



# Staff Report

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## Planning & Development Services – Planning Division

**Report To:** Committee of the Whole Meeting  
**Meeting Date:** September 13, 2022  
**Report Number:** PDS.22.114  
**Title:** Information, Direction and Recommendation Report – Official Plan  
**Prepared by:** Shawn Postma, Senior Policy Planner

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### A. Recommendations

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THAT Council receive Staff Report PDS.22.114, entitled “Information, Direction and Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review Phase 1”;

AND THAT Council consider the five (5) options presented in Staff Report PDS.22.114;

AND THAT Council proceed with option 5, being the option to adopt Official Plan Amendment No. 3, being the recommended Phase 1 Official Plan Amendment and direct Staff to forward to the County of Grey for final decision;

AND THAT Council confirm that the final modifications to Official Plan Amendment No. 3 do not require an additional Public Meeting as required under the Planning Act.

### B. Overview

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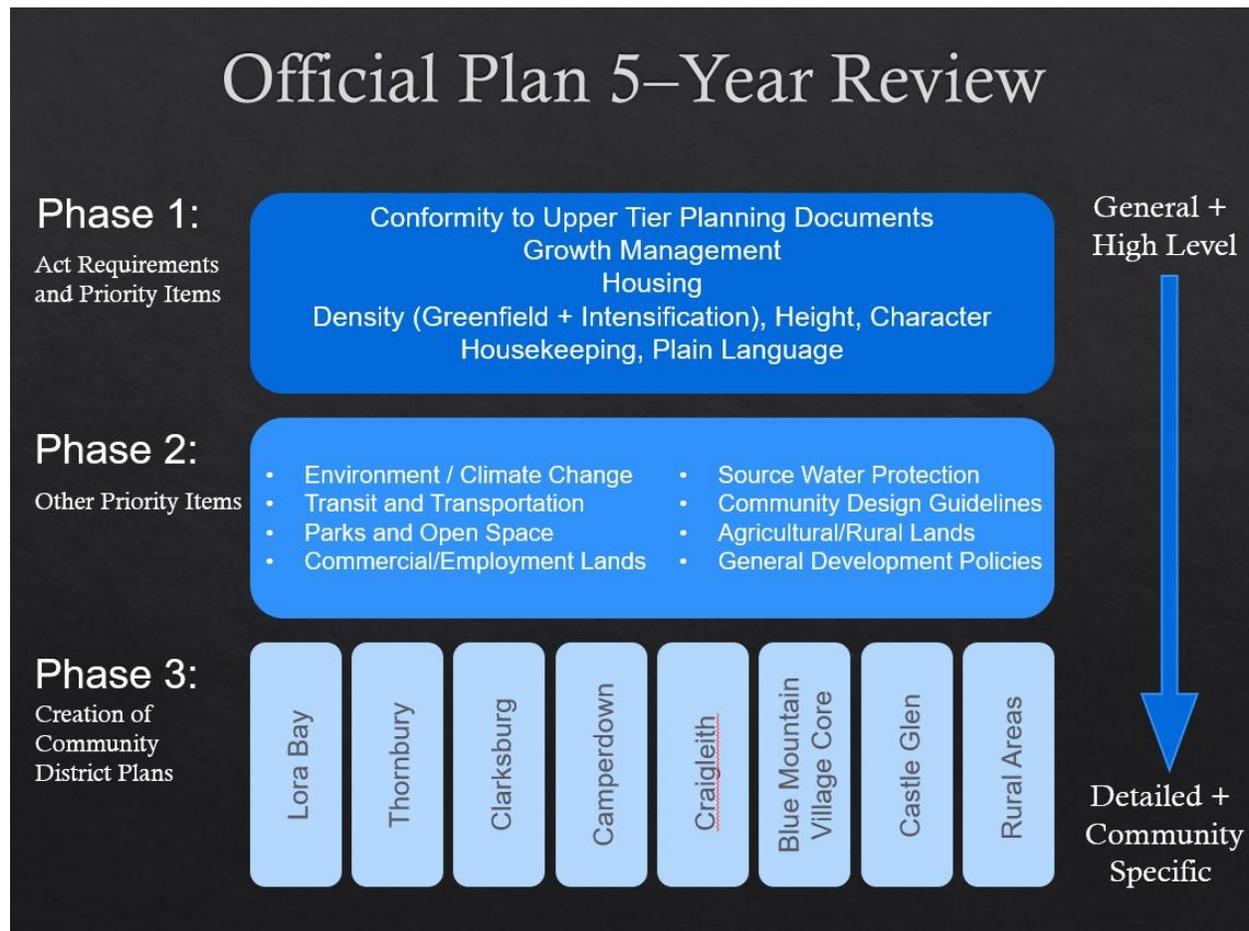
The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a summary of the August 8, 2022 Public Meeting comments received, all other comments received, summary of modifications to the Draft Official Plan Amendment No. 3, summary of options available to Council on how to proceed, and Planning Staff recommendation.

