# The Blue Mountains Future Story: Integrated Community Sustainability Plan Current State Report

| Project Name: | Project Manager: |
|---|---|
| TBM Future Story | John Lewis, President & Founder, Intelligent Futures |
| Anticipated Project Duration: | Sponsor & Client: |
| November 2020 - February 2022 | Jeffery Fletcher, Town of the Blue Mountains |
| Project Vision: | |
| The Sustainability Plan will build a holistic understanding of our community and will chart a clear actionable path to a future that is uniquely Town of the Blue Mountains, and is increasingly livable and healthy. | |
| Deliverable: | **Revision Number:** up to two (2) revisions |
| 4 of 18 | 0 |
| Date Provided by Intelligent Futures: March 23, 2021 | Requested Date Reviewed Document Sent to Intelligent Futures: April 2, 2020 |
| Remarks: | |
| A baseline assessment of current state in The Blue Mountains. This document is based on the review of local data, policy direction, international best practice direction, engagement feedback, and stakeholder feedback. | |
| Revision Log: | |
| Version Number: | Description: |
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# TBM Future Story Draft Current State Report

Version: 0.1

| Revision | Description |
|---|---|
| 0.0 (March 11, 2021) | Current State Report Outline |
| 1.0 (March 23, 2021) | Draft Current State Report |

**Instructions for Reviewers:**

This draft report is a content-focused report. Upon finalization of the content, the Intelligent Futures team will add a level of design treatment prior to completion of the report.

When reviewing the document, please provide your comments on the comment tracker spreadsheet, which was included in the email that circulated this draft. When adding your comments, please place them in the tab entitled 'Worksheet 1 - Reviewer Feedback.'

For the TBM team: Once reviewers have provided their feedback in the tab on the spreadsheet identified above, we ask that you review, reconcile, and identify the changes in Worksheet 1 and store the confirmed changes in the tab entitled 'Worksheet 2 (Confirmed Feedback)' for our team to factor into the revised version by April 2.

# Contents

# 1.0 Introducing Sustainability

## 1.1 Purpose of this document

In order to effectively move towards a sustainable future, it is important to understand the realities of the community today. When considering an issue as complex as sustainability in a community as dynamic as the Town of the Blue Mountains [TBM], understanding the current state requires inputs from a variety of sources - historical trends and data, current policy, community views and global best practices, which contextualize the TBM context. This Current State Report provides a review of varied sources and provides insights that will be considered as the TBM Future Story project moves into future phases and develops actions to move the community from the current state to the desired future.

## 1.2 The Opportunity of TBM Future Story

The challenge question that has been established for the TBM Future Story process is:

*How might we build upon the unique attributes of the Town of the Blue Mountains while creating a shared path towards a future of increased livability, vibrancy and health of all living systems in our community?*

TBM Future Story will help shape local decision making by providing a clear path to the future, starting with a sound understanding of today's context as explored in this report. Four community systems were identified as a starting point for understanding sustainability in the Town of TBM.

- The social system (how we can all live our best lives)
- The environmental system (how we protect our natural resources and manage climate changes)
- The economic system (how the community can remain vibrant and successful for decades to come)
- The cultural system (how our human and natural heritage can be preserved and enhanced)

These systems may be refined as the process evolves, to best reflect the unique context of the community.

*The four community systems that framed the exploration of the current state of TBM.*

The community has a strong history of exploring sustainability in a comprehensive way. In 2009-2010, the Town developed *The Sustainable Path* - a long-term sustainability plan to guide the future of the community. This plan included goals for the future and # related actions. INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT WAS COMPLETED WILL BE INSERTED ONCE WE HAVE THESE STATISTICS.

Since *The Sustainable Path* was completed in 2010, local to global realities have changed significantly. From the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change to demographic shifts, from technological advances to changes in the local economy, the pressures and opportunities for the community are very different. TBM Future Story is an opportunity to reflect these new realities and set a new course to address our challenge question that leads us to a future of increased livability, vibrancy and health of all living systems in our community.

# 1.3 The TBM Future Story Process

The TBM Future Story process is broken down into three phases:

**Phase 1: Community Situational Assessment**

This phase surfaces the current realities of TBM's context (including data, trends, policy, experience, and perspectives). The engagement in this phase focused on understanding the views and experiences of stakeholders and community members and exploring what makes it unique.

*Phase 1 Deliverable: Current State Report*
*Following the completion of Phase 1, a Current State Report discussing current realities in TBM will be presented to Council.*

**Phase 2 - Visioning and Objectives**

This phase will develop a picture of the desired future for TBM based on the ideas, hopes and dreams of the community. This is our largest phase of engagement, as we will focus on collaboratively gathering insights for what the community wants TBM to look like in the future.

*Phase 2 Deliverable: Vision and Objectives Report*
*Following the completion of Phase 2, a Vision and Objectives Report on a collectively desired future will be presented to Council.*

**Phase 3 - Develop Action Plan**

This phase will develop a plan for the future that moves the community from the current reality (Phase 1) to the desired future (Phase 2), turning ideas into meaningful action steps grounded in TBM's unique context. This phase of engagement will explore the most impactful ideas and opportunities for shared ownership of the actions to move towards the desired future of TBM.

*Phase 3 Deliverable:  The Blue Mountains Future Story: Community Sustainability Plan*
*Following the conclusion of the first three phases, a final report will be developed for further review. Once the final report is complete, the Action Plan will be presented to Council for adoption.*

The Blue Mountains Future Story: Community Sustainability Plan completed in phase 3 will provide the foundation that will inform the Town's directional plans and resources, as illustrated in the diagram below.

# 2.0 Current State Sustainability Insights

## 2.1 Developing Insights

Insights are a way to capture important information about a particular context or situation. For TBM Future Story, establishing insights about the current state of the community requires a multifaceted approach to information gathering. In addition to using the four community systems (social, environmental, economic, cultural) as a framework, the project team explored a variety of approaches.
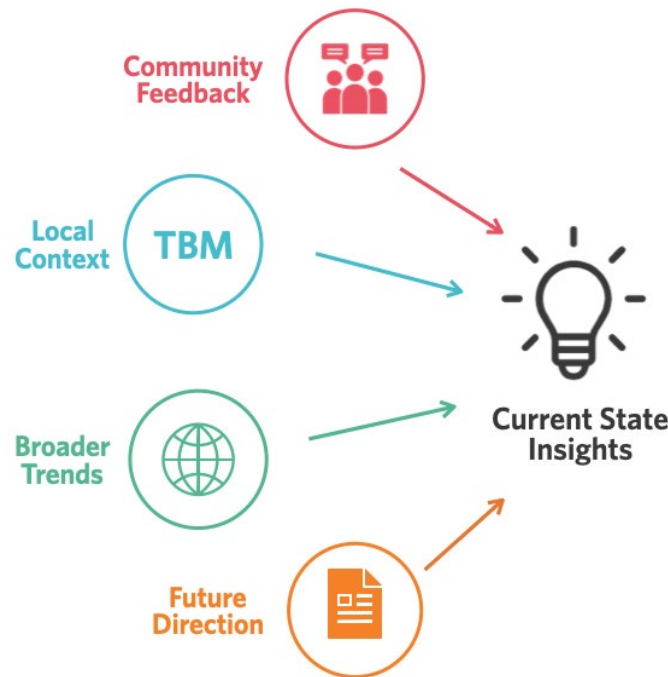


- *Community feedback* explored the views, experiences and ideas of residents. This provides an understanding of what matters to the community, what life is like today and what changes could improve the future.
- *Local context research* looked at data and trends that represent varied aspects of community life. This provides an understanding of historical trends and objective information on the community.
- *Broader trend research* examined best practices and directions in national and international policy. This provides a broader context to understand the current reality of TBM and where the community may go in the future.
- *Future direction research* reviewed the policy direction for the community and region. This provides a local perspective on the current direction for change in the community.

No single source of information provides the true reflection of the current reality of the Town of The Blue Mountains. Amongst all sources, a more holistic understanding of the community begins to take shape. The insights that follow in this section represent an integration of this information into statements that can shed light on the complex reality of the Town of The Blue Mountains as we look to move the community towards a more sustainable future. Each insight concludes with a challenge question that will frame part of the exploration of future phases of the TBM Future Story process.

## 2.2 Current State Insights

**The beauty of TBM can be a mixed blessing.**

The natural assets of TBM are what is most treasured by the community. These assets are a major economic driver, as visitors are drawn to the natural beauty and recreational opportunities of the area. High levels of visitation and use then actually serves to degrade the quality and enjoyment of these very assets, if not managed properly. At the same time, improvements to infrastructure and access to natural areas such as the shoreline can improve quality of life for residents, but then also attracts more people to visit, putting further pressure on these resources.

*A challenge question for TBM Future Story: How might we share in the enjoyment of our natural assets while ensuring their preservation for future generations?*

**Diversity in a variety of forms is challenged.**

A convergence of pressures is serving to limit the economic and social diversity of the community. The local economy is reliant on tourism, which provides limited economic diversity and opportunity. There is a strong agricultural heritage in TBM, representing an important part of our history, identity and economy, but the agricultural land base and local food security is diminished by land economics through the conversation of farmland to residential use. Combined with a high cost of living and limited supports and programs in the community, the population is less diverse as many are unable to comfortably live and work in the community. With a less diverse community, TBM may be missing unique perspectives and ideas to address challenges that the community faces.

*A challenge question for TBM Future Story: How might we build upon the unique attributes of TBM to become a community of more diverse opportunities?*

**There are varying sets of values and expectations in the community.**

The Blue Mountains is so many things to so many people. The result is a varied and sometimes conflicting set of views and expectations for life in the community. A high level of visitors and part-time residents can lead to a 'disposable' or 'single use' mindset that runs counter to preserving what makes TBM unique, highlighting the tension between enjoying the local resources and culture today and preserving these same resources for future generations. In meeting today's community needs and building for the future, actions - such as building apartments to address housing affordability - may run counter to the expectations of existing residents.

