



# Communications Overview

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Accountability & Transparency Committee

June 13, 2024

# Agenda

- Context of 2018/2019
- History of the Communications Committee
- Workplan Overview
- Communications Division Structure
- Communications Goals and Objectives
- Primary Functions and Responsibilities
- Overview of Communication Tools
- Policy Review

# Context of 2018/2019

The state of the Town's Communication efforts leading up to 2019 was lacking many key elements:

- No formalized brand presence
- Non-functional and difficult-to-use Town website
- Less than 300 email subscribers
- No social media presence
- Legislative notices were only advertised in the Collingwood Connection newspaper
- No formal policies or protocols related to Town communications
- Limited use of communication tools
- One dedicated Communications staff position

The Town's commitment to communications and the work of the Community Communications Advisory Committee were pivotal factors in changing the course and strengthening the Town's efforts.

# Communications Committee

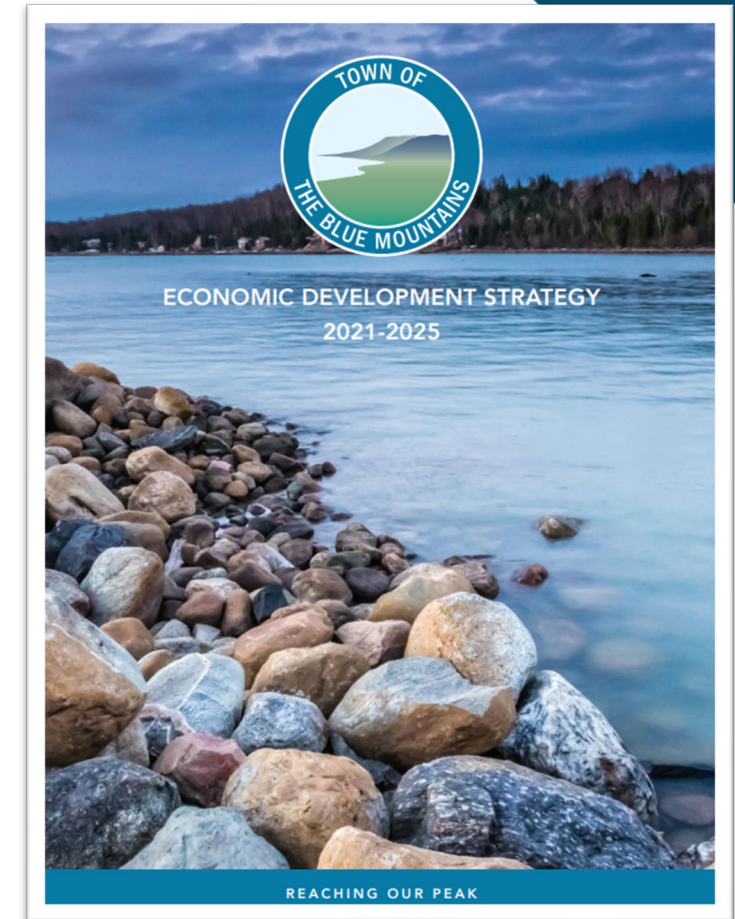
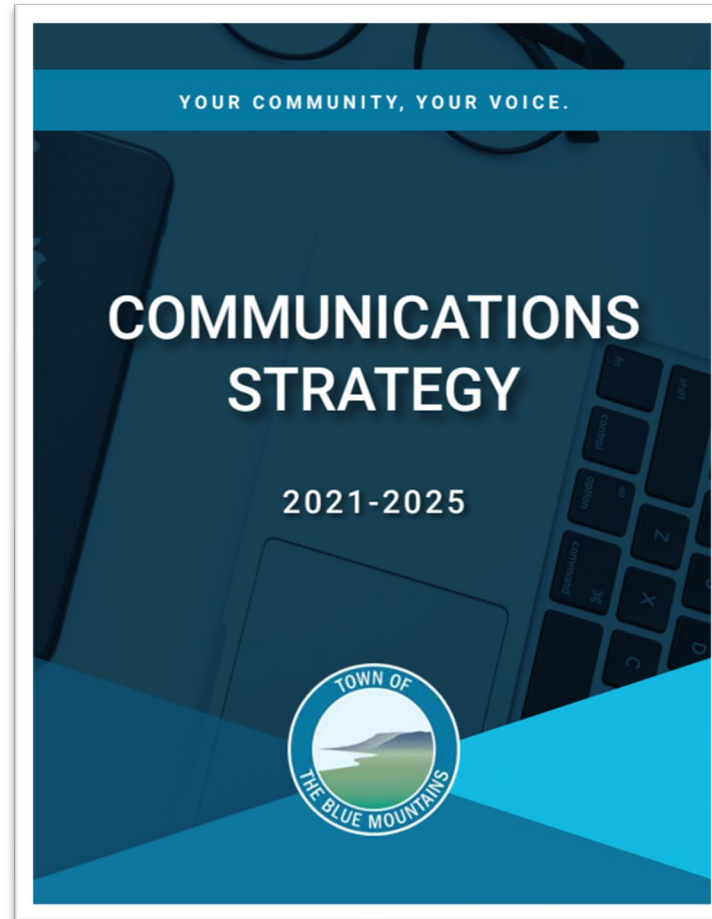
- The Committee was formed through the work of the Citizens' Forum Public Engagement Task Force, which involved Andres Paara, Rosemary Gosselin and Betty Muise.
- The Community Communications Advisory Committee, formed in 2019, was comprised of residents from throughout the community and was active between 2019 and 2022.
- Key projects included the development of the Town's first Communications Survey and Strategy, Town Website Redevelopment, Local Media Advertising Review, and much more.