### C. Background

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The Town of The Blue Mountains Official Plan Review started in July 2021 with an initial public meeting, council interviews and Information Report to Council. This process resulted in the finalization of the project framework and public engagement plan, and the creation of a Steering Committee. A detailed project Terms of Reference and project timeline was prepared and endorsed by Council in December 2021 through Staff Report PDS.21.150. The project was divided into phases (see Figure 1 below). Phase 1, which Official Plan Amendment No. 3 is a result of, includes review of the Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals and Objectives, Growth Management, Density, Height, Housing and Housekeeping Items.

Figure 1: Official Plan Phasing Plan



The Official Plan 5 Year Review, termed “The Blueprint”, began working through the Terms of Reference in March this year starting with a residents survey, the preparation of Background Papers, holding of PICs, the preparation of recommended policy amendments, writing the technical Official Plan Amendment documents, and the holding of the statutory Public Open House (July 27, 2022) and Public Meeting (August 8, 2022).

Additional background details on the project are available at [www.tbmbblueprint.ca](http://www.tbmbblueprint.ca) including all previous staff reports, presentations, meeting recordings, survey results, background papers, revision documents, project timeline, and other relevant documents.

At this stage, the community feedback received throughout the process, and all comments, concerns and questions raised at the Public Meeting will be summarized below. A number of options are then proposed for Council consideration on how to proceed to finalize the Phase 1 work.

## D. Analysis

### Public Consultation

The Official Plan Review includes enhanced public consultation throughout the project. Figure 2 below identifies the minimum public consultation requirements under the Planning Act and Town Policy, compared to the work completed for the Official Plan Review project.

*Figure 2: Public Consultation*

<p><b>Planning Act</b></p>	<p>Municipality to hold a minimum of two <b>public meetings</b>, one <b>public open house</b>, and provide <b>newspaper</b> notification.</p>
<p><b>Town Policy</b></p>	<p>Includes the Planning Act Requirements above plus:  Notification to be provided on Town <b>website</b>, posted at <b>Town Hall</b>, email subscribers list by <b>e-blast</b>, and to anyone else who requests notice.</p>
<p><b>Official Plan Project</b></p>	<p>Includes the Planning Act and Town Policy requirements above plus:  Dedicated Town <b>web page</b> (including project documents, project timeline, current status, ongoing updates, subscriber and comments submission link), regular project content updates published in local <b>newspaper/newsletters</b>, awareness through <b>radio</b>, direct <b>target group engagement</b> (including but not limited to: agricultural community, tourism operators, development industry, residential associations, recreation groups, other municipal departments, Committees of Council, County of Grey, and others), public <b>surveys</b>, release of <b>background papers</b>, two <b>public information centres</b>, other general public <b>events</b> (information booths), and general updates at <b>Council Meeting</b></p>

Prior to adopting an Official Plan Amendment, the requirements of Sections 17(15) to 17(21) of the Planning Act must be met. These sections refer to minimum timelines and information required for providing Notice, the holding of a Public Open House and Public Meeting, and to receive written and verbal comments and submissions. Planning Staff confirm that the requirements of the Planning Act have been met.

