



Staff Report

Planning & Development Services – Planning Division

Report To: COW-Operations, Planning and Development Services
Meeting Date: October 17, 2023
Report Number: PDS.23.104
Title: OP Update – Public Engagement, Survey Results, Background Papers update
Prepared by: Shawn Postma, Manager of Community Planning

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report PDS.23.104, entitled “OP Update – Public Engagement, Survey Results, Background Papers update for information purposes”;

B. Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the status of the Official Plan 5-Year Review project.

C. Background

Planning Staff last updated Council on the status of the Official Plan project in May and August this year. Since that time, the Public Survey has been completed, Background Papers are posted to the project website and an enhanced Public Consultation Plan has been prepared.

Previous Phase 2 Staff Reports:

[PDS.23.018](#) February Project Update
[PDS.23.028](#) May Project Update
[PDS.23.078](#) August Council Working Group Review

Previous Phase 1 Staff Reports and Presentations are available for viewing and download from the project website at www.tbmbblueprint.ca under the Phase 1 Staff Reports & Presentations section.

Public Survey:

Building on the findings of the Official Plan survey completed for Phase 1, a second survey was released over July and August. The survey primarily focused on Character and Community Design, as well as gaining some additional information related to the Phase 2 topics and seeking

further direction into some of the findings from the Phase 1 survey. In response the Town received 603 completed surveys. A [Survey Results Report](#) has been prepared and is available for viewing and download on the project website. Highlights from the survey report include:

Neighbourhoods & Housing

Residents overwhelmingly favour low-density housing on smaller lots. The primary sentiments expressed by respondents regarding neighbourhoods and housing revolved around the preservation of local character and the advocacy for affordable and accessible housing choices.

Commercial & Mixed Use

Residents prefer a low-density mixed-use concept to serve as the central focal point of the town's downtown areas.

Parks & Open Spaces

Improved active transportation infrastructure for walking and cycling with seating and landscaping is the type of parks and open spaces preferred by the majority of residents.

Streetscapes

Residents showed a strong preference for three streetscape images: Thornbury Downtown with outdoor seating (64.8%), pedestrian boulevards with expanded setbacks (56.1%), and significant street trees with building setbacks (53.0%).

Community Services & Amenities

Over half of the respondents selected parks and trails as the services/amenities they would like to see added. Community centres, local retail stores, grocery stores, and restaurants closely followed with roughly a third of the respondents each.

Affordable and Attainable Housing

Just under half of the respondents favoured the option of 'Gentle intensification in existing neighbourhoods,' which includes secondary suites and minor low-rise infill projects.

Building Height

When asked their opinion about the construction of buildings 3 storeys or higher, just over a third of respondents advocate for a site-specific analysis to ensure an appropriate transition and scale within their surroundings. As well, just under a third of respondents favour a maximum building height limit of 3 storeys.

The top three concerns regarding building heights of 3 storeys or higher are related to building shape, architecture, and character; worry about potential tree and vegetation

loss; and the potential loss of scenic views. Respondents felt that these buildings should be located in close proximity to community services, amenities and open space areas, most specifically along major roads. Most respondents favoured Blue Mountain Village or the surrounding area as well as Thornbury for such development.

Natural Environment, Climate Change, Parks, Trails and Open Space

Related to measures to address and mitigate climate change in The Blue Mountains, approximately three-quarters of respondent's favour:

- Preservation of the natural environment and features (78.3%), and
- Protecting urban green spaces and parks (74.1%)

Three-quarters of respondents expressed satisfaction with the level of access to parks, trails, and open spaces in their community and just under two-thirds of respondents expressed satisfaction with the amenities available within the existing public parks, trails and open spaces in their community.

In reviewing the results from the survey, it is clear that the survey respondents favour the continuation of low density (single detached dwellings) and low height (3 storeys) throughout the Town. Building Height appears to have one of the largest variances between respondents most indicating that 3 storeys should be the maximum, while others indicating that taller buildings can be considered based on site specific analysis, and careful attention to building design and architecture.

Consistent themes are apparent throughout the survey questions particularly around the protection/enhancement of trees, parks, open space, as well as attempting to retain the existing old-town feel of our communities. A strong majority of respondents are satisfied with the level of access to parks and trails and amenities provided, however there is also a strong desire to enhance community connectivity through sidewalks, trails, and other pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Outdoor community spaces including landscaping and seating should also be incorporated.