*A challenge question for TBM Future Story: How might we establish a shared set of values of what is worth preserving in TBM and what changes are needed for a sustainable future?*

**Meeting community needs in a visitor-driven local economy can be a challenge.**

As a key economic driver in the area, meeting the needs of visitors can take a great deal of resources and attention in a smaller community. This focus can hamper the ability to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the community, or serve

to drive people away. As a community that is relatively affluent, socioeconomic problems are often hidden to much of the community. With a lack of awareness, it can be a challenge to address these issues, magnifying the difficulty of balancing local needs with visitor needs.

*A challenge question for TBM Future Story: How might we leverage the benefits of a significant number of visitors to enhance the quality of life for all residents?*

**Thinking about crisis and pleasure isn't easily done together.**

Like every other community, TBM is grappling with the climate crisis, challenges to infrastructure, and demographic and economic pressures. Addressing these challenges requires a commitment to the future and a willingness to understand difficult realities. This mindset runs counter to the view of visitors who are going to TBM to recreate and 'get away' from challenges and difficulties.

*A challenge question for TBM Future Story: How might we leverage the initial attraction to the beauty of TBM as a way of generating actions that address the challenges of today and tomorrow.*

**Sustainable solutions need many hands.**

In understanding the varied community systems (economic, environmental, social, cultural), it becomes apparent that issues and opportunities do not exist in isolation. Rather, these systems are interconnected in ways that are both obvious and subtle. There is a strong need for leadership in all areas of the community to realize economic diversification, environmental protection and preservation, cultural and social security for today and future generations. Local government has a critical role to play in making the community more sustainable, but can't do it alone. Meaningful and coordinated action from individual citizens, businesses, institutions and regional partners will be required to move the culture of the community forward.

*A challenge question for TBM Future Story: How might we generate a sense of shared responsibility and action towards a sustainable future?*

As the TBM Future Story process continues, these insights and challenge questions, coupled with the rich detail of information described in Section 3 will provide information and provocation to establish a future path for sustainability in the Town of the Blue Mountains.

# 3.0 Sustainability Area Themes

Through an analysis of local data, policy, expert feedback, international best practice, and public feedback, nine sustainability themes emerged as necessary contributors to sustainability. In addition, five supplementary themes were identified that support the functioning of the initial 9 sustainability themes.

**Sustainability themes include:**

1) Watershed Health
2) Greenhouse gas emissions and energy
3) Consumption and Production
4) Sustainable Towns and Communities
5) Sense of Community
6) Affordability
7) Economic Growth and Tourism
8) Agriculture
9) Government and Partnerships

**Supplementary themes include:**

10) Health and Safety
11) Arts and Culture
12) Local Business
13) Education and Learning
14) Infrastructure and Innovation

Each sustainability theme will be documented in a four-page snapshot that summarizes what we've learned about sustainability in each topic area for The Blue Mountains. Once the content is finalized through the review process, these pages will be designed to be easily extractable for future engagements and reference.

Supplementary themes are documented in one-to-two page overviews, as supporting mechanisms identified by the public.

# 3.1 Watershed health

Watershed health refers to the status of the natural environment including significant natural features, water, wetland, forest, and wildlife conditions. International best practice, local policy, and local experts support the protection and maintenance of ecological resources, while enhancing biodiversity, wildlife environments, and improving water quality.

A 2018 analysis found that not all of TBM's watersheds have the same health status.[iii] Community feedback supports the natural environment as the most unique aspect of the Town, but also reports that tourism and development may be a threat to continued protection.

### 3.1.1 Stats and data

In 2018, both Nottawasaga and Grey Sauble Conservation Authorities underwent watershed "health checks" that reported on the health of the watershed's forest and wetland conditions, stream health, and groundwater quality.[iii][iv] Overall, southern parts of the municipality scored higher than northern catchments, particularly for wetland and forest conditions.

When looking closer at forest conditions for Indian Brook, the scores were broken down into: % forest cover (scored "fair" (C)), % forest interior (scored "poor" (F)), and % riparian zone forested (scored "good" (B)).[v] Each of these forest requirements have improved over past reports, but remain short of the optimal percentages determined by the province. In particular, percent forest interior–"the remaining portion of a woodlot when a 100 metre buffer is removed"–rated poorly due to a lack of large forested areas. These areas are important as they provide native species with undisturbed habitat.[vi]

| Catchment | Forest Conditions | Wetland conditions | Surface Water Quality |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Beaver River | A | B | A |
| 2) Mill Creek | A | B | B |
| 3) Little Beaver | D | F | C |
| 4) Indian Brook | D | F | B |
| 5) Townline Creek | B | A | C |
| 6) Pretty River* | | | |
| 7) Silver Creek* | C | D | B |
| 8) Black Ash Creek | | | |

\* Blue Mountains Watershed data retrieved by NVCA is not divided by catchment area, therefore the scoring is generalized for representation.

*Figure 1: 2018 Conservation Authority Watershed Report Card Results*

Wetlands in TBM scored low due to their lack of land coverage. The report notes that some of the threats to wetlands include: land conversion for development, drainage for agriculture and invasive species such as Phragmites.[vii]

### 3.1.2 Best practice

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
Three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are reflected in watershed health goals include:

- Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: To ensure access to safe water sources and sanitation for all.
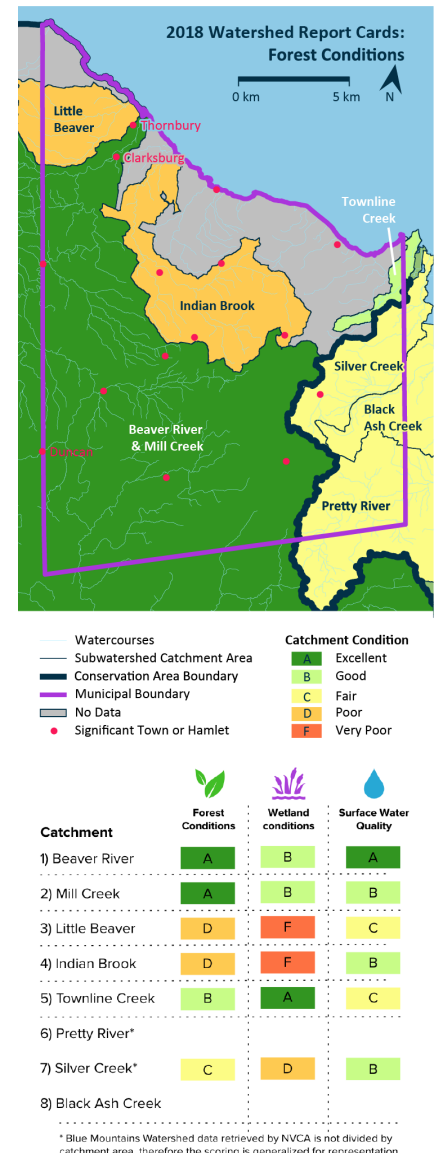
This goal suggests investing in water research, development, and governance which includes indigenous voices, women and youth.

- Goal 14: Life Below Water: To conserve and sustainably use the world's ocean, seas and marine resources. This goal suggests protecting valuable habitats and making responsible water choices.
- Goal 15: Life on Land: to sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss. This goal suggests supporting recycling, eating a locally sourced diet, and consuming only what we need.

**The ICLEI Montreal Commitment and Strategic Vision**: One of *ICLEI*'s five sustainability pathways is nature-based development. This pathway aims "to protect and enhance the biodiversity and ecosystems in and around our cities, which underpin key aspects of our local economies and upon which we depend for the well-being and resilience of our communities."[viii] This pathway encourages the maintenance of healthy environments (including, air, water and soil), and using nature for ecosystem services and economic opportunities.

**Project Drawdown review:** *Project Drawdown* is a report that tracks the actions necessary to reach the goal of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to, but preferably below, two degrees Celsius (see *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*). Two action areas to help support this are land sinks and coastal/ocean sinks. Within these action areas, recommendations are made to use degraded land like brownfields, protect & restore ecosystems, and shift agriculture practices to regenerative practices.

**Whitby Green Standard:** Whitby's Green Standard is a list of required and suggested standards for developers to implement to receive approval. Two of ten of the standard's implementation categories are land use and nature, and sustainable water. These categories include requirements attending to:

- Ecological function and integrity;
- Tree canopy and the heat island effect;
- Bird- and bat-friendly glazing;
- Restoration of biodiversity and pollinator habitat;
- Invasive species management;
- Key natural features or buffers;
- Native drought resistant plants; and
- Water balance and irrigation for lots/units.

**Federal Sustainable Development Strategy:** Five of 13 of the *Federal Sustainable Development Goals* align with watershed health, and include:

- Healthy coasts and oceans;
- Pristine lakes and rivers;
- Sustainably managed lands and forests;
- Healthy wildlife populations;

● Clean drinking water.

### 3.1.3 Local Policy

Watershed health and the protection of water resources is included in many of the County and Town's policy documents. Some common policy suggestions include:

● Enhance and support biodiversity, particularly in natural heritage spaces;
● Maintain, protect and enhance natural heritage features including: forests, wetlands, naturalized spaces, sensitive land uses, fish habitat, valleylands, areas of natural and scientific interest, endangered species and their habitats, biodiversity and ecological function;
● Connect wildlife and plant linkages and core areas;
● Ensure municipalities consider their effects on the whole watershed, minimize their negative impact on the watershed, and are aware of necessary water features, and their connectivity;
● Develop on lands that are stable and not prone to flooding;
● Protect the quality and quantity of potable water supply;
● Encourage low impact development stormwater management techniques, in addition to traditional stormwater management; develop education and community outreach programs to promote water best management practices;
● Develop and regenerate brownfield lands.

Conservation Authorities: Ontario's Conservation Authorities deliver services and programs that protect and manage water and other natural resources in partnership with government, landowners, and other organizations. They promote an integrated watershed approach, aiming to balance human, environmental, and economic needs.

Grey Sauble Conservation Authority's *Indian Brook Report Card for 2020* included some recommendations for protecting watershed health, which include recommendations to:

● Maintain vegetated buffers around water courses, and plant windbreaks;
● Minimize fertilizer and pesticide use near water;
● Identify and control invasive species, and plant native species;
● Fence livestock out of streams, and upgrade manure storage;
● Reduce soil erosion using "no-till, residue management and cover crops;"[ix]
● Conserve water and collect rain water;
● Increase land permeability and implement low impact development;
● Dispose of chemicals properly;
● Municipality: work with conservation authorities for planning regulations, and monitoring;
● Municipality: adopt environmental sustainability initiatives and community grants; and
● Purchase and protect environmentally significant properties to connect natural features.

