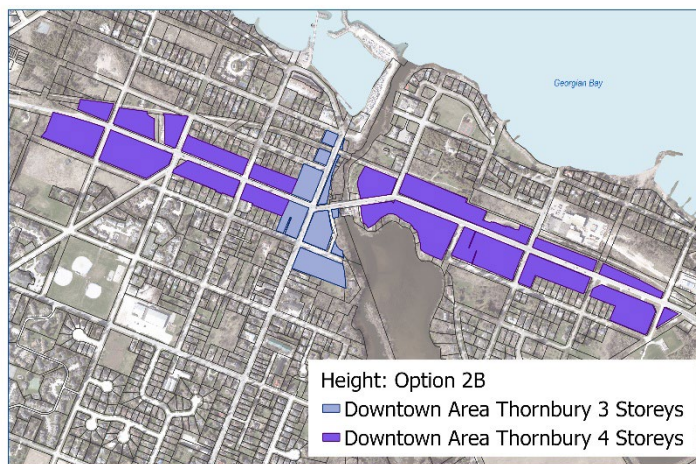
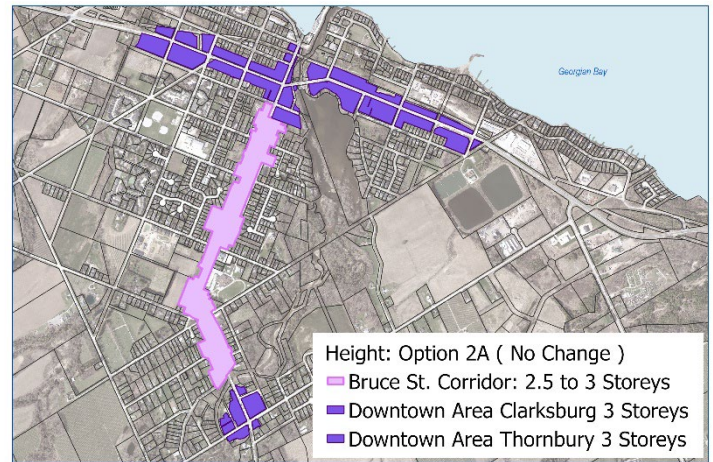
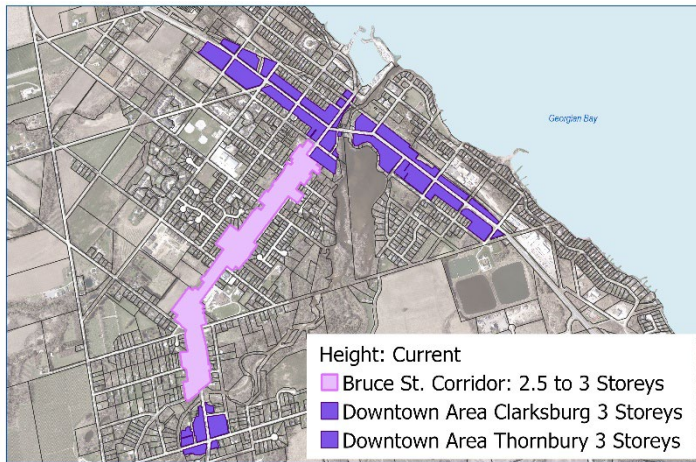
Following the Table, there are a number of maps to illustrate the locations for increased building heights in the Town.

*Table 2: Building Height Policy Options*

Option	Policy Modification
2A	Revert back to the maximum of 3 storeys across the entire Town (except Blue Mountain Village) as existing in the current Height Policies of the 2016 Official Plan
2B	Maintain the maximum of 3 storeys across the Town (except Blue Mountain Village) and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• maintain the maximum of 3 storeys along the Bruce Street Corridor, and</li><li>• permit up to 4 storeys along Highway 26 in Thornbury from Peel Street to Russell Street right-of-way.</li></ul>
2C	Maintain the maximum of 3 storeys across the Town (except Blue Mountain Village) and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• maintain the maximum of 3 storeys along the Bruce Street Corridor, and</li><li>• permit up to 4 storeys (and 5 storeys with community benefit) only along Highway 26 in Thornbury from Peel Street to Elma Street and from Elgin Street to Russell Street right-of-way.</li></ul>
2D	Maintain the maximum of 3 storeys across the Town (except Blue Mountain Village) and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• maintain the maximum of 3 storeys along the Bruce Street Corridor, and</li><li>• permit up to 4 storeys (and 5 storeys with community benefit) along Highway 26 in Thornbury from Peel Street to Russell Street right-of-way.</li></ul>
2E	Maintain the maximum of 3 storeys across the Town (except Blue Mountain Village) and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• maintain the maximum of 3 storeys along the Bruce Street Corridor, and</li><li>• permit up to 5 storeys along Highway 26 in Thornbury from Peel Street to Russell Street right-of-way.</li></ul>



Figure 2: Building Height Maps / Illustrations



### **3. Density**

Staff Report PDS.25.004 was presented at the February 4, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting, which proposed a number of options for consideration with respect to Density.