Public Consultation and project communication was identified early in the project as a priority. Generally, Town Staff have received a lot of positive feedback on the amount of Public Consultation and communication for the project. Some concerns were raised regarding the

speed of the project timeline (too quick) including the amount of time to digest information for public review throughout various project stages.

### **August 8, 2022 Public Meeting Comments**

A total of 67 written submissions have been received by Planning Staff since the Official Plan Five Year Review project started. Included in that total are 39 written submissions that were received in response to the Notice of Public Open House and Public Meeting for the August 8, 2022 Public Meeting. Additional verbal comments have been received by phone, counter, various meetings, public information centres, public open house and the Public Meeting. Planning Staff are summarizing all comments received within a Comments Matrix (see Attachment 3). The Comments Matrix also includes a response and summary of Official Plan changes that have been considered. In addition to the Matrix, all written comments as they were received are included in Attachment 4 in their original form.

The written and verbal comments received generally include the following items. These comments are addressed in greater detail later in this report. All other comments received are addressed in greater detail within the Comments Matrix in Attachment 3:

1. **Project Timeline:** Phase 1 work should be influenced and supported by Phase 2 research and outcomes; the project has been moving too quickly since start. Official Plan Amendments should not be considered until all of Phase 1 and Phase 2 work is completed, and the timing of a Phase 1 decision occurring just prior to a new Council and upcoming election.
2. **Character:** Character remains priority and paramount, as a consistent topic raised throughout the project. The Official Plan needs to better define character and supporting documents should be updated (such as engineering standards, community design standards)
3. **Density/Height Changes:** The 6 storeys recommendation is too tall. The Town 'development pipeline' already accommodates enough growth for the next 25+ years without needing to approve new projects. What are the impacts on infrastructure (road, water/sewer capacity) that result from increased density/height, (particularly if not studied until Phase 2)? Building height guidelines and community design guidelines to be in place prior to Phase 1 decision
4. **Housing policies:** Additional work is required on housing sections, including affordable and attainable housing, establishing minimum targets, enabling policies, definitions and providing for clear/measurable monitoring.

### **Project Timeline**

The Official Plan Review project workplan as submitted in Staff Report PDS.21.152 was endorsed by Council in December 2021. A key consideration was the creation of multiple phases. The phased approach allows us to build a Plan with strategic timing. Phase 1 focuses on the legislated requirements, the overall Plan Vision and Goals and Objectives as well as the

priority issues identified by Council, Staff and the Public. The scoped limits of Phase 1 have been structured to be completed with the current Council prior to the Fall 2022 municipal election. Since endorsement, the project has remained on schedule and on budget. The workplan identified that Official Plan Amendment documents would be prepared and presented at a Public Open House and Public Meeting. Following that, an Information or Recommendation Report would be completed requesting a decision of Council. The Project Team has accomplished all of the required tasks in accordance with the approved workplan delivering a recommendation report and series of Official Plan modifications in early fall 2022.

The work completed in Phase 1 is complete and Staff have no concerns about implementing the proposed Official Plan Amendment at this time. It is noted that the Phase 1 modifications are complete, sustainable, and are further supported by both existing Plan policy and related documents such as Community Design Guidelines, Community Improvement Plans, and other approved Town Plans. The workplan for Phase 2 will consider further updates to policy and related documents to further bolster the work completed in Phase 1.

The approval of Phase 1 at this time will allow work to begin on Phase 2 immediately. Deferring a decision to the next Council will add significant time to the project, including bring the new Council up to speed with the Phase 1 work, and then to seek direction on Phase 1 and potential changes to the Phase 2 workplan. Staff support the knowledge and time this Council has put into this project and believe that it is appropriate to approve Phase 1 at this time. Staff anticipate that early with the new Council, a Staff Report will be brought forward on the current project status, approved Terms of Reference, and request support to continue with the existing workplan, or seek out further enhancements to the project subject to timing and budget availability.