- Mary Ferguson
- Lyn Logan
- Tom Maloney
- Jayne Sutherland
- John Milne
- Jacqui Morrison
- Andres Paara
- Elizabeth Brims
- Bills Abbotts
- Councillor Paula Hope
- Deputy Mayor Peter Bordignon
- Former Deputy Mayor Rob Potter

# Workplan

The work plan is driven by three primary functions:

1. **Corporate Communications & Economic Development**  
Supporting the activities, projects and initiatives of all Town departments and divisions
2. **Implementation of the Communications Strategy**
3. **Implementation of the Economic Development Strategy**



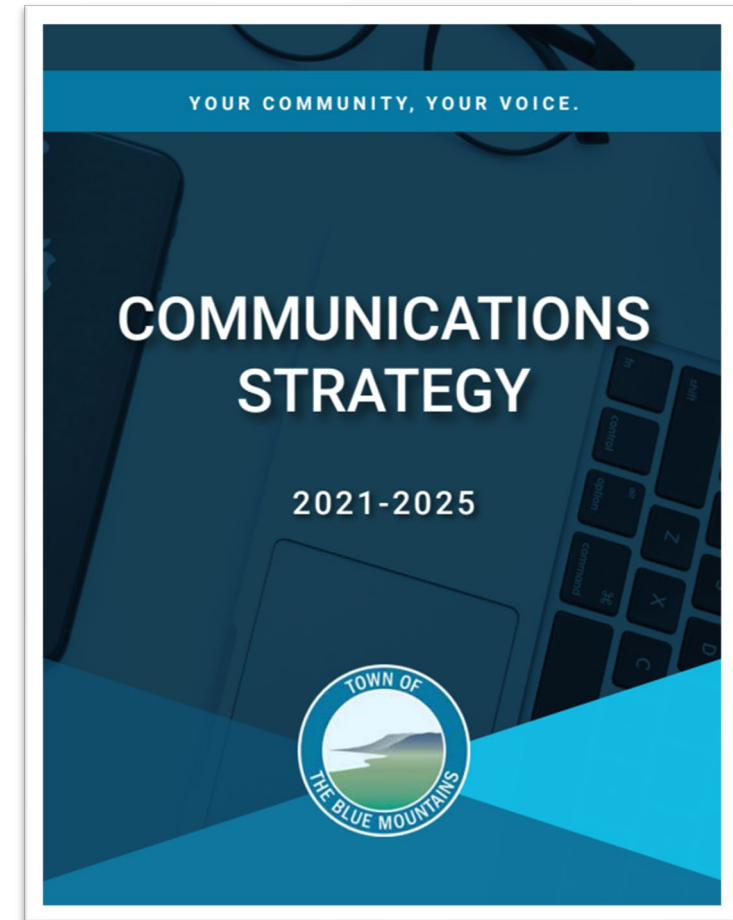
# Communications Strategy

The Strategy has a single goal that underscores the importance of listening and proactive communication, which includes all residents and stakeholders in The Blue Mountains community.

*An engaged community in which every voice is heard.*

## Objectives – Four Year Implementation

Objectives	Means of Achievement
<b>#1: Establish</b> a communication baseline	Define standards against which progress will be measured
<b>#2: Cultivate</b> communication excellence	Consistently deliver all Town communication in a factual, transparent, relevant and timely manner.
<b>#3: Develop</b> creative and multi-platform content that enhances all communication activities	Bring creativity and innovation to all aspects of how the Town engages residents across all media platforms
<b>#4: Foster</b> engagement and uphold public trust	Actively listen and engage residents to instill public trust and confidence



# Strategy Implementation

- 86% (18/21) of action items have been completed
- The remaining four action items are scheduled for implementation in 2024/2025
- Implementation progress is reported to Council through the annual budget process
- The strategy update project is scheduled for 2025

Research and define resident/stakeholder personas to enable targeted engagement plans	Develop an issues management communications plan
Develop and implement Social Media strategy	Conduct Citizen Satisfaction survey as identified in the Corporate Strategic Plan
Implement email address collection campaign	Create new resident welcome package
Launch quarterly, printed and mailed Town newsletter focused on storytelling	Develop department-specific explainer content (How To, Did You Know, Infographics, Videos)