When discussing density, it is important to distinguish the Community Living Area from the Residential/Recreational Area. The proposed Official Plan increases the density within the Community Living Area designation from 20 to 25 units per hectare. This change is prescribed by the County through Grey County Official Plan Amendment No. 11. The Town's Plan must conform to this minimum density.

For the Residential/Recreational Area, the Grey County Official Plan defers to the Town to establish appropriate density targets. The Town's existing, in-force Official Plan permits a maximum density of 10 units per gross hectare, and requires no minimum density. There is also a requirement for a minimum of 40% of the lands within the Residential/Recreational Area to be maintained as open space. The proposed Official Plan increases the maximum density within the Residential/Recreational Area from 10 units per gross hectare to 15 units per gross hectare, and institutes a new minimum density requirement of 10 units per gross hectare.

An alternate option was presented in Staff Report PDS.25.004, increasing the maximum density of the Residential/Recreational Area from 10 units per gross hectare to 12 units per gross hectare, while maintain the status quo of no minimum density requirement. Planning Staff do not recommend this approach. While the slight increase allows for additional units, the lack of a minimum density would continue to permit the development of very low densities, which does not help the Town to diversify housing options.

As an alternative, Planning Staff have prepared another alternative option, which would permit a maximum density of 15 units per gross hectare to diversity housing options, while still requiring the achievement of a minimum density of 8 units per gross hectare. While 8 units per gross hectare is less than the original proposed minimum density for the Residential/Recreational Area, it would eliminate the development of even lower density developments, while still allowing flexibility to build homes on large lots, and recognizing that denser development is to be directed to Thornbury.

With respect to Density, Planning Staff offer the following options for Council's consideration:



*Table 3: Density Policy Options*

Option	Policy Modification (UPH = Units per Hectare)
<b>3A</b>	Maintain the existing maximum of 10 UPH for the Residential Recreational Area designation as existing in the current Density Policies of the 2016 Official Plan
<b>3B</b>	Establish a new maximum of 12 UPH and no minimum UPH for the Residential Recreational Area designation
<b>3C</b>	Establish a new maximum of 15 UPH and a new minimum of 8 UPH for the Residential Recreational Area designation
<b>3D</b>	Establish a new maximum of 15 UPH and a new minimum of 10 UPH for the Residential Recreational Area designation