## **Character**

Minor policy adjustments related to Town and neighbourhood character are proposed under Phase 1. The reorganization of existing character policies for the Community Living Area designation are proposed, as well as expanding these policies to apply Town-wide. These existing policies are complete and can apply to the proposed changes in height and density. The continued review of character policies as part of Phase 2 will help bolster and further articulate these existing policies and the Phase 1 updates. It is also noted that the existing policies and direction in other Town documents such as Community Design Guidelines, Community Improvement Plans, Engineering Standards among others will also continue to apply to new project proposals. Comments received through the public process have indicated that there is a need to further update the Official Plan and these supporting documents. As part of Phase 2 there is an opportunity to seek further direction from Council about incorporating additional character policy updates and requirements.

## **Density**

The policy updates and recommendations related to residential density include:

- Updated density targets for the Community Living Area designation applicable to Thornbury/Clarksburg:

- Increasing the overall maximum density from 20 to 25 units per hectare;
  - Increasing the density range for townhouses from 25-40 units per hectare to 25-50 units per hectare; and
  - Increasing the density range for multiples and apartments from 40-60 units per hectare to 40-100 units per hectare.
- Updated density targets for the Residential Recreational Area designation applicable to Lora Bay, Camperdown, Craigleith, Swiss Meadows and the Blue Mountain Village Area:
    - Changing the maximum permitted density for the Blue Mountain Village Area from 15 units per hectare to a permitted density range of 15-20 units per hectare;
    - Changing the maximum permitted density for all other areas from 10 units per hectare to a permitted density range of 10-15 units per hectare;
    - Increasing the density range for townhouses from 25-40 units per hectare to 25-50 units per hectare; and
    - Increasing the density range for multiples and apartments from 40-60 units per hectare to 40-100 units per hectare.

No comments were received that directly relate to the specific density recommendations outlined above. Rather, many of the comments received related to concerns about how the proposed changes would impact community character and questions about whether the proposed changes should be implemented in advance of further work to be completed as part of Phase 2 of the Official Plan Review. There were also comments regarding to the need to address the provision of affordable and attainable housing in the Official Plan.

It is recommended that the density recommendations outlined above remain part of the Official Plan Review Phase 1 policy directions. The affordable and attainable housing policies have been updated since the Public Meeting based on feedback received, however it is important to note that issues of housing affordability in the community are multi-faceted and require the creation of policy tools beyond the Official Plan. Fortunately, the Town has instituted such tools including the Housing Within Reach Community Improvement Plan and the Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation. Further study and investigation of the issue could allow for new programs to be developed.

## **Height**

The policy updates and recommendations presented at the Public Meeting related to height include:

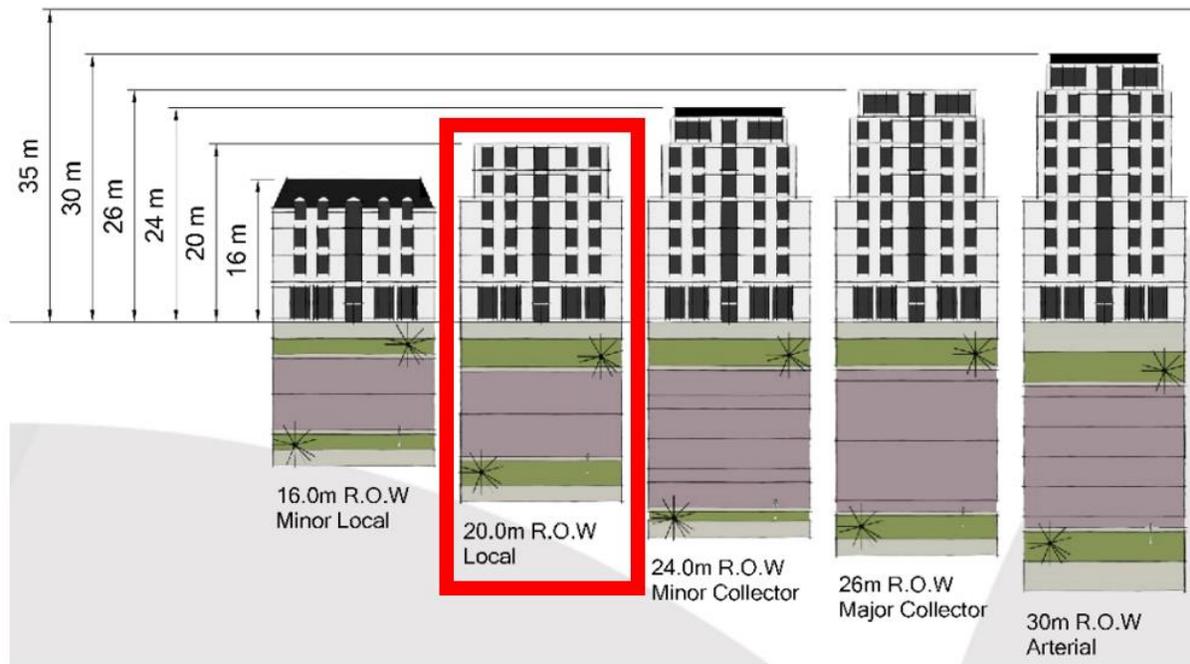
- Maintaining the maximum height permission of 3 storeys throughout the Town, maximum of 5 storeys in the Blue Mountain Village Core and maximum 2 storeys in the Craigleith Village Residential designation;
- Increasing the maximum height permission to 6 storeys for lands along Highway 26 in Thornbury, outside of the Downtown Core (Bruce Street), subject to compatibility and intensification criteria;