Launch new corporate Town website	Conduct media relations training for leadership & Council
Evaluate public survey tool and engagement website	Establish youth engagement opportunities through partnerships with local schools and other levels of government
Establish standards for customer service	Launch resident text message communications and emergency alert tool
Develop communication work plans and review	Launch municipal podcast to share news and information with residents
Hire research firm to assist with all Town surveys	Launch pilot project with Town 'news boxes' located in high-traffic areas to assist with newsletter and Town survey distribution
Develop communication orientation package to onboard new staff and Council members	Purchase and improve use of digital screens/signage
Launch monthly e-newsletter	

# Communications Overview – Primary Functions

## 1. Corporate Communications

- Provide communications support for all Town departments and divisions
- Manage the Town’s website, including all content and notices (with the exception of Council/Committee notices)
- Lead public engagement efforts for projects through surveys, public information centres and workshops
- Jointly responsible for customer service through website email forms, corporate phone system, and user experience management

## 2. Project Support

- Dedicated communications support for the Operations Department and the Planning and Development Services Department
- Work with the project lead (Engineer, Planner, etc.) to help support their project
- Manage 107 project webpages for Planning and Capital projects ([www.thebluemountains.ca/current-projects](http://www.thebluemountains.ca/current-projects))

## 3. Branding and Graphic Design

- Dedicated staffing to complete all graphic design in-house
- Work diligently to uphold and manage the Town’s brand identity and to ensure a consistent look and feel





**Manager of Communications  
& Economic Development**

**Communications &  
Ec. Dev Coordinator**

**Communications  
Coordinator  
Capital Projects**

**Communications  
Coordinator Planning  
& Development**

**Communications &  
Branding Specialist**

# Communications Tools

The Town manages a variety of channels that are used to communicate and share news and information.