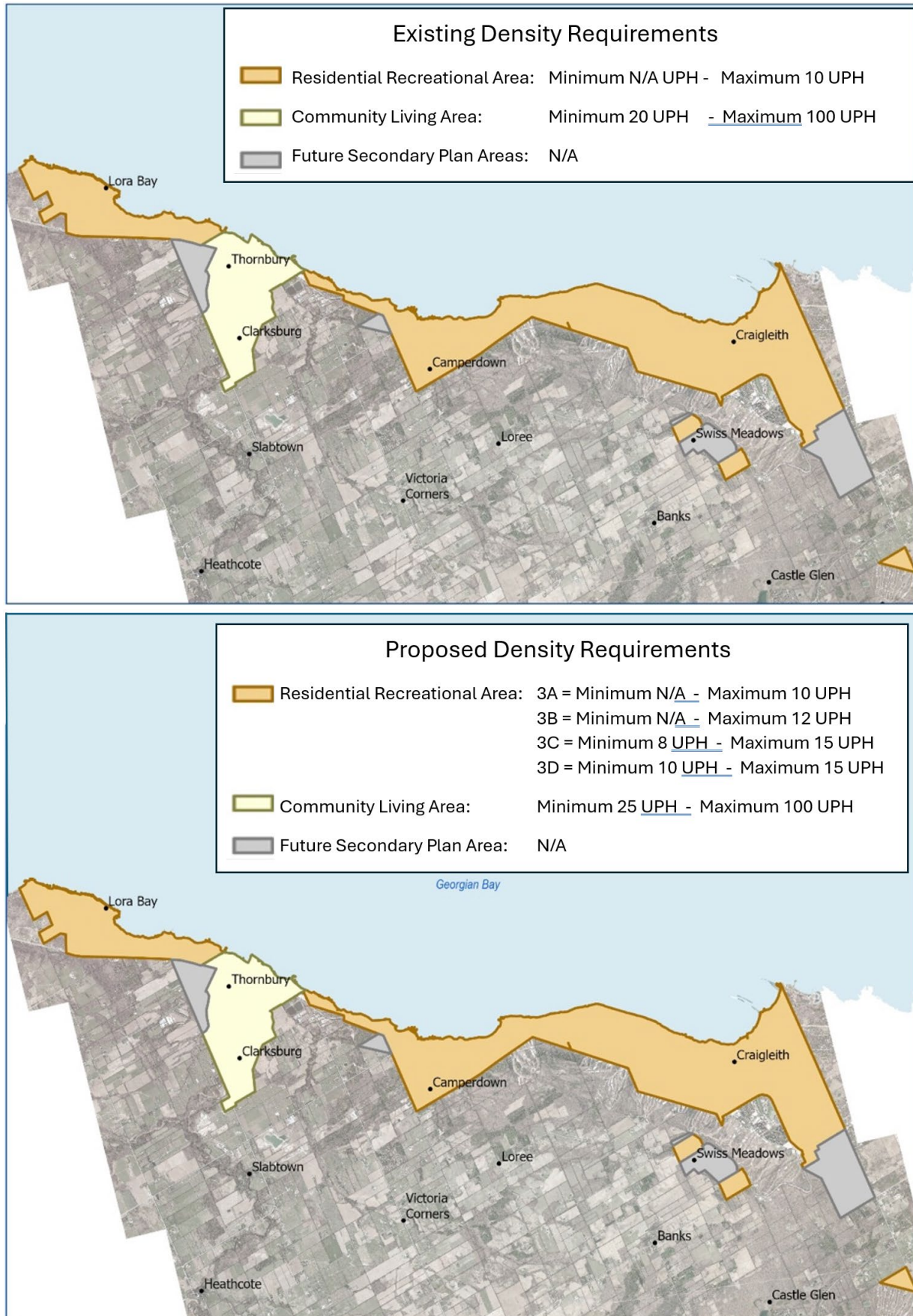
For additional background, existing residential neighbourhoods in the Town provide the following approximate density. Following this table additional maps are provided to illustrate the proposed density options:

*Table 4: Existing Residential Neighbourhoods Density Examples*

UPH (Units per Hectare)	Residential Neighbourhood	Unit Types	Sample Lot Size
<b>2 UPH</b>	Rural Subdivision (Fawcett Lane, Summit View Court) Grey 2 and 24 <sup>th</sup> Sideroad	Large Lots Single Detached	1.25 acres (private services)
<b>5 UPH</b>	Shoreline Lots at Bay Street/Bayview Avenue, Huron Street East, King Street East Thornbury	Large Lots Single Detached	0.3 ac
<b>6 UPH</b>	Common RRA Designation Single Detached Dwelling Subdivision: Trailwoods (High Bluff Lane, Timber Lane, Pheasant Run)	Large Lots Single Detached	0.25 ac to 0.5 ac
<b>7.4 UPH</b>	Lora Greens Subdivision (Lora Bay)	Large Lots Single Detached	0.25 ac to 0.33 ac
<b>8.6 UPH</b>	Wickens Lane Subdivision (east Thornbury)	Medium Lots Single Detached	0.25 ac