- Requiring an Official Plan Amendment to permit 6 storey buildings outside of the Downtown Area designation within the Community Living Area designation or Residential Recreational Areas, subject to compatibility and intensification criteria; and
- Directing the Town to prepare a Building Height Study to examine appropriate building heights in certain locations in the Downtown Area.

Many comments were received in relation to building height, including opposition to the maximum height of 6 storeys, based on compatibility concerns with the small-town character of Thornbury. There were a number of questions as to why 6 storeys was determined to be an appropriate building height. In response to this, it is important to re-iterate why the maximum height of 6 storeys was recommended:

- Good urban design principles and practices establish that the height of mid-rise buildings should generally be consistent with the width of the right-of-way of streets onto which the buildings front to ensure the streetwall maintains a human-scale and comfortable pedestrian environment and shadowing impacts are minimized (see Figure 3). The right-of-way width of the Highway 26 corridor through Thornbury is generally 20 metres, with some sections being wider than 20 metres in width. When calculating the height of buildings, typically 3 metres for each storey is assumed, except for the first storey of mixed use buildings, where a height of 4.5 metres is assumed where commercial uses are proposed at-grade. Assuming a 4.5 metre height for the first floor, and 3 metre height for each floor above the first floor, the height of a building would be approximately 19.5 metres at the top of the 6th storey – which is generally equivalent to the right-of-way width of Highway 26.
- In addition, many of the properties along Highway 26 in the Downtown Area also have deep lot depths. Deeper lots provide room to transition the scale of new buildings fronting Highway 26 to existing low-rise buildings on adjacent properties. This transition can be managed through minimum yard setbacks and/or separation distances, as well as through the built-form of buildings, where building “step-backs” may be used to create a gradual transition in height to lower buildings on adjacent properties. Given the lot depth characteristics of many of the properties along Highway 26, a building height of 6 storeys can be accommodated while achieving an appropriate transition in height to low-rise areas.
- Further, the recommendations for maximum heights were directly tied to recommended criteria to be evaluated in determining compatibility with neighbouring low-rise residential areas.
- It is also noted that taller buildings are subject to an Official Plan Amendment requiring a more rigorous approvals process.