When presented with a range of images providing examples of different densities, mix of uses, and streetscape designs, the local images ranked highest as top priority indicating that the continuation and protection of the existing town character should be maintained.

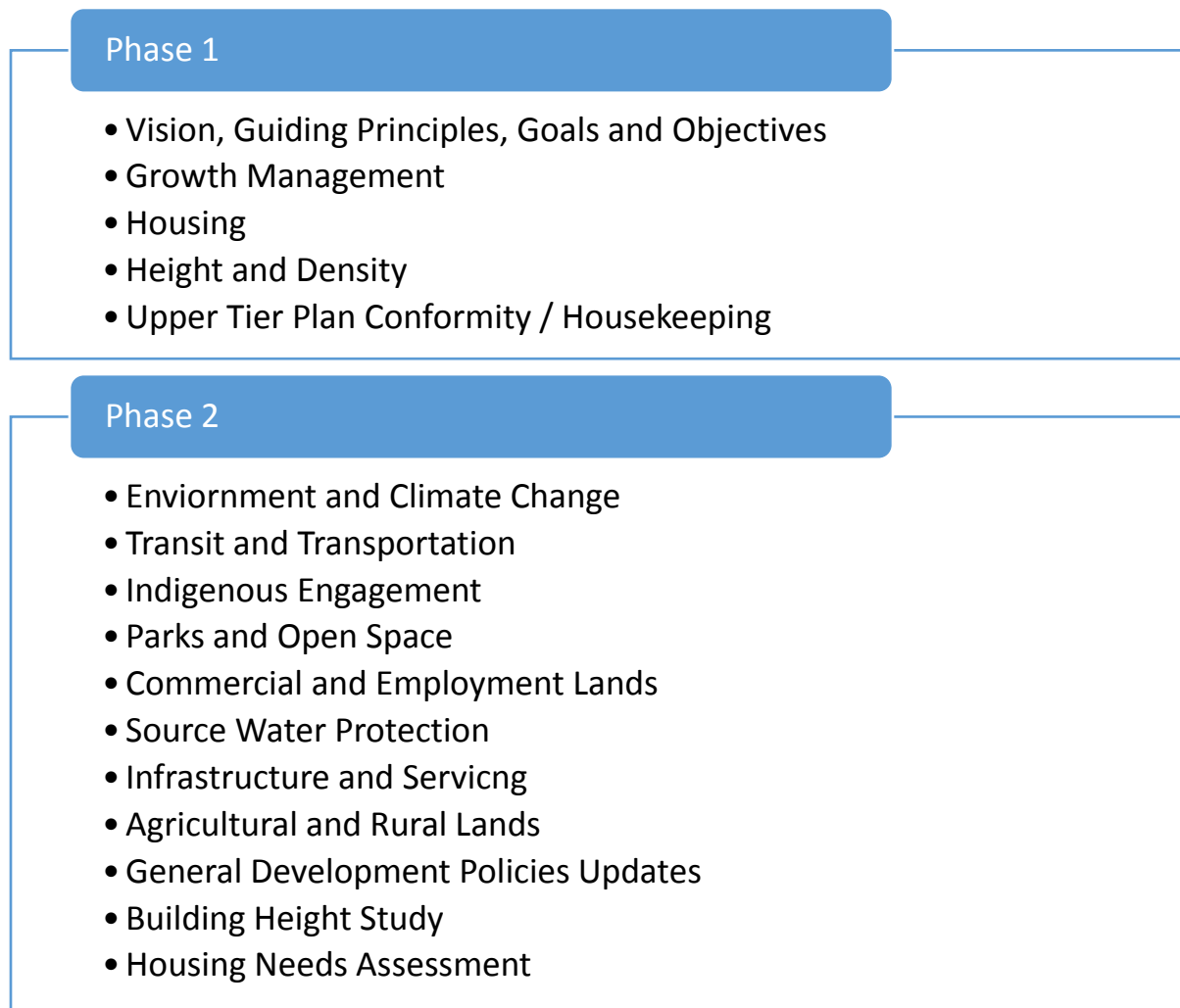
There is support for more attainable and affordable housing options throughout the Municipality. To achieve attainable and affordable housing, survey respondents indicated that gentle intensification and town initiated programs to be top priority.

Background Papers:

Eleven topics are examined as part of Phase 2, each with a Background Paper providing research into current policy direction, Provincial and County policy review, industry best practices and opportunities for policy updates to the current Official Plan. Nine of these papers have already been released. Two new additional papers to the project being a Building Height Study and Housing Needs Assessment will be released shortly.