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T1, G1: Develop links between natural areas and wildlife corridors | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | U | U | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | | | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | |
| | Tertiary | | | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T1, G2: Achieve long-term Conservation of existing forest resources for future generations | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | U | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | | | | | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | |
| | Tertiary | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T1, G3: Provide Education and Marketing of the Value of the Local Natural Environment | Action | U | | | | | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | I | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | |
| T1, G4: Protect Local Biodiversity and Habitat | Action | U | | | | U | | | | U | | U | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | |
| T1, G5: Preserve, Protect and Enhance the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater | Action | U | | | | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | |
| T1, G6: Becoming a Dark Sky Community | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U)

### 3.1.5 What local experts say

When asked "if the watershed had a voice, what do you think it would say it needs?" community representatives and experts reported the watershed would cry for: help, respect, more trees, less chemical runoff, less erosion, and increased government concern.

When asked what contributes to decreased watershed health in TBM, experts answered:
- Urban expansion and intensification in sensitive areas;
- Poor compliance with legislative setbacks;
- Recreation and tourism activities;
- Lack of incentives to rehabilitate creeks;
- Rivers and watersheds impacted by previous developments;
- Agricultural tensions, with particular reference to livestock in the Beaver River/Silver creek;
- Loss of forest and wetlands;

- Debris, drainage, and runoff from parks, lawns, farmland, and sewage systems; and
- A general lack of education on importance and protection of the watershed.

Opportunities to improve watershed health that were listed included:
- Investment in sustainable aging infrastructure replacements;
- Low impact development;
- Built form, design, and enforcement improvements;
- Regenerative farming;
- Reforestation;
- Tourism practice changes;
- Ecosystem services approach to infrastructure; and
- Data collection, analyzing, engagement, outreach, and action plan drafting.

### 3.1.6 What the public says

During Phase 1 of engagement, the public highlighted the following as the best aspects of the community:
- Natural features, including: Blue Mountain, Georgian Bay, the harbour, natural or wild landscapes, Niagara Escarpment, beaches, forests and trees, lakes and rivers, parks, open, and green space, and trails;
- Scenery and natural beauty including the view of the Georgian Bay, the pastoral view of agriculture, and the view of the mountain, hills, and valley; and
- Respondents reflected on how lucky and grateful they are to live where they do for the natural environment and the recreational activities associated within. Interviewees put natural environment features as the main thing they would retain as it was the reason why many of them moved to the area in the first place.

Natural features, including the Georgian Bay Shoreline, the Niagara Escarpment, Nipissing Ridge and others, were ranked as the most unique element of TBM.

When asked "what changes would make the community even better," the community said:
- Increased natural landscape respect and protection, particularly: air protection, forested area protection and tree planting, wildlife protection, and trail improvements. This was often raised when referring to new developments;
- Improved public access to waterfront and rivers, particularly in regards to beaches. They also listed access to public parks, and greenspace.

In addition, when asked about the story of today, some residents spoke about environmental loss in the area. This was particularly referenced in context of urban development and the actions of new transplants and tourists. There is a perception that tourists are more likely to deteriorate the area because they do not have a "stake" in it.

# 3.2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions in TBM are largely attributed to building energy efficiency and reliance on private automotive transportation for both local and tourist access. Policies, best practice and local experts promote the increased use of active transportation, renewable energy sources, improvement of agricultural practices, and the development of green building standards for new development.

### 3.2.1 Local statistics and data

The Town of The Blue Mountains' *Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) Milestone One Report* found that the majority of community carbon dioxide equivalent emissions ($CO_2e$) originated from transportation (37%) and residential sources (26%).[x] This differs from the global average distribution of all greenhouse gas emission sources:

- 25% electricity production
- 24% food, agriculture & land use
- 21% industry
- 14% transportation
- 6% buildings
- 10% other energy-related emissions.[xi] [xii]
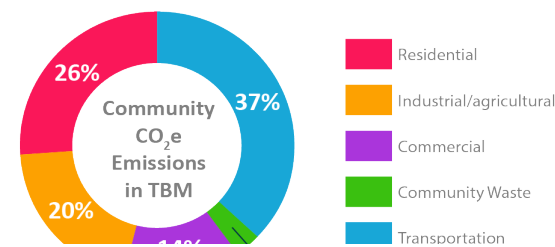


*Figure 2: CARBON DIOXIDE EQUIVALENT EMISSIONS IN TBM*

This difference is indicative of TBM's lack of significant industry and electrical production as well as the differences in gas emissions type and monitoring methods from global metrics.

The TBM *Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan* reports the operational emissions produced by Town-owned buildings and infrastructure. This report found per capita Town emissions decreased since 2005, noting that the lead contributors to Town corporate GHG emissions include: fleet, buildings, water, wastewater and solid waste, and streetlights and traffic lights.[xiii]
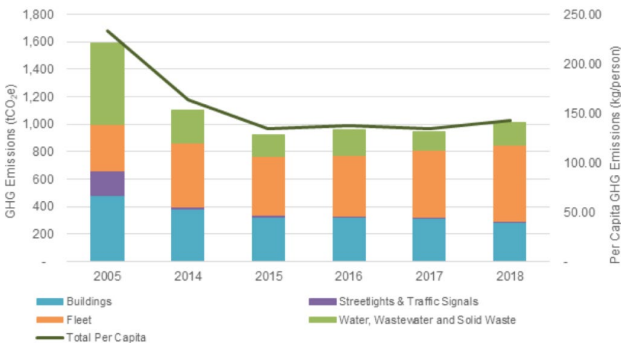


*Figure 3: TOWN CORPERATION GHG EMISSIONS OVER TIME*

Petroleum products are the largest fuel type consumed in Ontario at 48% of the total usage, with natural gas at 28% and electricity at 16%.[xiv] Ontario's electrical distribution primarily uses zero carbon emitting sources of nuclear power (60%), hydro electric (26%), and other green forms of electricity generation (wind: 7%, solar: 2%). Ontario's total energy demand is the second highest in Canada, and the eighth highest per capita in Canada.

### 3.2.2 Best practice direction

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Two Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are reflected in greenhouse gas emissions goals include:

- **Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy:** ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. The goal suggests investment in renewables, prioritizing energy efficient practices, adopting clean energy technologies and infrastructure, encouraging businesses to source electricity from renewable resources, encouraging employers to implement telecommunications and incentivizing train travel and active transportation over automobile travel.
- **Goal 13: Climate Action:** encourages changes, particularly after COVID-19, including: Green transition to decarbonize the economy, the creation of green jobs and sustainable inclusive growth, investment in sustainable solutions that do not rely on fossil fuels, ensuring polluters pay for their pollution, confronting climate risks, and cooperation between all levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal).

According to the 2020 SDG report, COVID-19 caused a 6% drop in greenhouse gas emissions for 2020. This decrease is 1.6% short of the annual reduction needed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030.

**The ICLEI Montreal Commitment and Strategic Vision:** The ICLEI Montreal Commitment lists low emission development as one of five sustainability pathways. The aim of this pillar is "to curb climate change, create new economic opportunities and improve the health of people and natural systems."[xv] Suggested actions include reducing pollutants and GHGs, implementing the Paris Climate Agreement, implementing climate neutrality in infrastructure and operations, and promoting sustainable mobility and transportation.

**Project Drawdown review:** Project Drawdown is a report that tracks the actions necessary to reach Paris Agreement goals to limit global warming to, but preferably below, two degrees Celsius. They report that carbon sinks are vital to climate change (see *Watershed Health*), with 24% of emissions removed by plants on land and 17% removed in oceans. The report notes that 59% of heat-trapping emissions stay in the atmosphere.

Key insights:
- If we begin advancing climate solutions now rather than waiting on new technologies, we can achieve the Paris Agreement goal;
- Climate change actions need to have an integrated systems approach that includes energy efficient buildings, improved farming practices and reduced meat consumption;
- Climate solutions should be connected to other objectives like economic development, public health and equity issues;
- Climate solutions have cost savings over the long term, particularly when factoring in healthcare savings, savings from reduced air pollution, and the avoidance of climate damages (like agricultural losses and water rise);
- Climate solutions require stopping the use of oil and gas, and incentivizing green energy alternatives;
- We need to build carbon sinks at the same time we reduce emissions;
- Climate change is not an issue for one government or group, and requires cooperation and action at all levels;
- It is essential to collectively turn from theory to solutions-based actions immediately.

Action categories include:

- electricity proposed solutions;
- food, agriculture & land use proposed solutions;
- carbon dioxide reduction;
- industry proposed solutions;
- transportation;
- building efficiency;
- improve land sinks;
- improve coastal & ocean sinks; and
- societal barrier decreases (like education).

Strengthening actions for climate change initiatives include:

- Shaping culture - reshaping media, culture production;
- Building power toward climate change, not away;
- Setting goals that are specific to GHG and carbon;
- Altering rules & policy in favour of environmental actions;
- Shifting capital to finance climate change efforts;
- Changing behaviour; and
- Improving technology.

**Whitby Green Standard:** The Town of Whitby is a municipality that implemented a green standard after the Town declared themselves in a climate emergency. They set the Town's GHG gas reduction target to 80% by 2050. One of Whitby's 10 principles that informs this standard is energy and climate change, which addresses the following actions:

- District energy systems;
- Renewable energy;
- Passive solar orientation;
- Building commissioning;
- Energy efficient appliances and performance; and
- Building resilience.

**Federal Sustainable Development Strategy:** Two of the 13 focus areas within the  Federal Sustainable Development Strategy emphasize effective action on climate change and clean energy. Indicators that support tracking this at the national level include greenhouse gas emissions, sea ice quality and coverage, snow cover and temperature change.

### 3.2.3 Policy

**Climate Change:** *The Provincial Policy Statement* (PPS), *Grey County Official Plan* (GC OP) and other high-level documents state that municipalities and all levels of government should prepare for the impacts of climate change. This includes addressing the impact climate change will have on water in their area.