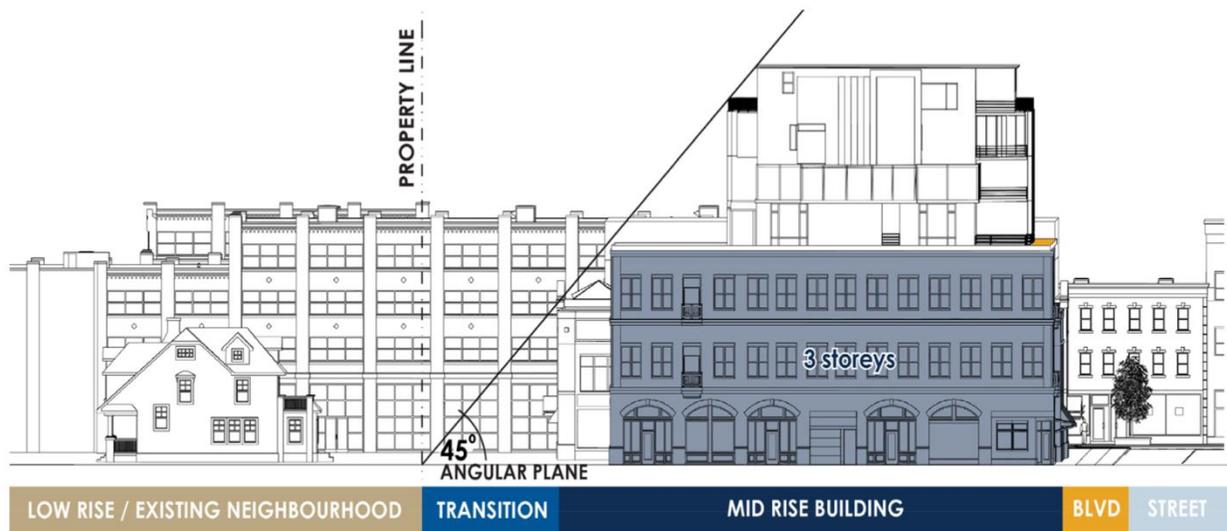
*Figure 3: Mid-Rise Buildings No Taller Than Width of the Public Right of Way*



There are a number of built form strategies that can help lessen the impact of a taller building on the public realm and adjacent low-rise neighbourhoods. A variety of combined methods depending on the site context can effectively be used such as building setbacks, step-backs, variation in built form, intervening mid-rise and the use of a 45 degree angular plane (see Figure 4 below). The use of these methods has been included as a requirement in the Official Plan for intensification proposals greater than 3 storeys in the Town.

- A 45 degree angular plane is measured from the adjacent property line of a low-rise building to the top of the building. This is one measurable method to ensure the proposed building provides a transition down and mitigates impacts such as overlook, privacy and shadowing. This requirement limits the number of available sites for taller buildings in Thornbury, especially on shallow lots that back onto low-rise neighbourhoods, and directs higher density to larger, deep lots that can accommodate a taller building close to the street.
- Setbacks establish minimum distances from a property line to the outer walls of a building, which can be used to provide adequate sidewalk space and room for pedestrian amenities and landscaping, as well as avoid conflict with adjacent structures providing separation.
- Building step-backs refer to the step-like recessions in the profile of a building, which can be implemented to preserve sunlight on neighbouring structures, yards, sidewalks and parks. Building step-backs above the streetwall maximize the perception of building mass from the sidewalk.

Figure 4: Mid-Rise Built Form Transition – 45 Degree Angular Plane and Stepback



In response to comments received, which emphasized the need to require and provide for affordable and attainable housing units, further changes are proposed to the proposed Official Plan Amendment:

- Across the Town, the maximum permitted height of 3 storeys will remain.
- For lands along Highway 26 in Thornbury within the Downtown Area designation, outside of the Downtown Core (Bruce Street), building height can be increased above 3 storeys, up to a maximum of 6 storeys, granted affordable or attainable housing units are provided and subject to compatibility criteria;
- For lands outside of the Downtown Area designation in Thornbury, heights may be increased above 3 storeys, up to a maximum of 6 storeys, within the Community Living Area designation or Residential Recreational Areas through an Official Plan Amendment, granted affordable or attainable housing units are provided and subject to compatibility criteria.

The recommended policy changes strike a balance between the concerns raised with respect to the maximum height of 6 storeys and the need to ensure that new development provides for affordable or attainable housing units. Where 6 storeys and affordable housing units are proposed, the built form criteria will ensure that any development provides for an appropriate transition and relation to adjacent properties.