## Town Website (last 12 months)

- 160,000+ website users
- 570,000+ page views
- More than 650 newsroom notices posted annually
- 74 dedicated planning and development project webpages
- 33 dedicated capital project webpages
- 27 dedicated strategic project webpages

## Email Subscribers

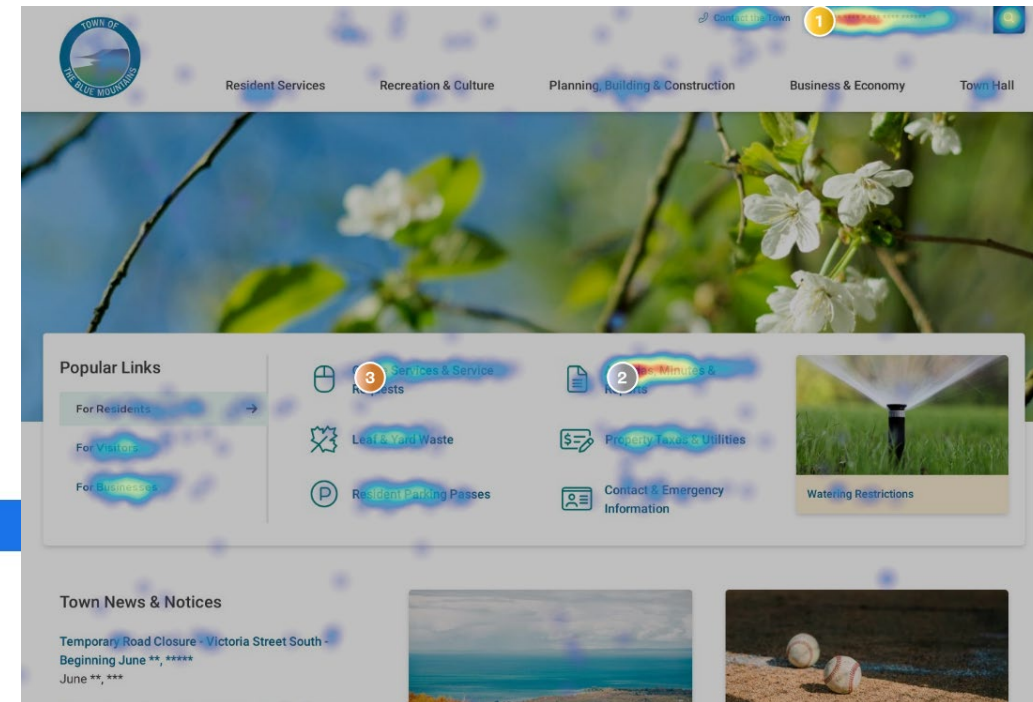
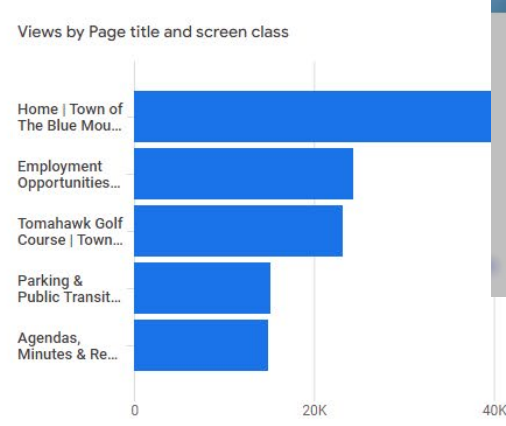
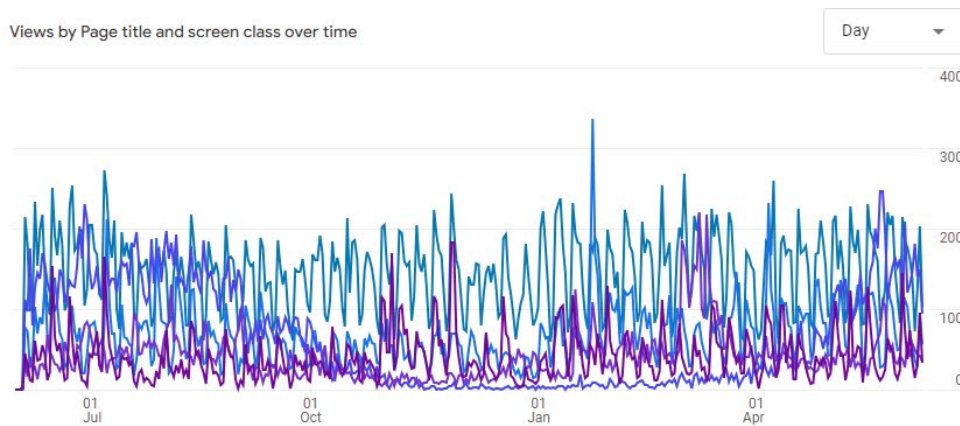
- 4,063 subscribers
- Six primary email lists
- Dedicated email subscription for every project webpage
- CASL compliant and actively managed