These background papers provide a starting point for discussion throughout the future public consultation sessions to be held this fall. However, action on these complex subjects extends beyond the Official Plan and involves other plans and strategies.

Figure 1: Phase 1 and Phase 2 Background Papers



Public Engagement:

With further direction from Council earlier this summer, an enhanced public engagement plan has been prepared to increase the number of community engagement sessions from 4 sessions to 6 Sessions. In addition, time has also been set aside to meet individually with various stakeholder and special interest groups.

Public engagement will occur over the month of November through a series of three **Large Format Meetings** at Town Hall. These meetings include both live and virtual attendance, the presentation of Background Papers, a facilitated Q&A session, and then followed by facilitated breakout tables by Official Plan topic. Three **Drop-in Sessions** are planned and will provide 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. These sessions will be held throughout the Town in Ravenna, Clarksburg, and Craigleith.

Throughout the Public Engagement stage, Town Staff and the Project Team will be seeking feedback on the opportunities presented in the background papers, and gain a community wide understanding on policy direction.

Figure 2: Enhanced Public Engagement Plan

Date/Time	Location	Meeting Type	Meeting Topics
Saturday November 4 9:30am - 12:00pm	Town Hall	Large Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment and Climate Change Agriculture and Rural Lands Parks and Open Space Source Water Protection Cannabis Facilities
Wednesday November 8 12:00 - 4:00pm	Ravenna	Drop In	All Topics
Thursday November 16 2:00 - 4:30pm	Town Hall	Large Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure and Servicing Transit and Transportation Commercial Employment Lands Indigenous Engagement Community Planning Permit System
Saturday November 18 1:00 - 5:00pm	Clarksburg	Drop In	All Topics
Week of November 20-24	Various	Stakeholder Meetings	Individual stakeholder meetings topics/dates/times to be scheduled.
Thursday November 30 2:00 – 5:00pm	Town Hall	Large Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 topics refresher: Growth Management, Housing and Density Building Height

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character and Community Design Guidelines
Saturday December 2 9:30 am – 12:30pm	Craigeleith	Drop In	All Topics

All feedback is considered integral to the project, and will be reviewed prior to developing policy updates to the Official Plan. Once this stage of Public Consultation has been completed, the remainder of the project schedule and tasks are unchanged from the original project workplan.

The Official Plan Project Team will begin the preparation of policy updates to be considered as a Draft Official Plan Amendment. These new draft policies as well as an updated draft version of The Official Plan will be presented to the public again through a Public Open House and Public Meeting. Additional feedback will be received and will lead to further refinement of the Draft document. Subsequently, a recommendation report can be prepared to Committee of the Whole and then to Council for a final decision. Once Council is satisfied with the final version of the updated Official Plan, the Plan is next sent to the County of Grey for final approval.

The enhanced Public Engagement Plan results in the need for additional project time and budget. Town Staff estimate that the project completion date will be moved from December 2023 to April 2024.

Completion of this update is imperative to enable new policy tools to address present community development challenges and embark on other projects connected to the Official Plan. This includes a review of the Town’s Zoning By-law that while initially planned for 2024 is now being extended to 2025 in order to accommodate the new timeline for this project.

D. 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.

E. 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.

F. Financial Impacts

The current upset fee limit for the project is \$235,000 which includes contingency fees. With the enhanced public engagement plan proposed, an estimated \$23,000 in new costs will be required for Phase 2. The project contingency fee will be utilized resulting in a new contingency total of approximately \$13,000. Bill 23 impacts the ability of the municipality to continue using Development Charge (DC) revenue for this project. Once the DC Background Study is updated in early 2024, expenses associated with this project will be required to come from alternative sources.

G. In Consultation With

Tim Hendry, Manager of Communications and Economic Development
Adam Smith, Director of Planning and Development Services

H. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report will be the subject of an enhanced Public Engagement Plan in accordance with the schedule provided in Figure 2 to this report, in addition to a future Public Open House and Public Meeting to be scheduled.

Any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Shawn Postma,
planning@thebluemountains.ca

I. Attached

1. Nil

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Postma
Manager of Community Planning

For more information, please contact:

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	PDS.23.104 OP Update - Public Engagement, Survey Results, Background Papers Update.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Oct 6, 2023

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

Adam Smith - Oct 6, 2023 - 9:40 AM