## Housing

The proposed amendment includes numerous policy updates that permit and encourage the delivery of attainable and affordable housing options:

- Increasing maximum permitted densities throughout Town;
- Establishing new minimum densities throughout Town;
- Policies to expand permissions for second and third dwelling units in line with Provincial legislation, and to encourage the 'rough-in' of additional dwelling units in new construction;

- Policies to permit converted dwellings in Thornbury/Clarksburg;
- Policies to encourage maximum development potential in downtown areas; and
- Policies on employee housing.

All of these policy recommendations are intended to promote additional housing options in Town, including permissions for smaller unit sizes that will contribute to the delivery of more affordable housing. With respect to the specific density ranges proposed, these are reflective of current practices in terms of permitted densities by building type and what could be appropriately accommodated as the Town grows. For example, the current Official Plan permits a maximum density of 60 units per hectare for apartment buildings. This is quite low when compared to what is and could be appropriately built in the Town, including the Riverwalk condominium building which achieves a density of 99 units per hectare.

Comments received through the Public Meeting requested a further review of the draft housing policies and available implementation tools. The project team committed to 'leaving no stone unturned' regarding the housing policy changes. As a result, additional policy enhancements are proposed including:

- Providing definitions for 'Affordable Housing' and 'Attainable Housing' in line with home ownership and rental housing provincial and Community Improvement Plan definitions;
- New policy direction to insert County Plan housing requirements to achieve a minimum target of 30% of new housing units or units created by conversion to be affordable;
- New policy direction to implement a first stage to achieving the 30% target to now require new residential housing projects of 40 units or more and/or taller than 3 storeys to demonstrate the provision of a minimum of 10% affordable housing and the submission of an affordable/attainable housing report; and
- Recognition of additional housing programs inside and outside of the Official Plan which may also aid in providing affordable/attainable housing such as Community Improvement Plan, Community Planning Permit System, Supportive Zoning By-laws, Strategic reductions of Development Fees, and/or alternative site development standards.

The recommended policy changes place much stronger emphasis on providing affordable and attainable housing on new larger scale residential development projects. The housing policies strengthen many of the other policy changes proposed under the Height and Density sections, and by providing additional clarity through new descriptions and definitions.

The modifications to Density, Height and Housing described above have been summarized in Attachment #1 in track changes format. The original modifications as presented at the August 8, 2022 Public Meeting are shown in red. Modifications considered after the Public Meeting are shown in purple.

## **Council Options**

Based on the foregoing, Council has a number of options to consider. A summary is provided below and can be refined further after Council discussion:

1. Decision to **'Defer'** and push the entire Official Plan Review project to the next Council for further direction, decision on Phase 1 recommendations and Phase 2 process.
2. Decision to **'Approve in Principle'**. This is a non-binding position from this Council demonstrating Council endorsement of the intent and direction of Official Plan Amendment No. 3. The final decision on Phase 1 recommendations and Phase 2 process are pushed to next Council.
3. Decision to **'Adopt and Hold'**. Official Plan Amendment No. 3 can be adopted by By-law by this Council indicating formal support, along with a letter to County Council to hold off on a final decision until such time as Phase 2 is complete and request that the County provide a final decision on Phase 1 and Phase 2 at the same time. Adoption of Official Plan Amendment No. 3 by this Council allows for this Council to make a decision on Phase 1, however it does allow for future modifications to Phase 1 changes by the next Council and upon completion of the Phase 2 work.
4. Decision to **'Adopt in Part'**. Portions of Official Plan Amendment No. 3 could be adopted by this Council such as the Vision, Guiding Principles, Goals and Objectives, and Housekeeping items only. Adopted portions can then be sent to County Council for final approval. The remaining portions of Official Plan Amendment No. 3 such as the Density, Height and Housing sections can be deferred to Phase 2. Planning Staff note that the policies related to Density, Height and Housing sections are intertwined and should be adopted as a whole.
5. Decision to **'Adopt and Forward'** Phase 1 OPA to County Council for Approval. This option provides a firm decision on Official Plan Amendment No. 3 by this Council and directs the new County Council to provide a decision for final approval.