# Town Website

- The Town website serves as the primary customer service tool for the public
- Significant resources are invested to manage and maintain the website to ensure it is up-to-date
- Annual website upgrade program of \$10,000 to ensure that functionality and features remains competitive
- Use a variety of tools to track website performance (analytics, heat maps, session recordings, search query reports)

Keyword	Total Searches	Clicks	CTR	ACP
official plan	71	30	42.25%	1.20
sta	70	24	34.29%	4.69
zoning	62	23	37.1%	1.82
jobs	61	22	36.07%	1.24
parking	60	20	33.33%	1.95
pool	59	28	47.46%	2.90
bids	55	27	49.09%	1.36



## Monthly E-Newsletter

- 1,500+ subscribers
- Focused on sharing important Town news and project updates
- Open Rate: 76%, Click Rate: 15%

## Mailed Town Newsletters

- 7,500 newsletters printed quarterly and mailed to residents
- Print copies in display racks at Town Hall, Foodland, BVCC and Grace United Church
- Promoted online through the website and social media



## Social Media

- Twitter: 3,629 followers (Launched in 2010)
  - 2.3% Engagement Rate
- Facebook: 837 page likes (Launched 2022)
  - Average 1,000+ monthly interactions (shares, likes, reactions, etc.)
- Instagram: 855 followers (Launched 2023)
  - Average 1,700+ individual accounts reached monthly



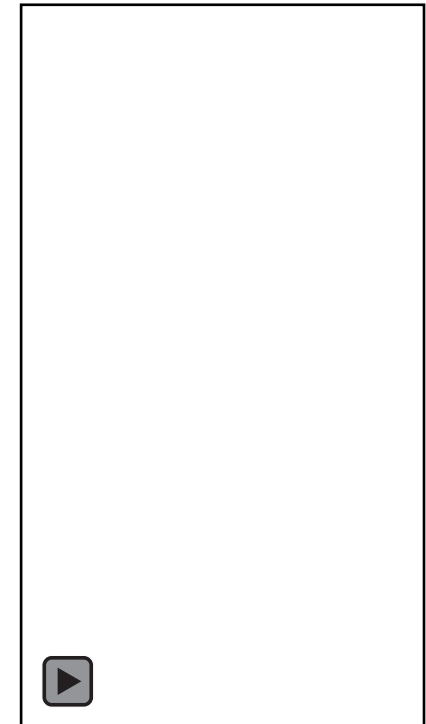
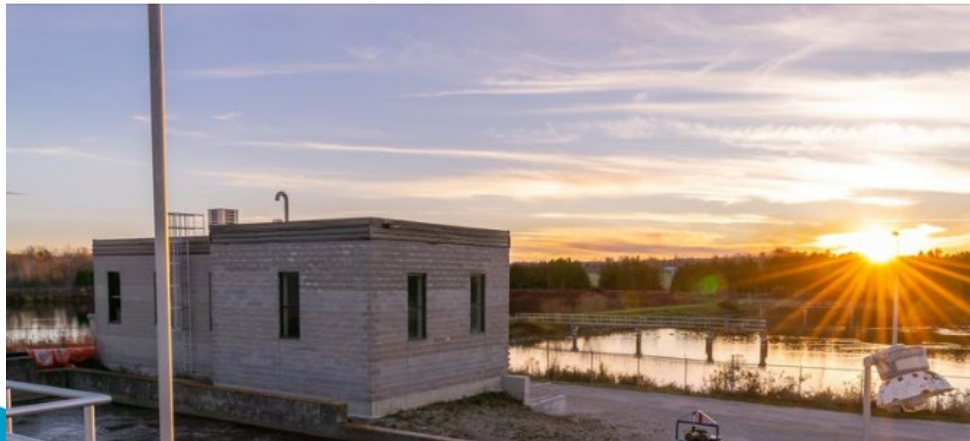
Town of The Blue Mountains