GC's OP also outlines the need to consider climate change in development by:

- Increasing canopy in parks and natural areas;
- Updating infrastructure;
- Supporting green technologies and construction methods;
- Encouraging active transportation;
- Reusing older existing building stock;
- Promoting retrofits.

GC's OP also specifies the need for shade and ultraviolet radiation protection to mitigate the urban heat island effect.

In advance of 2024, the Corporate Strategic Plan identified the need to define the Town's Climate Emergency Declaration.

The *Blue Mountains Official Plan* sets strategic objectives to promote the use of leading-edge sustainable development and energy conservation policies, and commits to working with partners to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### 3.2.4 2009 ICSP direction

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T2, G3: Create an Energy Conservation Culture | Action | U | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | | | | | | | | |
| T2, G4: Embrace Renewable Energy Production and Achieve Efficiencies in Energy Generation and Consumption | Action | N | | | | N | | | N | | |
| | Sub-Action | N | N | N | N | N | U | U | N | N | N |
| T2, G5: Reduce Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 80% and achieve carbon neutrality for Town Sources by 2050 | Action | N | | | | | | N | | | |
| | Sub-action | N | N | N | O | N | N | N | N | | |
| | tertiary | O | N | | | | | | | | |
| Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U) | | | | | | | | | | | |

### 3.2.5 What local experts say

We asked experts and community representatives why transportation and residential emissions are the main contributors to TBM's community $CO_2$ emissions. Their responses included noting that TBM has a high proportion of housing compared

to industry and commercial, with few transit and active transportation options due to the geographical spread of their communities. It was suggested that the age of residents was also an important factor, because the elderly may be less able to use active transportation or transit in their activities of daily living.

Due to the unique rural and tourism draws within the municipality, car travel is a significant factor. The preference for large homes has also been flagged as a specific issue, and notes that we should be more cognizant of other greenhouse gases, particularly those like nitrous oxide that come from farming (see *Agriculture*).

We asked experts what may have reduced GHG emissions in TBM during COVID-19. Their responses primarily included travel restrictions for air travel and decreased local travel and tourism travel. Active transportation has been more common during COVID-19. Other participants noted that  more people are reflecting on the natural world around them, and perhaps are more aware of the need to protect it (see *Watershed Health*). Business closure was also highlighted as a potential for GHG reduction during COVID-19.

Participants also shared their ideas on opportunities to reduce carbon emissions in TBM, including:
- Supporting alternative energy including solar, wind, and water resources;
- Tree planting and tree planting policies;
- Energy conservation and alternative energy incentives;
- Improved active transportation network and advocacy;
- Cost-benefit analysis as well as testing and reporting public transportation;
- Electric and fuel efficient cars and infrastructure supports;
- Town leading by example through fleet and public buildings, net zero and green building policies for new builds and retrofits;
- Supporting complete and walkable communities;
- Exploring agricultural methods to achieve net zero emission with cover crops;
- Education;
- Having the Town commit to sustainability in all communications.

### 3.2.6 What the public says
In the first phase of public engagement, questions were raised to gain a general understanding of community perspectives. When asked what changes participants suggest to make the community even better, responses included:
- Creating a green/environmentally friendly community;
- Green building initiatives;
- Public transportation;
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- Minimizing climate change.

Many interviewees mentioned options that are related to climate change:

- Gardening from home;
- Trail use and active transportation;
- Shopping locally;
- Supporting local agriculture;
- Planting trees;
- Purchasing long-lasting products;
- Enjoying recreational activities close to home.

# 3.3 Consumption and Production

Consumption and production refers to the reduction of waste, water, and energy that is being used by TBM overall. There has been an increase in the residential waste diversion rate over the past 15 years, but little to no decrease in the overall amount of waste going to landfill. This suggests that people are recycling, and composting more, but still throwing away as much garbage as before. Tourism and part-time residents were mentioned as a potential reason for this, particularly when referring to the limitations associated with short-term rental (Airbnb) waste disposal. Some recommendations for improvement include production reductions for businesses, more diversion options and education for tourists, and the encouragement of a circular economy.

### 3.3.1 Stats and data

Waste diversion and reduction trends in TBM are similar to national trends: the rate in which materials have gone to the landfill has remained about the same, while additional materials are being diverted. In TBM, residential diversion particularly has increased since 2015 when a composting program was introduced. Looking at two periods of time 10 years apart, we can see this trend:

Recycled materials:

- 2009: 1,898 Tonnes
- 2019: 1,411 Tonnes

Composted materials:

- 2009: 932 Tonnes
- 2019: 1,379 Tonnes

Landfilled materials:

- 2009: 4,772 Tonnes
- 2019: 4,657 Tonnes



According to the 2019 Solid Waste Report, composting rates are the highest they have ever been. At the current rate of waste landfilled, it is estimated that TBM's landfill capacity will be reached in 2046.[xvi]
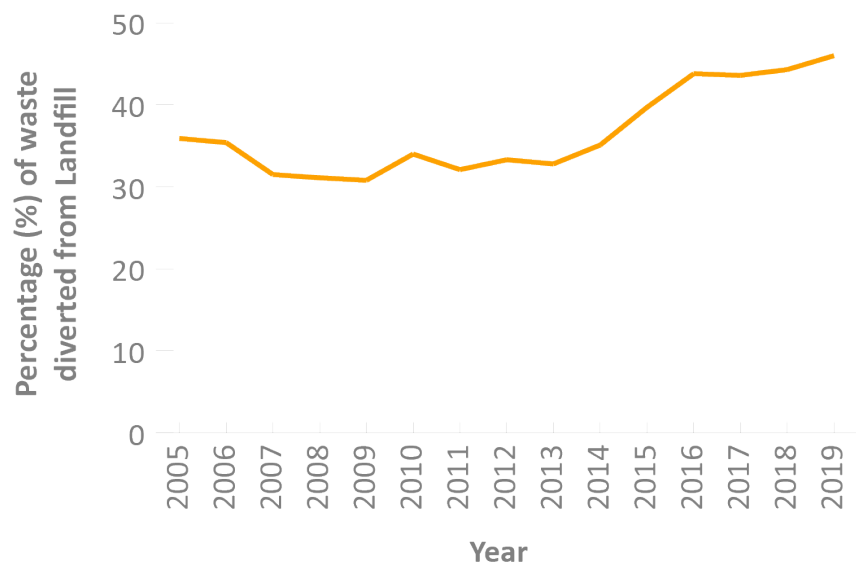
*Figure 4: Residential Waste Diversion Over Time*

At the national level, we are finding that although we are diverting more materials away from landfill, we are not cutting down on waste overtime. Instead, we are disposing more than ever, plus recycling more. This is not unlike TBM's current state. Over the course of 14 years, the solid waste collected in Canada increased by 11%, while Canada's population grew by 13%.[xvii] In TBM, the reported census population increased by 3% while landfilled waste increased by 2% over a 10 year period.[xviii] [xix] It should be noted that 2009 waste numbers may appear higher than other years due to a local tornado in that year.

We are seeing that population growth may be outpacing waste use per capita, but not significantly. Moreover, we are seeing an increase in diversion, though this does not put an end to local waste issues. In particular, given new national recycling restrictions over this 10 year period, this rate of decrease is not sustainable for future citing.

### 3.3.2 Best practice

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:** One Sustainability Development Goal that reflects consumption and reduction is Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. This goal supports the reduction of waste overall; it acknowledges that the sources from which we purchase goods and services and the sustainable options we choose on a daily basis help play a role in reducing waste.

**The ICLEI Montreal Commitment and Strategic Vision:** Circular Development is one of five pathways in the ICLEI commitment. This pathway supports circular development, and aims to shift our current linear model of production, consumption, and discarding materials. Some actions this commitment speaks to include: decentralizing resource extraction from economic development, supporting economies that are responsible for using the "three R's", and working with businesses to reach production and consumption goals.

**Project Drawdown Review:** Project Drawdown is a report that tracks the actions necessary to reach the goal of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to, but preferably below, two degrees Celsius. Two of the action areas related to consumption and production in the report are land sinks and industry-proposed solutions. Land sinks were highlighted, as decreasing waste and encouraging plant-rich diets are important components in ensuring the health of land sinks. Industry-proposed actions include: the improvement of materials (such as the replacement of plastics, metals and cement), the reclamation of materials, better management practices for the replacement of refrigerants, and the enhancement of waste management efficiency.

**Whitby Green Standard: "**Zero waste" is one of the 10 action areas highlighted in the Whitby Green Standard for development. Some actions included under this category include: waste collection and storage, household hazardous waste, and construction waste reduction.

### 3.3.3 Policy

Consumption and reduction improvements for waste, water, and energy are portrayed in many local policy documents within the County and Town, including the following documents:

- *TBM' Official Plan* supports the reduction of energy, water, land, and other non-renewables.
- *Grey County's Official Plan* encourages the reduction and elimination of waste, mandatory waste diversion tactics, a decrease in the amount of waste going into households, and food waste reduction in the following priority: a) source reduction; b) diversion to food banks, soup kitchens, and shelters; c) diversion to animal feed; d) use for fuel conversion and energy recovery; and e) composting.
- The *Provincial Policy Statement* suggests that there be sufficient planning for efficient and sustainable water use. TBM's Official Plan also suggests promoting practices to conserve water and protect or enhance water quality.

- Policy documents describe energy efficiency as being an important component to sustainable planning. *The Provincial Policy Statement* emphasizes the need of energy conservation, for buildings, transportation, and infrastructure, in order to negate climate change, and improve air quality.
- *TBM's Official Plan* supports the building of energy efficient communities which are compact, energy efficient in design, and that minimize space heating and cooling energy consumption. Grey County's Official Plan also specifies to consider energy conservation when assessing public proposals.
- GC's *Official Plan* encourages its municipalities to explore sharing economy resources like car sharing, shared economy transportation, and bike sharing.