**Planning Staff has reviewed the above options and recommend that Council proceed with Option 5.**

Planning Staff in consultation with SGL Consultants have reviewed the scale of the proposed changes to the Official Plan Amendment and do not recommend that a second Public Meeting is required to seek input on the proposed changes. It is noted that the proposed changes have been discussed in detail at the Public Meeting through the submitted letters and verbal comments received. As part of a decision of Council to adopt the Official Plan Amendment, it is recommended that Council confirm this by way of resolution.

The Official Plan Project Team has completed the project deliverables as set out in the Terms of Reference for Phase 1. All public comments have been heard and considered through the public consultation process. Comments received up to and after the August 8 Public Meeting have been reviewed and informed the final modifications to Official Plan Amendment No. 3. The project team has balanced all comments received and heard through the project and are pleased to report that the final recommendations of the project are being delivered on time and on budget. All required steps have been completed, and there do not appear to be any outstanding research work to be completed under Phase 1. Implementing the policies of Phase 1 at this time allows for much needed policy updates to be put into effect shortly. Planning Staff are confident that the policy changes in Phase 1 can stand on their own and are

prescriptive to require additional study where required if higher density/building heights are being considered. Deferring a decision will likely result in delay until the completion of Phase 2 which is anticipated to take just over a year to complete. A decision of Council on Phase 1 will also provide the project team with clear direction and understanding on Phase 2 deliverables for the project.

Should Council wish to defer a decision, Planning Staff request that the reasons for deferral should be provided along with a summary of additional workplan details (if required) to be completed prior to a recommendation being provided to the next Council.

## **E. Strategic Priorities**

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### **1. Communication and Engagement**

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

### **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**

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Enhancements to environmental policies and the addition of new climate change policies are introduced within the Vision, Guiding Principles and Goals and Objectives sections of the Plan. Environmental benefits of more compact neighbourhoods are achieved through the increased density/height policies of the Plan. Further environmental impact review will occur more specifically under Phase 2 of the Project.

## **G. Financial Impacts**

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Phase 1 of the Official Plan Review project has been completed on budget. A decision to adopt and seek County approval on Phase 1 will allow Phase 2 to continue on the current budget plan. An appeal of Phase 1 will lead to legal costs associated with an Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) hearing process. Deferring a decision on Phase 1 may lead to Phase 1 and Phase 2 project changes and potential for new budget considerations. Deferral does avoid the ability for an appeal on Phase 1 changes until Phase 2 is completed.

## **H. In Consultation With**

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Official Plan Steering Committee  
Sierra Horton and David Riley, SGL Planning Consultants  
Adam Smith, Director of Planning and Development Services  
Shawn Everitt, CAO

## **I. Public Engagement**

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The topic of this Staff Report has been the subject of a Public Meeting, Public Open House and two Public Information Centres which took place in June, July and August 2022. Those who provided comments, including anyone who has asked to receive notice regarding this matter, has been provided notice of this Staff Report. Any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Shawn Postma, [planning@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:planning@thebluemountains.ca)

## **J. Attached**

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1. Summary of Official Plan Modifications since Public Meeting (Track Changes)
2. Official Plan Amendment No. 3 – Last Revised August 30, 2022
3. Agency and Public Comments Summary Matrix
4. Agency and Public Comments (Original as submitted)

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Postma  
Senior Policy Planner

For more information, please contact:  
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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	PDS.22.114 Information, Direction and Recommendation Report - Official Plan.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Attachment 1 - Official Plan Height and Housing Track Changes.docx</li><li>- Attachment 2 - Official Plan Amendment 3 - Official Plan 5 Year Reivew September 2022.docx</li><li>- Attachment 3 - Public Comments Summary for Official Plan Review Staff Report_KL_2.docx</li><li>- Attachment 4 - Official Plan Compiled Comments_Redacted.pdf</li></ul>
Final Approval Date:	Aug 31, 2022

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

**Adam Smith - Aug 31, 2022 - 5:16 PM**