Published by Buffer · May 1 ·



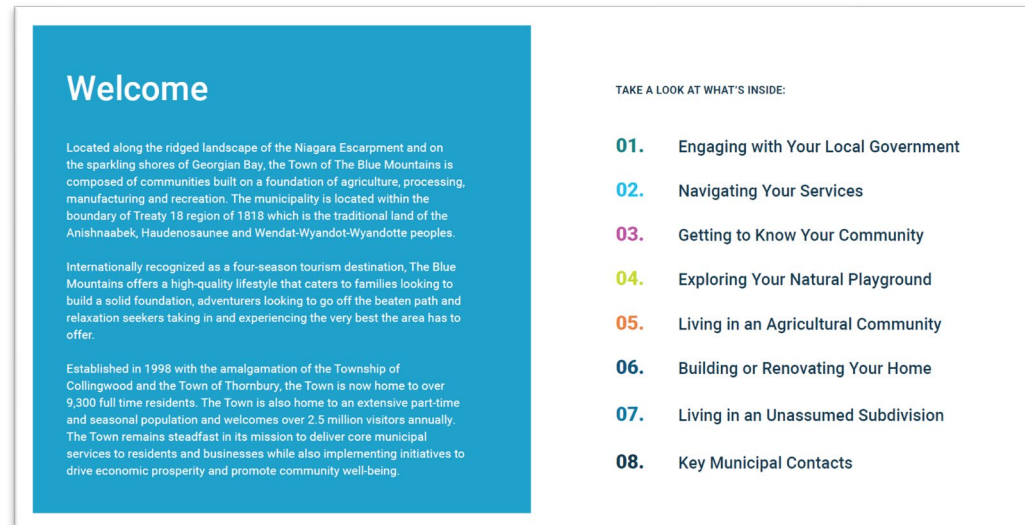
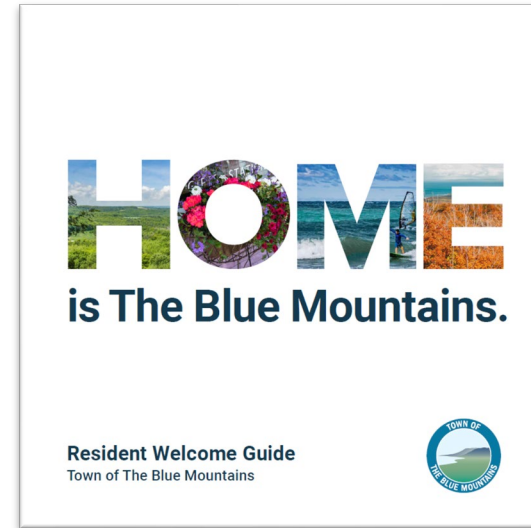
The Town is developing a Water and Wastewater Servicing Allocation Policy to ensure that existing system capacity is allocated in a sustainable and strategic manner. Share your thoughts at the Public Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 14.