### 3.3.4 2009 ICSP direction

| Goal | TYPE | STATUS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T2, G1: Develop and promote The Blue Mountains as a Conserver Society | Action | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T2, G2: Enhance Water Conservation strategies | Action | O | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | O | I | N | | | | U | | | | | | |
| | Tertiary | | | N | N | N | N | | | | | | | |
| T2, G6: Assume Full Responsibility for the Management of our wastes within regional borders | Action | O | O | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | | N | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T2, G7: Become a community that supports a movement towards a zero waste society | Action | O | | | | | | | | O | | O | | |
| | Sub-action | C | N | N | N | C | N | O | N | O | O | O | O | N |
| T5, G2: Promote smart use of recycled and re-used materials within the built environment and provide for new technologies in waste management | Action | U | | C | C | N | | | N | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | | | N | O | N | N | N | C | N | | |
| Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C), Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

### 3.3.5 What local experts say

Community representatives and local experts were asked to reflect on a series of production and consumption data points related to waste. In response, they noted that there was some progress made for diversion, particularly when considered on a per capita basis. At the same time, they noted there was still a lot of waste going to landfill, with diversion programs not having as much of an impact as originally thought.

They mentioned that a "buy and toss" culture was strong in the area, attributable to part-time residency. Here, it was suggested that part-time residents and tourists had fewer opportunities to properly dispose of water, particularly in short-

term rentals. Furthermore, it was highlighted that building practices in particular were not reflective of environmental needs, and that there is currently a need for styrofoam reduction in the waste stream.

When asked for opportunities to continue to decrease waste in TBM, community representatives and experts suggested:
- Increased public engagement for reduction;
- Adopting circular economy practices;
- Changing policy to provide incentives for decreased food packaging, and increased business recycling and composting options;
- Deconstruction to be enforced rather than demolition;
- Building for quality with local materials that can be easily repurposed and repaired;
- Creating a framework for social procurement and green building;
- Leading by example in public events and programs;
- Diversifying the Town's recycling program;
- Creating visitor-specific programming for waste; and
- Reducing construction waste.

### 3.3.6 What the public says

When asking the public what general things to improve in the community, many mentioned changing habits, particularly in regards to littering and polluting. There was frustration–particularly from those under 18–about the amount of pollution and littering in TBM. Potential solutions were offered, including: creating the conditions for a decreased reliance on plastic, purchasing of fewer things, and ensuring a better distribution and supply of Town waste and recycling receptacles.

Water protection was referenced as another thing to improve life in TBM. This was referenced in response to increased development and to leachate and pollution concerns surrounding the TC energy project. Water protection mainly focused on Georgian Bay, with few mentions of generalized natural heritage protection.

Consumption and production themes were prevalent in interviews where respondents went through their daily activities and reflected on their sustainable implications. Many interviewees were already aware of environmental efforts and how they relate back to production and consumption, with some actions including: gardening from home, waste reduction, trail use and active transportation, shopping locally, supporting local agriculture, and planting trees. Other sustainable consumption actions that individuals listed that were less common included: lessening their water use with laundry and hygiene choices, purchasing durable products, pursuing recreation within close proximity to where they live, and often taking active modes of transportation.

# 3.4 Sustainable towns and communities

Sustainable towns and communities refers to good overall planning practices, with particular reference to service provision, housing, and transportation. In this section, we hear that residents are upset by the amount and type of developments in the Town, but also the lack of transportation and housing options. Policy and best practice calls for increased density, active transportation-oriented development, and providing a diversity of housing options to support the formation of complete communities.

### 3.4.1 Stats and data

TBM is serviced by two transit connections: The Grey Transit Route, that runs from Owen Sound to The Blue Mountains, and the Collingwood-Blue Mountains transit, which runs from Craigleith Area to Collingwood and Wasaga Beach.[xx] These transit options are relatively new, and the latter was supported largely as a way to bring workers living in Collingwood to TBM.

Development in TBM over the past 3 years can be seen in the table below. Dwelling units issued by the Town has increased over the past 5 years, but are similar to 2017's number of approvals.[xxi][xxii][xxiii][xxiv]

|  | 2016 Dwelling units issued | 2017 Dwelling units issued | 2018 Dwelling units issued | 2019 Dwelling units issued | 2020 dwelling units issued |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | 16 | 34 | 25 | 34 | 54 |
| Q2 | 65 | 111 | 81 | 140 | 76 |
| Q3 | 71 | 70 | 62 | 114 | 139 |
| Q4 | 44 | 138 | 22* | 32 | 86* |
| Total | 196 | 353 | 190* | 320 | 355* |
| * numbers do not take December of their respective year into account due to lost information | | | | | |

In 2020, 14.9% of housing is rental tenure, and 83.8% are commuting by car.[xxv]

### 3.4.2 Best practice

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:** The Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities was reflected often in community feedback and local policies. The SDG states that "there needs to be a future in which cities provide opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation and more,"[xxvi] and supports actions that reflect general good planning practices.

**The ICLEI Montreal Commitment and Strategic Vision:** Resilient Development is one of five pathways highlighted in the ICLEI commitment, which focuses on the anticipation, prevention, absorption, and recovery from shocks and stresses, including those from "rapid environmental, technological, social and demographic change, and to improve essential basic response structures and functions."[xxvii] Some actions that were highlighted to support this pathway include prioritizing resilience in local governments, strengthening systems to respond to external stressors, and enhancing trust in government through transparency.

**Project Drawdown review:** The Review establishes transportation as one of its action focus areas in order to slow the increase in global warming. To do so, the report suggests shifting to alternative modes of transportation and supporting compact cities with advanced communications technologies to reduce travel demand. The report also suggests to improve transportation efficiency, and electrify vehicles.

**Whitby Green Standard:** Whitby's Green Standard highlights "Travel and Transport" as one of 10 main action areas. Some actions supported by the Green Standard are:

- accessible pedestrian infrastructure and walkways;
- active transportation planning and infrastructure;
- transit supportive compact built form;
- parking footprint and traffic control;
- off-street surface parking;
- access to transit;
- carpool and car-share parking;
- functional entry to the urban mobility network;
- complete street design; and
- electric vehicle charging stations.

**Federal Sustainable Development Strategy:** Green Growth was highlighted as one of the 13 goals highlighted in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

### 3.4.3 Policy

Sustainable City and Community policies are far reaching in TBM area, but some examples of local policy direction include:

- Supporting active transportation for healthy and active communities;
- Establishing an equitable distribution of resources for recreation and access to shorelines;
- Minimizing effects on natural resources, parks and environments;
- Creating walkable, and easily accessible communities;
- Encouraging the decreased use of private automobiles by promoting alternative modes of transportation;
- Supporting land development that is transit-supportive;
- Developing a range of housing options (rental and ownership), to support a diverse workforce;

●  Developing housing that meets the social, health, economic and well-being requirements of current and future residents;

●  Supporting at least 10 year of residential growth, creating barrier free environments, and intensification; and

●  Supporting density to ensure transportation and other community benefits.

**3.4.4 2009 ICSP direction**

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T5, G1: Build strong neighbourhoods through sustainable neighbourhood design | Action | U | | U | | U | U | | U | U | | | | | | | U |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | U | | U | U | U | U | U | |
| | Tertiary | | | | | | | | | U | U | | | | | | |
| T5, G3: Protect, Preserve and Enhance agricultural, natural and environmentally sensitive lands | Action | U | | | U | | | U | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | |
| T6, G1: Eliminate provincially significant traffic passing through the urban areas of the municipality | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T6, G2: Develop an integrated public transportation system | Action | U | | | | | | U | | | | | | U | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | |
| | Action cont'd | U | | | | | | U | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-actions | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U |
| Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**3.4.5 What local experts say**

Local experts were not explicitly asked about sustainable city and community topics, but housing and transportation in particular were woven throughout professional commentary in other sections.

**3.4.6 What the public says**

When asked about the best things in TBM, many highlighted the accessibility of the area, particularly to medical supports, dining options, and shopping opportunities, either in the Town or in surrounding communities in the GTA, Collingwood, or Meaford.

Many of the respondents mentioned that they moved here from the GTA and compared the community favourably as being "less urban". Some highlights included the lack of: chain stores, congestion, crowding, highrise development and sprawl.

This is in contrast to the reported views in question two, as many believe that the area is starting to take on urban characteristics.

While many spoke positively to the general feeling of living in a small town, some respondents specified that it was due to the area's small population size relative to other municipalities in the region and province. Respondents also noted the diversity of experiences that exist within the region, and the community spirit that unites the area.

When asked for what improvements would make the community even better, respondents highlighted:

- Growth and development management. Residents voiced a frustration with the amount and types of development being built. Some were opposed to subdivisions, some to high density housing, some to building heights, and some to location of housing developments. A prominent subtheme was a want for coordinated plans at a regional level and within Town administration. Some felt that development did not align with the Town's Official Plan or the Planning Policy Statement. Additionally, some felt as though development was happening too fast and in a haphazard approach, rather than strategically.
  - Frustrations were voiced about some ongoing developments in the area. These include: the high number of gas stations, secondary homes, subdivisions replacing apple orchards, and a high-rise development across from Georgian Peaks. These were often voiced in frustration when referring to a loss in small town feel or damaging of natural features.
- Traffic management, including a want to divert traffic away from waterfront areas and to insert traffic-calming measures. Respondents reported an increase in traffic, particularly during COVID-19, and were concerned about traffic's relationship to new developments and more permanent residents due to COVID-19.
- Development tied to community benefits. These benefits include allocated greenspace, green building needs, forest land dedication, funding for cultural activities, and facilities tied to new development proposals. There was an understanding by some that growth was necessary, but that it wasn't serving the community in the way they were hoping.
- Public and "green" transit was mentioned, particularly in order to connect the rural towns in TBM, to form greater transit connections with the GTA, Collingwood, Meaford, and Owen Sound.

When asked about life today in TBM, themes related to sustainable community building practices included:

- **Overdevelopment:** some respondents reported that the area feels like it's being developed too fast, or being over developed.
- **Growth:** respondents referenced this theme with regard to recent developments, and a reported increase in full time residents over the time of COVID-19. Feedback was mainly an ask for development and growth to be slowed, particularly for new development applications.
- **Busy:** While restrictions for COVID-19 were put in place during this time of engagement, respondents described the times before the provincial stay-at-home order as busy due to the influx in tourists and visitors from the GTA (particularly in summer 2020). This was particularly true for outdoor trails, beaches, and at Blue Mountain.

- **Congested:** Associated with development and tourism, respondents also mentioned how congested the area and highway had become, with frustrations about the noise, access, and overall manners of those they came across on the road.