<b>9.9 UPH</b>	Orchard Drive, Pyatt Avenue + Area Cul-De-Sac's Subdivision Thornbury	Medium Lots Single Detached	0.2 ac
<b>10.0 UPH</b>	Cobblestone Lane, Limestone Lane Subdivision (Thornbury)	Smaller Lots Single Detached	0.15 ac
<b>10.0 UPH</b>	Windfall Development Craigleith (Singles and Semis Only)	Smaller Lots Single Detached Semi-Detached	0.12 ac 0.06 ac
<b>15 UPH</b>	Windfall Development Craigleith (Mixed Development including Mountain House)	Single Detached Semi-Detached Apartments	0.12 ac 0.06 ac N/A
<b>19.5 UPH</b>	Thornbury Meadows (Land Lease) Thornbury	Land Lease Semi-Detached Townhouse	N/A
<b>19.6 UPH</b>	Boynton Court Mixed Unit Types: 2 Singles, 10 Semi's, 8 Towns (Mixed Use Development Thornbury)	Single Detached Semi-Detached Townhouse	0.16 ac 0.12 ac 0.03 ac
<b>22.9 UPH</b>	24 Alfred Street Mixed Unit Types: 7 Singles, 12 Semi's, Condominium Road (Thornbury Infill)	Single Detached Semi-Detached	0.13 ac 0.07 ac
<b>25 UPH</b>	Applejack Condominiums Thornbury	Condominium Townhouse	N/A
<b>26.5 UPH</b>	Millpond Homes Thornbury	Condominium Townhouse	N/A
<b>30-35 UPH</b>	Craigleith Area Condominiums: Arrowhead at Blue, Settlers Way, Sierra Lane, Rivergrass	Condominium Townhouse	N/A
<b>44 UPH</b>	Windfall Development Craigleith (Mountain House Only)	Condominium Apartments	N/A
<b>100 UPH</b>	Thornbury Riverwalk	Condominium Apartments	N/A

Figure 3: Existing / Proposed Density Maps



#### **4. Parkland Dedication**

Policy D6.2.5 of the Official Plan addresses the dedication of land through the development approvals process for parkland purposes. The proposed Official Plan includes a new proposed policy, stating the following:

*“The Town shall prioritize parkland dedication over cash-in-lieu of parkland in order to accommodate a range of parkland facilities in Town, in proximity to residential and commercial development. Where cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication is proposed, the Town shall ensure that one or more of the following circumstances is met:*

- i) Where the required land dedication fails to provide an area of suitable shape, size or location for development as public parkland;*
- ii) Where the required dedication of land would render the remainder of the site unsuitable or impractical for development; and/or*
- iii) Where existing park and recreational facilities in the vicinity of the site are, in the opinion of the Town, clearly adequate to serve the projected increase in population”.*

At the February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting, Council expressed that they are looking for policy clarity as to how the evaluation is completed to determine where land is acceptable and where cash-in-lieu is acceptable.

Policy Sections 6.3.3 and 6.3.4 of the Official Plan address minimum park sizes and criteria for various park types in Town, including Town-wide parks, community parks, neighbourhood parks and parkettes. Further, policy section 6.3.1 contains policies and criteria on parkland siting and design, to ensure that all public parkland is appropriately located and designed for all users. Proposed policy D6.2.5 i), as noted above, would require planners and decision makers to assess and evaluate the suitability of parkland based on the criteria in the policy sections noted.

It is also important to note that policy Section 6.2.6 of the Official Plan addresses lands that the Town will not be accepted for parkland dedication, including hazard lands, for example.

Planning Staff recommend adding additional wording to better link policy D6.2.5 to the existing criteria in the Official Plan to provide greater clarity to proponents of development applications that dedication of Land is preferred over cash-in-lieu where parkland dedication is required (Option 4B below).

With respect to Parkland Dedication, Planning Staff offer the following options for Council’s consideration:

Table 5: Parkland Dedication Policy Options

Option	Policy Modification
4A	Maintain parkland dedication policies as drafted in the proposed Official Plan
4B	Amend policy D6.2.5 i) to state “Where the required land dedication fails to provide an area of suitable shape, size or location for development as public parkland, <b><u>in accordance with sections 6.3.1, 6.3.3 and 6.3.4 of this Plan</u></b> ”

## **5. Georgian Trail Crossings and Access**

The Official Plan recognizes the Georgian Trail as a regionally significant right-of-way and trail link (D.2.3) and a major active transportation corridor through the Town, connecting Collingwood and Meaford (D2.5 f)). As an important link, it is necessary that the corridor be protected and enhanced for the safe and continued use of all residents and visitors to the Town.

On December 10, 2024, Committee directed Planning Staff to substitute the words “encourage appropriate” to “justify” access points in residential developments with specific reference to the Georgian Trail. This specific request provides a higher standard as it relates to Section A3.9.2 “Tourism and Recreation –Strategic Objectives” of the draft Official Plan where Objective 6 notes:

*“Recognize and maintain the Georgian Trail as a regionally significant trail link, and to encourage appropriate access points in the long-term development of a Town-wide trail system.”*

Specific direction for the trail network throughout the Town is set out in Section D6.3.5 of the draft Official Plan. Policy direction was added to the draft Official Plan that encourages the enhancement of trail linkages between residential, commercial and institutional areas wherever possible through the development process.