Learn more: <https://www.thebluemountains.ca/.../water-and-wastewater>



## Resident Welcome Guide

- Developed as a resource to welcome new residents and provide answers to common questions
- Available at Town Hall, community churches, and distributed by the Town's Building Inspectors during final occupancy inspections



# Other Communication Tools

- Press Releases and Notices
- Email Subscriber Lists
- Social Media
- Local Media Partnerships
- Mailed Notices and Postcards
- Road Signs and Construction Signage
- Newspaper and Radio Ads
- Project Update Videos
- Public Surveys
- Public Information Centres

**TOWN NEWS & NOTICES**

(519) 599-3131 | info@thebluemountains.ca  
32 Mill St. Thornbury, ON | www.thebluemountains.ca  
Subscribe for Updates: [www.thebluemountains.ca/subscribe](http://www.thebluemountains.ca/subscribe)

### Notice of Public Meeting - Proposed Zoning By-Law Amendment

**Property Location:**  
Bay Street West Road Allowance, Town of The Blue Mountains

**Public Meeting:**  
October 3, 2022 at 1:00 PM (Hybrid Format - Virtual - Online format using Microsoft Teams & In-Person)

**What is being proposed?**  
Further to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) Decision on the "Abbotts Subdivision" (OLT Case No. OLT-22-002269) an application for Zoning By-law Amendment is required to zone a portion of the Bay Street W and Victoria Street N Road allowances for tree protection. As considered during the Tribunal Hearing, the addition of a tree protection area was identified. This change requires a formal application and public process to be completed. As such, the Town has been directed to apply to re-zone the portion of the unopened Bay Street West and Victoria Street N Road Allowances for tree protection.

The effect of the application is to rezone a portion of the Bay Street W and Victoria Street N Road allowances from the Residential (R1-1) zone to the Open Space (OS) zone. It is noted that no additional technical changes to the overall development plan considered by the OLT are proposed.

**Public Meeting Information:**  
Written Comments - You are encouraged to provide your comments or questions in writing using email or regular letter mail to the Town Clerk. Written comments received by October 2nd, 2022 will be read by the Town Clerk at the Public Meeting and will be included in the record of the Public Meeting.  
Verbal Comments - Those that wish to make verbal comments are required to pre-register with the Town Clerk, no later than five business days in advance of the Public Meeting, by September 26th, 2022.

Please note that the meeting will be also live broadcasted on the Town's website and posted as a video following the public meeting. You do not need to register to view the meeting on the Town's website. Any submitted comments become part of the public record, including names and addresses.

**Key Maps:**

**Legend:**

- Subdivision of the unopened
- Tree Protection Area (Bay St)

Contact the Town Clerk to pre-register or submit comments to [townclerk@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:townclerk@thebluemountains.ca) or by calling the Town at (519) 599-3131 ext. 232 or Fax: (519) 599-7723  
Comments by mail: Town Clerk, Town Hall, 32 Mill St. Box 310, Thornbury ON, N0H 2P0.

**Where do I find more information?**  
For more information about this matter, including information about preserving your appeal rights, contact Planning Services at the Town of The Blue Mountains at (519) 599-3131 ext. 283 or [planning@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:planning@thebluemountains.ca). The Town Planner assigned to this file is Travis Sandberg, Intermediate Planner. You may also view the Town's Development Projects page on the Town website at [www.thebluemountains.ca](http://www.thebluemountains.ca) to view application materials. You may also request a copy of the full public notice.

**MEETING LIVE STREAM**

Watch Council, Committee & Public Meetings live from anywhere!  
[www.thebluemountains.ca/live-stream](http://www.thebluemountains.ca/live-stream)



# Public Surveys

Public surveys have been used to gain feedback from residents and stakeholders on a variety of topics/projects. Between 2019 – 2022, the Town issued many surveys, which led to response/engagement burnout.