Some interview themes regarding sustainable development included:

- **Transportation Options:** when asked about why respondents chose to drive, it was clear that transit infrastructure was either not available or would take too much time to be usable. The school bus was even an extension of this; one respondent noted that he chooses to drive his children to Collingwood each day because transit would take up 3 hours a day for his child. In contrast, another respondent referenced this bus ride as a right-of-passage in small towns.
- **Remote working and events:** Some respondents talked at length about how COVID-19 has opened up the possibility for them to engage remotely with places they would not usually travel to (e.g. In Downtown Toronto), or working from home rather than losing time driving daily. These respondents were hopeful that these groups and employers would continue to offer these remote working options and events. Some residents who worked from home before COVID-19 mentioned that it would be an opportunity for residents to diversify economically without a direct need for an industry hub in the Town itself.
- **Walkable Downtown with amenities:** Thornbury residents were grateful to be in a walkable neighbourhood with many local coffee shops and most amenities within close proximity. It was also noted that restaurants in the area are particularly impressive, with one respondent stating "Thornbury is outside of its league in terms of restaurants."

# 3.5 Sense of community

Sense of community refers to the overall community in TBM, the feelings and acceptance the area evokes, the involvement of its residents, and the support it shows for different demographics. Many of these elements are not quantifiable, but data shows that TBM is primarily home to an older demographic of affluent Caucasian residents who are heavily involved in their community. Though policy and best practices suggest creating communities for all, and enhancing the small-town feel, there is currently a division between the full-time residents and the new residents and tourists in the community. Full-time community members reported feeling removed from the Town, as they felt there was too much emphasis on the tourists of an area.

**3.5.1 Stats and data**

According to The County of Grey's 2020 Demographic Report, and 2016 Federal census data, the population of TBM is older than the Ontario average. In 2016, census data found that TBM had almost double the Ontario average for those over 60. In 2020, the County found that the household maintainer (those who rent or own a home in TBM) average in TBM was 20% over 75 years old, 26% between 65 and 74, and 25% between 55 and 64. Comparatively, Meaford and Ontario have a lower household maintainer average in these age demographics.

The age demographics for permanent residents have been reportedly changing throughout the pandemic. However, due to the recency of the pandemic, there has not been sufficient time to collect, analyze, and release any demographic data to confirm this trend in TBM.

Average household income has been increasing in TBM since 2001, to its current average of $143,748 according to Grey's 2020 Annual Report. There are few visible minorities reported in the Town, and a high proportion of part-time residents.



*Figure 5 Percent of homes owned/rented by age in TBM, Meaford, and Ontario respectively*

**3.5.2 Best practice**

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Two UN Sustainable Development Goals that contribute to sense of community include:

- **Goal 5: Gender Equality:** To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This goal specifies the need for services in order for women to stay in school.
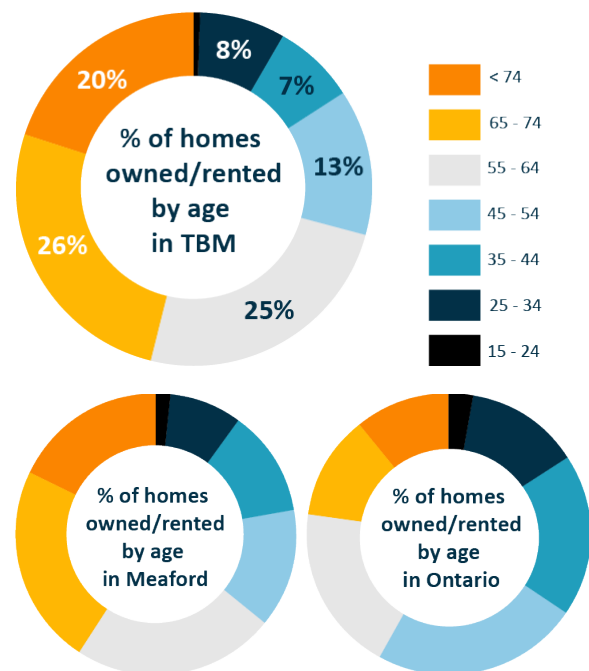
- **Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities:** which focuses on creating policies that are universal, yet pay special attention to the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized populations.

**The ICLEI Montreal Commitment and Strategic Vision:** Equitable and people-centred development is one of five pathways for ICLEI, "to build more just, livable and inclusive urban communities and address poverty."[xxviii] Some actions that align with this pathway include creating cities and development that are inclusive, that promote health, wellbeing, safety and livability, and that thrive with cultural vibrancy.

### 3.5.3 Policy

Some local policy in TBM area that supports creating a sense of community include:

- Supporting a high quality of life for all ages, all life stages, for both residents and visitors;
- Creating complete communities that are viable for all ages of demographics;
- Creating an age-friendly approach to development, design, and decision making;
- Creating supports for youth including attainable housing, recreation and childcare;
- Creating awareness and appreciation for the cultures of municipalities through education and outreach initiatives;
- Creating and defining a sense of place that includes built form and cultural planning, in addition to the conservation of features that help define character, like heritage features;
- Creating an inventory of underutilized spaces to modify into cultural hubs; and
- Protecting and enhancing the community feel and the character of the Town through multiple placemaking features, including: defining their character.

### 3.5.4 2009 ICSP direction

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T3, G1: All residents and their local government identify strongly with the blue mountains' community culture and feel both a sense of pride in, and a responsibility for their success | Action | I | | | O | | | | | U | I | | U | | | | |
| | Sub-action | C | U | O | U | O | U | O | I | O | U | U | O | U | U | U | U |
| | Action cont'd | U | | | | U | U | | | | | | | I | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | C | U | | U | U | U | O | U | U | U | U | | |
| T4, G1: To enhance community life and pride by providing a wide range of community events | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | |
| T4, G3: Facilitate a strong volunteer force to support community events and services | Action | U | | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | |
| T8, G2: Secure facilities and programming that are adaptable to changing community needs | Action | U | | U | | U | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T10,G2: To meet the social and community service needs of our seniors | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T10, G3: Meet the social, employment and community service needs of our families | Action | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T10, G4: Encourage youth to remain in, or to return to, the community | Action | U | | | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T10, G5: Provide adequate daycare services within the community | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | sub-action | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T11, G2: Improve and enhance communications and engagement of local youth | Action | U | | | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | | | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | |

Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C), Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U)

### 3.5.5 What local experts say

Community representatives and local experts were shown a population-by-age graph and the percentage of the population 60 years-old or older for multiple local regions in Ontario.

We asked this group why TBM is home to a larger population of seniors per capita. They responded by saying the age of TBM is attributed to the "retirement community" orientation of the Town, and the quick access to services, family, and housing flexibility from previous livelihoods in the GTA. There is an attraction to the community for recreation, nature, quality of life and the small-town pace of life for older populations. The area is thought to be less expensive for GTA homeowners, who can downsize from more expensive housing prices. The net growth of housing prices, and overall poor access to high paying jobs is also seen to be part of the reason why younger people cannot settle in the area.

Attendees were asked what implications having an older population has on the long-term sustainability in TBM. They noted there is a need to better support existing older demographics, and there is a need for a long-term plan to support and attract other demographics. The Town's older population implies an increased demand for healthcare and support services and for resources available in residents' prior residences, like the Greater Toronto Area.

Advantageously, It was also noted that the wisdom of these older generations can be mobilized to great effect. The area's older population may provide guidance for younger generations and – with many of them retired and financially comfortable – may participate in civic and volunteer life in greater numbers. One consulted expert noted that, "in the long-term the businesses created by the increased spending of the senior population will provide jobs that will remain here.

The age profile of Blue Mountains brings with it implications for long-term planning. As generations age and pass on, attention must be paid towards attracting other demographics to ensure the community does not foster a monoculture which may lead to its decline. An absence of younger demographics has led to a decrease in area career opportunities, unmet job vacancies, and declining numbers of youth who wish to stay in the area.

We asked the group what some opportunities were to better support youth in TBM. The main opportunities for youth retention and support in TBM that were highlighted include lowering housing costs, increasing income and diversifying employment opportunities, creating youthful spaces, supporting youth leadership and mentorship, and creating unique educational opportunities in the area. Additional areas of inquiry were about technology supports like wi-fi hotspots, mental health and community building opportunities, and meaningful youth engagement.

### 3.5.6 What the public says

Small-town, village and hamlet feel and connection between neighbours was ranked as the third most unique aspect of TBM, after it's natural features and recreation opportunities.

When asked what the best things were in TBM, survey respondents highlighted:
- **Small-town feel**, particularly in the downtown businesses, neighbourly friendliness and connection. Some themes similar to small town feel include: rural charm, friendliness of neighbours and residents, and the quaint feeling of the towns.  Residents were afraid to lose small town feel to new development.
- **Sense of Community,** particularly as some individuals simply liked to feel a part of the community either through involvement, or neighbourhood bonding.
- **Quiet and relaxed lifestyle**, particularly in comparison to their previous residences in the GTA and other more urbanized communities. The mentioned a slower pace, relaxed feeling, and quiet setting.

When asked for what could be changed in the community, some respondents highlighted the need for all-ages support, which entails building a community that has services needed for all age demographics, particularly families, youth, and seniors.

We asked respondents what the story of TBM today was, and their responses described:
- **A community of engaged citizens,** with the reliance on citizens in committees, social and cultural groups, and event organization.
- **Retirement community,** particularly in reference as a series of like-minded community members who are involved after retiring to the area in recent years from other communities.
- **Divided community life**, particularly when referencing new residents and tourists. Full time residents describe tourists and new residents as affluent, inconsiderate and rude. These perceptions have led to suggestions for education for new residents and an increase in community events to bridge this divide.
- **Loss of small-town feel**, particularly when referencing new community developments. There is a fear that with the new developments, that the Town is taking on more traits of a city than the area's heritage and small town feel.