In Staff Report PDS.25.004, we recommended adding additional wording to Section A3.9.2 and Section D6.3.5 indicating that new vehicular crossings of the Georgian Trail shall be discouraged in order to recognize the importance of this major trail corridor, as well as maintaining the existing tree canopy and buffering along the trail, and shall only be supported where required for access and/or safety reasons, and where removal of vegetation is limited to the greatest extent possible. Access points for new trail or walkway connections to the Georgian Trail shall also be evaluated with consideration of impacts to the tree canopy and to ensure safe and structured connection points.

Based on additional Council feedback, it is now further recommended that additional wording be added to the Official Plan to address this matter. Section D2.3 of the Official Plan addresses



restrictions of certain types of roads. It is recommended that a new sub-section be added to address new vehicular road crossings of the Georgian Trail, when proposed, as follows:

***“D2.3.4 Vehicular Crossings of the Georgian Trail***

*All proposed new road crossings, or proposed widening of existing road crossings, of the Georgian Trail shall require the submission of a Traffic Impact Study, to be prepared to the satisfaction of Council, to assess the appropriateness and safety of such crossing(s) as it relates to users of the Georgian Trail. Such new road crossings, or widening of existing road crossings, shall only be considered if there are no suitable or reasonable alternatives”.*

With respect to Crossings of the Georgian Trail, Planning Staff offer the following options for Council’s consideration:

*Table 6: Georgian Trail Crossings Policy Options*

Option	Policy Modification
5A	Maintain policies as drafted in the proposed Official Plan, including recommended changes to Section A3.9.2 and Section D6.3.5 as noted above
5B	Maintain policies as drafted in the proposed Official Plan, including recommended changes to Section A3.9.2 and Section D6.3.5 as noted above, PLUS adding a new policy to Section D2.3.4 as drafted above

**6. Tree Protection**

Staff Report PDS.25.004 summarized all of the policies that address tree protection within the proposed Official Plan. An additional policy recommendation was also made, recommending that Section D.8.2 of the draft Official Plan be updated to note that the Town recognizes the critical role of established trees on public and private lands and will prioritize their preservation wherever feasible. It was also recommended that Section D.8.2 include an additional policy for the Town to require a Tree Inventory and Protection Plan as part of the planning application process for Site Plan and Draft Plan of Subdivision applications.

Council direction has requested that these policies be clarified so that they apply to specifically to Development Lands. Planning Staff has reviewed the [Policies of D.8.2](#) (Page 237) and confirm that the current policy wording is sufficient to only cover Development Lands. The policy section provides some general statements on Tree Canopy, with specific policy direction referencing “new development” and consideration as part of “development applications review”. No further changes are recommended.

It is relevant to note that the Tree Trust has expressed support for the policies in the Official Plan, and the latest recommended changes outlined in Staff Report PDS.25.004.

*Table 7: Tree Preservation/Protection Policy Option*

Option	Policy Modification
6A	Maintain the Tree Canopy policies of Section D.8.2 as recommended in Staff Report PDS.25.004.

## **D. Strategic Priorities**

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### **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.

## **E. Environmental Impacts**

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Policies contained within the Official Plan 5-Year Review provided an enhanced level of recognition and protection of Natural Heritage features. It is noted that additional measures will be considered through implementation of the recommendations within the Natural Asset Inventory and Natural Heritage Study.

## **F. Financial Impacts**

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Policies contained within the Official Plan 5-Year Review provide for modernization and efficiencies for long term community growth with expectations that those efficiencies can also lead to long term financial benefits.

Appeals to the Official Plan 5-Year Review may also be subject to appeals, which are required to be considered by the Ontario Land Tribunal.

## **G. In Consultation With**

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Town Council, Internal Town Departments, External Agencies, Town Committees, Community Stakeholders, Area Residents

## **H. Public Engagement**

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The topic of this Staff Report has been subject to extensive Public Consultation including numerous Workshops, Information Centres, Open Houses, Public Meetings, and Council Reports. A dedicated project page on the Town website, newspaper notices, regular press releases, and project updates have been provided. Any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Shawn Postma, [planning@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:planning@thebluemountains.ca).

Respectfully submitted,

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Town of The Blue Mountains

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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	PBS.25.005 Official Plan Follow-Up Report to the February 4th COW Discussion.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Apr 17, 2025

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

**Adam Smith - Apr 17, 2025 - 11:31 AM**