- Official Plan Review
- Resident Satisfaction Survey
- Moreau Park Revitalization Project Survey
- Craigeith Community Park Survey
- Communications Strategy
- Role of Tourism Survey
- Sustainability Priorities Survey
- Fire Master Plan
- Leisure Activities Plan
- Economic Development Strategy

## Key Challenges

- The overreliance on public surveys led to reduced response rates and raised questions about the Town's engagement practices
- Concerns that survey questions are designed/written to pre-determined a specific response
- Concerns regarding specific comments not being captured within survey response analysis and summaries
- Concerns that project recommendations and action items do not reflect the public feedback that was provided through the survey
- Projects often have long timelines following the close of the public survey, and it's often perceived that the project has stalled

## New Changes

- The Communications Strategy identified an opportunity to improve the Town's survey methodology by using an independent, professional third-party research firm. Last year, budget was approved, and the Town completed an open-market RFP bid process to hire a survey firm of record: The W Group.
- Since then, The W Group has developed and conducted the analysis for all Town surveys. The process involves The W Group working with the Town's project team to identify the goals and objectives, drafting/reviewing the questions, administering the survey and completing the data analysis and final summary report.



# Policy Review

Policies have been implemented to ensure consistency in service delivery:

- Notice Policy (currently under review)
- Social Media Policy
- Media Relations Policy
- Corporate Brand Policy
- Proclamation Policy

## Other Relevant Policies & By-laws

- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service Policy
- Accountability and Transparency of Town Actions to Public Policy
- Sale and Disposition of Land Policy
- Purchasing Policy
- Public Meeting Comments Policy
- Procedural By-law



### Logo Use

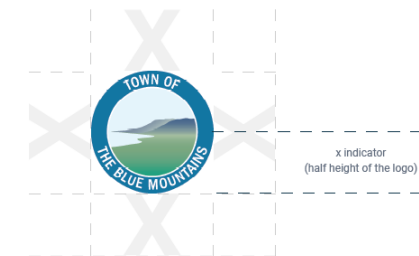
#### LOGO CLEAR SPACE

In order to maintain the visual integrity of the Town of The Blue Mountains brand, there needs to be adequate space around the logo every time that it is used. This space can be represented by the measurement 'X' (which equals half of the height of the logo). Each logo should have at least 'X' amount of space surrounding it at all times, meaning no other visual element (other logos, text, etc.) should fall within this space.

#### MINIMUM SIZE

The Town of The Blue Mountains logo should never appear smaller than specified.

LOGO USE



PRIMARY LOGO 02.3

# Active Projects

The team is leading or supporting communications efforts for the following projects

- Moreau Park Revitalization
- Natural Heritage Study
- Official Plan Review
- Thornbury West Upgrades
- Multi-Use Recreation Centre Study
- Craigleith Community Park
- Community Improvement Plan
- Municipal Accommodation Tax
- PDS Customer Service Survey
- Resident Satisfaction Survey
- Craigleith Firehall Construction
- Youth Climate Action Fund
- Servicing Allocation Policy
- Film Attraction
- Physician Recruitment
- Wastewater Master Plan
- Open Fields
- East Side Water Storage EA
- Inflow and Infiltration
- Lakewood Drive Reconstruction
- Thornbury WWTP Expansion
- Campus of Care and 125 Peel Street
- Bay Street Reconstruction
- Ravenna Roads Depot Expansion
- Beaver Valley Tourism Strategy
- Informal Public Engagement Opportunities
- Notice Policy Review
- Zoning By-law Review
- Provincial Delegations
- Wayfinding & Gateway Signage
- Future Story Sustainability Strategic Plan
- Street Tree Inventory
- Peel Street North Reconstruction
- Drainage Master Plan
- Customer Service Training
- Employee Working Groups

# Conclusion

The Communications Team has enjoyed and benefited from working with advisory groups, and we welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Accountability and Transparency Committee.

We understand the role of communications in accountability and transparency, and every team member is dedicated and passionate about their work and the benefits it can provide to the community.



**Thank You**