



Staff Report

Community Services

Report To: COW- Admin, Corp and Finance, SI, Comm. Services
Meeting Date: November 17, 2025
Report Number: CS.25.003
Title: Town Cultural & Heritage Assets
Prepared by: Ryan Gibbons, Director Community Services

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report CS.25.003, entitled “Town Cultural and Heritage Assets”;

AND THAT Council endorses the Town’s Cultural Map, administered by the Craigeith Heritage Depot Museum and Archive with TBM GIS support, as the corporate intake and working inventory for identifying cultural, natural, built- heritage, intangible, and agricultural assets, recognizing it as a living database;

AND THAT Council directs staff to include consideration of developing a Cultural Heritage Master Plan in the 2027 budget process, at which time consideration can be extended to the establishment of a Heritage Committee.

B. Overview

This staff report responds to 2 notices of motion by members of Council and provides recommendations that identify the current tools available. The report also recommends that a Cultural Heritage Master Plan and Heritage Committee be considered through the 2027 budget process recognizing the significant resources required for implementation.

C. Background

On April 8, 2024, Councillor Hope provided a Notice of Motion:

WHEREAS the Town of The Blue Mountains is blessed with many undocumented cultural and heritage assets;

BE IT RESOLVED that Council direct staff to prepare a report to establish the process by which all Town cultural and heritage assets are identified, managed and preserved.

On April 15, 2024, Councillor Maxwell provided a Notice of Motion directing staff to develop and disseminate information and communication tools enabling residents to participate in preservation of natural, built, cultural, and agricultural assets, and expressing support for the

establishment of a Municipal Heritage Task Force to assist in developing Terms of Reference for a subsequent Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee (MHAC).

WHEREAS the Town of The Blue Mountains has a rich history reflected in its natural landscapes, built environment, and cultural traditions that have shaped the community's identity over generations;

AND WHEREAS this historical heritage, along with vital agricultural lands and our natural landscapes have continually contributed to the economic vitality and sustainability of the municipality;

AND WHEREAS engaging the community in the preservation of these assets is imperative to their stewardship for the benefit of present and future generations;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains directs municipal staff to develop and disseminate information and communication tools and methodologies to residents who are interested in to actively participating in the preservation of our natural, built environment, cultural, and vital agricultural assets;

AND FURTHER that Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains also supports the establishment of a Municipal Heritage Task Force prior to assist in the development of the Terms of Reference for the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee that will follow shortly after, as outlined in the Official Plan, to enhance these public engagement efforts and guide our preservation strategies.

The Town maintains an active Cultural Map Initiative, led by the Craigeith Heritage Depot Museum & Archives in collaboration with the Blue Mountains' GIS Team. The Cultural Map is a dynamic, online inventory that collects and showcases community-identified cultural, natural, historical, and intangible assets. Since its launch in early summer 2024, the Map has grown to feature 147 sites and 5 more have been recently submitted for consideration.

Building on this success, the Town, in partnership with the Museum, released a print edition of the Cultural Map in Fall 2025, available at the Library, Museum, and Town Hall. This community-driven initiative invites residents and visitors to contribute their stories, photographs, and memories—helping to uncover hidden gems, strengthen connections to the past, and celebrate the vibrant culture of the present.

D. Analysis

The implementation of the Cultural Map by the Craigeith Heritage Depot directly addresses several components of the motions passed by Council. The use of cultural mapping represents a well-established and recognized approach within the fields of community development and heritage planning.

Prior to its launch, staff conducted a comparative analysis of local, provincial, and international precedents to identify pertinent methodologies and frameworks suitable for adaptation within

the context of this community project. A comprehensive outline of the project's conceptual foundation, procedural framework, and operational processes is included as an attachment to this report.

The Cultural Map currently functions as the Town's centralized intake and working inventory for identifying potential cultural assets. Public nominations, along with staff and partner research, continue to be accepted through existing channels, including the online submission portal and Museum intake process. Routine data governance practices, such as monthly data entry by Museum staff and monthly GIS updates, will be maintained to ensure AODA-compliant content and verified permissions for all images and records.

The primary objectives of the Cultural Map are twofold: to preserve the community's existing cultural heritage and to record lost or at-risk heritage resources. Observational analysis of historical photographic records from the region underscores a substantial depletion of both cultural and natural heritage over the past 25 to 30 years. Consequently, the creation of this map served as a proactive strategy to conserve existing visual and narrative records before further heritage attrition occurs. Given the exigency of this undertaking, a relatively inclusive criterion was employed in the selection of elements deemed significant for inclusion on the map. The Cultural Map will function as the single corporate intake and working inventory for candidate assets. Public nominations and staff/partner research will be accepted through existing channels (web form/portal and Museum submissions). Routine data governance practices (weekly data entry by Museum; monthly GIS refresh) will continue, with AODA-compliant content and appropriate image/records permissions.

Building upon the foundation established through the Cultural Map, a comprehensive Cultural Heritage Master Plan or a The Blue Mountains (TBM) Heritage Conservation Plan could serve as a mechanism for informing residents about active participation in the preservation of natural, built, cultural, and agricultural assets. Such a plan would act as a centralized resource to enhance public understanding, outline strategic priorities, and identify policy tools to support ongoing preservation and management efforts.

Generally, the municipality's primary role in cultural heritage planning should primarily focus on the establishment of clear standardized procedures and protocols for heritage preservation within the community, rather than directly managing or preserving individual assets. Municipal intervention could be reserved for instances where these established heritage standards and protocols are not being adhered to.

The development of a comprehensive heritage plan and accompanying by-laws is an essential precursor to forming an effective heritage committee. The initial composition of such a committee is paramount for the successful implementation of any new regulations and procedures.

Given the above and current staff capacity and expertise, it is recommended that Council not establish a Municipal Heritage Committee or Task Force at this time. Town and Library staff, including Museum and GIS professionals, currently manage the intake, curation, verification,

and analysis of community submissions as part of their regular duties. This existing structure supports the objectives of the Notices of Motion.

The Cultural Map remains an excellent platform for building awareness and identifying cultural assets within the community. As part of a future Cultural Heritage Master Plan, the establishment of a Municipal Heritage Committee or Task Force should be explored to help guide and coordinate heritage initiatives. The success of such a body will depend on adequate resourcing and the identification of meaningful, well-supported projects—both of which are best achieved through the development of a comprehensive, forward-looking plan.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

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

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

None at this time.

G. Financial Impacts

There is no budget impact associated with the recommendations at this time. The development of a Cultural Heritage Master Plan will be brought forward through the 2027 budget process.

H. In Consultation With

Adam Smith, CAO

Jennifer Murley, Library CEO

Alessia Ferris, Museum Curator

I. Public Engagement

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

J. Attached

None

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan Gibbons
Director Community Services

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	CS.25.003 Town Cultural and Heritage Assets.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 7, 2025

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

No Signature found

Adam Smith - Nov 7, 2025 - 2:23 PM

Ryan Gibbons - Nov 7, 2025 - 2:25 PM