Interviews spoke more in detail about some of these aspects that affect sense of community, including:

- **"The great divide":** the tension between long-term residents and new community members and tourists. Long-term residents reported frustrations with new residents for a perceived lack of respect, rudeness, lack of understanding of local culture and practices, excessive environmental degradation due to the other group's new development, and general lack of involvement in what makes the community unique. On the other hand, those who were new to the community reported that even though they and other new residents are incredibly involved in the community and giving back, they are still seen as the new and separated from long-term residents. A respondent who was a new resident and person of colour reported that even though their partner grew up in the area, their family is often seen as being from "the city" because they look different from the locals.
  - New residents believed that the disconnect was due to COVID, and the lack of interaction between new residents and old. They wished that there were efforts to welcome them as new residents to the Town to get oriented.
- **Community Events:** Many residents mentioned events that they already love in TBM, but they also mentioned some that used to exist that could help bring a sense of community back. These included sports games for the community to watch, and the old fashioned community events put on by public groups.
- **The replacement of general community groups:** one interviewee spoke at length about the growth of special interest and business groups in the area. In contrast, they spoke about how many of the general community benefit associations and groups were disappearing from the area in particular and Ontario in general. This was tied to the reduction in community cohesiveness, and the importance of these groups to pull everyone together.

## 3.6 Affordability

Affordability was a common theme in TBM due to a lack in affordable housing, services, and food options. The area was highlighted as having starkly divergent affluence levels. There is a large portion of high income earners, and a large number of low to mid-income earners who cannot afford to live in the area. The latter is particularly the case for those employed in the service or tourism industry.

**3.6.1 Stats and data**

The Blue Mountains is not currently affordable. In the South Georgian Bay, median household income in 2016 was $67,762, an increase of 12% since 2011.[xxix] In comparison, the average price for a single-family home increased 34% in the same amount of time to $433,000. In 2017 prices rose an additional 18% year-over-year to nearly $512,000. At this price, (assuming a 20% down payment) a qualifying household income of about $121,000 is required, almost double the region's median income.

The images on the right show the average household prices recorded in the *2018 South Georgian Bay Tourism Industry Workforce Housing Research and Business Case.* Housing prices have since increased further, making the area even more economically unattainable for many populations, namely youth.

In 2016, 51% of private dwellings in TBM were occupied by permanent residents, whereas the rest



**Ownership**

Detached house: $627,000
Income required: $146,000

Townhouse $490,000
Income required: $116,000

Condominium: $400,000
Income required: $96,000

**Rental**

1- Bedroom $1190/month
Income required: $47,600

2-Bedroom $1465/month
Income required: $58,600

3-Bedroom $1850/month
Income required: $74,000

*Figure 6: Price of local accommodations calculated in the 2018 South Georgian Bay Tourism Industry Workforce Housing Research and Business Case.*

were occupied by short term accommodations, or secondary homeowners. There has been informal reporting of that percentage increasing during COVID-19, but current numbers are yet to be confirmed.

*The South Georgian Bay Tourism Worker Survey* found that:
- 56% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that housing affordability is a barrier to living in the area permanently;
- 79% of respondents indicated that it is difficult to find appropriate housing in South Georgian Bay; and

● 75% of respondents indicated that if housing costs and availability were not an issue, they would consider living in the area permanently.

Another indicator of affordability in TBM is food insecurity and poverty. 20% of households in Grey Bruce are food insecure, which is higher than the provincial average of 15%.[xxx] Similarly, 11.3% of households in TBM are low income, 23.1% of households have unaffordable shelter costs, and 4.7% of residents are unemployed.[xxxi] 15.1% of children and youth and 7.3% of elderly adults are in low-income households.

Some causes of food insecurity and poverty in Grey Bruce communities include:
● Lack of affordable transportation;
● Income insecurity;
● Stigma with food security;
● Access to fresh foods year-round is limited partially due to lack of competition; and
● Limited understanding of existing programs.

### 3.6.2 Best practice



**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:** Two Sustainable Development Goals that are associated with affordability include:
● Goal 1: No Poverty: to end poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030. The main actions mentioned in this goal include governments encouraging and enabling job opportunities for the poor and marginalized.
● Goal 2: Zero Hunger: to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Some action areas include: supporting local farmers & markets, and making societal changes to sustainable food choices.

**Whitby Green Standard:** Equity and local economy is one of Whitby Green Standard's 10 action areas. Related development actions include: affordable housing, varied housing types and size, and community safety.

### 3.6.3 Policy
Affordability is a root principle in many local policies, including direction to accommodate an affordable market, and a mix of uses to encourage affordable complete communities, using plan development, service delivery, growth, and transportation improvements.

### 3.6.4 2009 ICSP direction

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Action | U | | | | U | | | | | U | | | | |

| T5, G4: Require a mix of housing types and uses accommodating the need for attainable housing for all income groups | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Action cont'd | U | | | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | |

Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U)

### 3.6.5 What local experts say

Local experts and community representatives were shown multiple statistics on food insecurity, poverty and housing costs in TBM and the surrounding area.

When asked what contributes to food insecurity in Grey Bruce, attendees listed the following:

- High housing prices, and lack of options;
- Low wages and transient jobs;
- Lack of access to year-round produce, and competition in grocery stores;
- Limited practices for growing own food;
- Mental health barriers; and
- Limited access to social services in the area.

We asked what contributes to high housing costs in the South Georgian Bay, to which experts and residents mentioned:

- Competition among affluent, and often previous GTA residents for desirable housing location;
- Lack of housing stock, particularly for diverse attainable properties;
- Competition heightened by short-term accommodations;
- An increased migration to the area due to COVID-19; and
- National market forces.

Those who were mentioned as the most vulnerable to affordability issues included:

- Lower- and middle-income earners in general;
- Those with low education levels;
- Students and youth;
- Young families;
- Homeless;
- Seniors relying on a fixed income;
- Singles;
- Those with special needs; and
- Local seniors who have not experienced housing inflation.

When asked where there are opportunities to improve food access, poverty, and affordable housing in TBM, attendees suggested:

- Increase living wage and employment opportunities;
- Build attainable and affordable housing;
- Increase grocer competition and enhance buy local opportunities;
- More gardening opportunities and education;
- Increase access to services, and focus on proactive ways to address poverty and food access;
- Affordable services like daycare;
- Reduced short term accommodations, or consider timeshare options for continued use;
- Incentives for higher density developments;
- Create partnerships with business and government to enhance housing options;
- Coordinate sustainability goals with attainable housing co-operation;
- Improved convincing of locals for the need of attainable housing; and
- Consider alternative housing models like tiny home villages, cooperative housing, and granny suites.

### 3.11.6 What the public says

When asking the public what improvements need to occur in TBM, survey respondents highlighted affordable and attainable housing, particularly in regards to housing young families and service workers. Respondents placed focus on affordable rental prices and creating a range of housing options that are more attainable and integrated into the community.

Some associated sub-themes that arose with affordable housing included: affordable food options, affordable recreation options, affordable retail (everyday needs), employee housing, affordable services, and affordable taxes.

Similarly, when asked about what life in TBM looked like today, many highlighted that the area was not affordable for many. These groups include: children of residents who hope to remain in the area, people looking for work in service industries, and anyone who is not affluent.

In interviews, respondents highlighted affordable groceries and services as equally important to affordable housing. Interviewees witnessed an increase in food prices particularly in comparison to local stores in Meaford and Owen Sound. There is a want to make sure the everyday residents are able to afford the food options that exist in Blue Mountains.

# 3.7 Economic Growth & Tourism

A large portion of TBM's economy is reliant on tourism. This is in line with local policy, but best practice suggests more efforts be made towards economic diversification. Experts and the general public report that the area is now experiencing over-tourism, with a need to create higher paying, permanent jobs.

## 3.7.1 Stats and data

This graph shows the distribution of employment by industry pre-COVID.[xxxii] In comparison to local areas, TBM has a larger proportion of agriculture, real estate and leasing, arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services. It has a smaller proportion of health care and social assistance, retail, and manufacturing than Ontario, Grey County, Meaford, Collingwood, and Wasaga Beach.
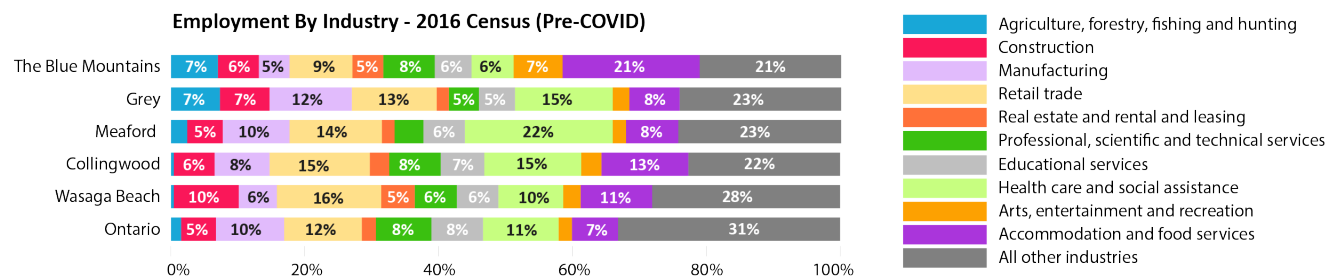


*Figure 7: Employment By Industry from 2016's census data*

Accommodation and food services are directly related to the tourism industry in TBM. Blue Mountain Village and its partners employ between 2,700 and 3,300 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees, accounting for about 20% of the tourism labour force in the South Georgian Bay.[xxxiii]

Prior to COVID-19, Blue Mountain Village had a labour shortage, with approximately 150 positions continuously left unfilled. This has been drawn to affordability issues in the area; there are not enough attainable housing options for those working on a tourism income. Comparing the housing prices reported in *Affordability*, the following are the average incomes of some tourism-based employees. Average salaries include:

- Front desk agent: $33,000
- Food service counter attendant: $36,000
- Housekeeping: $36,000
- Food & beverage server: $37,000
- Retail sales clerk: $39,000
- Cook: $41,000
- Grounds/maintenance: $47,000
- Restaurant manager: $52,000-$62,000
- Chef: $54,000
- Outdoor adventure guide: $50,000-$80,000

(Note: these salaries have likely increased slightly from the date this data was retrieved from the Canadian tourism industry compensation data from Tourism HR Canada in 2012).

### 3.7.2 Best practice

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:** Economic Growth and Tourism relate to Sustainable Development GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. This goal aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. Action areas related to this include: providing youth with education, and economic empowerment, implementing safety measures for workers, and supporting people-centred economies promoting youth employment.

**8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

### 3.7.3 Policy

Sustainable economic policies exist in multiple levels of local policy, with some general policy directions being:

- Support rural diversification to increase employment opportunities through goods and services, including value-add products, and the sustainable management and use of resources;
- Recognize and celebrate diversified businesses for their role in the local economy, particularly in times of economic downturn;
- Support flexible and diverse economic development and planning policies to support and open and competitive and entrepreneurial investment;
- Balance the needs of residents and visitors of diverse economic circumstances;
- Improve affordability for low income groups;
- Develop sustainable tourism opportunities, particularly in rural areas by utilizing existing assets;
- Protect the natural features that make the area attractive, including biodiversity and culture;
- Increase sustainable tourism revenues through managing and marketing Grey County as a tourism destination;
- Create positive and creative planning policies to accommodate tourism and recreation-oriented developments;
- Recognize tourism and recreation as important to economies in Grey County;
- Encourage ecotourism, agri-tourism and cultural heritage tourism, and support programs to better customer service provision in tourism; and
- Create a leisure activities plan.

### 3.7.4 2009 ICSP direction

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | |
|------|------|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T6, G3: Improve access to the area for a wide range of tourists | Action | U | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | | | | U | | | | | |
| | Tertiary | U | U | U | U | | | | | | |
| T11, G1: Create employment opportunities for youth | Action | U | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | |

| Goal | Type | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T15, G1: Encourage economic development that is compatible with the community's values and priorities and attracts new business initiatives that support economic diversity | Action | U | | | | | | | | U | | U | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | |
| T15, G2: Develop a strategy that clearly defines the current and future economic opportunities | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | |
| T15, G3: Attract a diversified mix of retail service for all income levels | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | |
| T15, G5: Identify emerging new business opportunities to create permanent well-paying employment | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U |
| T17, G1: Support the Development of a Regional Tourism Plan that guides the achievement of the Vision | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | |
| T17, G2: Create an economic plan that will welcome sustainable and appropriate tourism investment | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | |
| T17, G3: Be part of a tourism destination that distinguishes itself by its sustainable focus thereby creating a competitive market advantage as well as serving its community | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | U |
| | tertiary | | | | | | | | | | U | U | U | |
| T17, G4: To become a tourism destination renowned for its truly friendly service and people | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C), Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U)

### 3.7.5 What local experts say

We showed community representatives and local experts the graph in section 3.7.1 and asked what it said about industry in TBM. Some components they highlighted included:

- A strong tourism industry;
- A rural community with a seasonal user population;
- A gap in local healthcare and health professionals;
- Being vulnerable to loss of talent and difficulties attracting talent;
- A diverse economy;
- Danger of over-tourism, and too much reliance on tourism, which has low wages, seasonal fluctuations, and limited ways to transfer into other industries in the community;

- Little care taken for the community;
- A need for diversification, training and education;
- Acknowledgement that local communities have a lot of the services that the Town is missing;
- One third of the employment is in hospitality and is low wage earning; and
- "If the tourism industry is hit badly (as per COVID-19 or climate change) then 35% of the workforce is in trouble!"

When asked where the opportunities were to support existing industries to become more sustainable, workshop attendees listed:

- Affordable housing to bring and keep workers to our area;
- Public transportation;
- Local food markets, and the slow food movement;
- Agricultural efficiencies;
- Clear and consistent government regulations and policies across sectors;
- More support for older populations;
- Youth employment opportunities; and
- Financial assistance and requirements for green businesses.

When asked where the opportunities were to diversify industries to become more sustainable, workshop attendees suggested:

- Expanding the industrial sector;
- Creating a growth sector by encouraging things like tech-hub or industry-hub to attract like-minded industries or businesses;
- Focusing less on tourism, and more on year round industries;
- Attracting talent that can work from home using unique natural environment;
- Green initiatives and industry;
- Services for aging in place;
- Diversifying opportunities, such as education and health care; and
- Creating value-add and diverse agricultural opportunities.

### 3.7.6 What the public says

Tourism-related community aspects were voted as some of the least unique aspects of TBM, with "a mix of residents who are both full-time and seasonal" ranking as 10th most unique (third-lowest rating), and the "Town's location and relationship with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)" as 11th more unique (second-lowest rating).

Similarly, when asked about the story of today, and opportunities for the community to improve, the public described tourism as a component that needs to be rethought. Some respondents requested that the Town set limits or manage tourism more effectively, namely asking for visitation caps (Venice was offered as an example), or for tourism attractions to be more spread out throughout the area. In particular, respondents were frustrated by the high numbers for tourism in

2020. Correlated with this, many felt like Council placed too much priority on the tourist community than their full-time residents.

It should be noted that TBM received abnormally large numbers of tourists from the GTA during the summer of 2020 due to travel restrictions from COVID-19.

# 3.8 Agriculture

Agriculture has been highlighted as another large contributor to TBM's economy. The agricultural sector has a series of local ties to community history, identity, and local food distribution. Local residents noted their access to fresh farm produce as one of the highlights in the community. Both Best practice and local experts recommend that the Town research more into regenerative agriculture to both improve soil health and reduce local reliance on pesticides and fertilizers. Other members of the community and policy spoke to the need to preserve agriculture, continue agricultural succession planning (particularly to youth), and to improve agricultural technologies.

### 3.8.1 Stats and data

Agriculture makes up 7% of the employment industry in TBM. The area has a unique climate that facilitates the growth of a unique mixture of crops and animals including:

- Hay - 5199 acres (9.72% decrease from 2011);
- Soybeans - 3818 acres (37.93% growth from 2011);
- Christmas trees, woodland and wetland - 3190 acres (18.85% increase from 2011);
- Apples - 2490 acres (3.6% decrease from 2011);
- Cattle and calves - 2205 (21.64% decrease from 2011);
- Dairy cows - 165 (126.03% increase from 2011);
- Hens and Chickens - 726 (17.31% decrease from 2011).



*Figure 8: Land in crops and crop control product use over time, according to the 2016 farm census*

Overall, cropland has decreased in the Town over time, with most farms being between 10 and 129 acres in size. The image on the right shows that insecticide, herbicide, and commercial fertilizer use has increased per acre.

Farmers in the Blue Mountains areas are older than the provincial average; in 2016, the average age of a farmer in TBM was 60, 53 in Grey County, and 55 in Ontario overall.

Lastly, the County and the Town have a large proportion of direct farm sales in comparison to the remainder of the province. In fact, Grey County has the highest number of farm direct sales in Ontario. Additionally, 19% of TBM's agricultural base has farm direct sales.
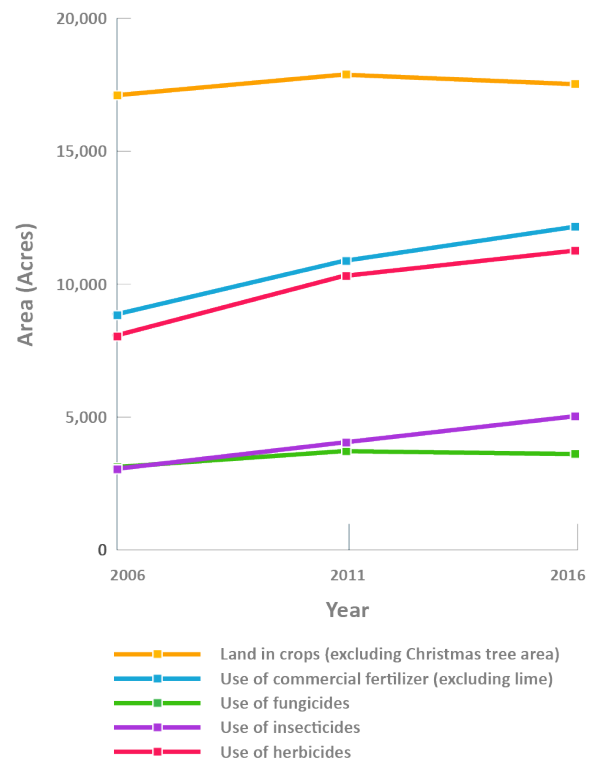
### 3.8.2 Best practice

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:**

Agricultural practices in TBM aligns with three UN SDGs, mainly:

- Goal 9: Industry Innovation & Infrastructure: essential investments to ensure the fruition of other sustainability goals.
- Goal 14: Life Below Water: To conserve and sustainably use the world's ocean, seas and marine resources. This goal suggests protecting valuable habitats and making "ocean-friendly" choices.
- Goal 15: Life on Land: to sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss. This goal suggests supporting recycling, eating a locally sourced diet, and consuming only what we need.

**Project Drawdown review:** Food, Agriculture and Land Use Proposed Solutions is one of the action areas of focus to reach climate change goals in the Drawdown report. Some action areas focused on in the report include:

- Addressing waste and diets to shift what people eat,
- Protecting ecosystems to improve food production on farmland, and
- Shifting agricultural practices - to release less gases like methane, nitrous oxide, and carbon dioxide.

**Whitby Green Standard:** Local and Sustainable Food is one of the action areas in the Town of Whitby's Green standard, which supports development aiding in the development of local food production.

**Federal Sustainable Development Strategy:** Sustainable Food is one of the 13 focus areas in the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

### 3.8.3 Policy

Agriculture policies exist for all levels of government surrounding TBM, but some general themes include:

- Preserving and promoting local agriculture production to grow a strong affordable food system facilitating access to healthy foods and to eliminate food scarce areas;
- Promoting community gardens, local markets, urban agriculture, and other local food initiatives;
- Promoting agricultural practices that conserve water, soil, and environmental features;
- Protecting and supporting local farms, through protecting agricultural resources, minimizing land use conflicts;
- providing opportunities to support local food, and maintaining and improving the agri-food network;
- Encouraging more young farmers, and succession farming;
- Strengthening of links between food producers, distributors, and customers.

### 3.8.4 2009 ICSP direction

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T16, G1: Maintain and improve the economic viability of agriculture | Action | U | | | | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| T16, G2: Enhance sustainable agriculture within TBM community that promotes prosperous family farming and encourages youth engagement in the farming profession | Action | U | | | U | | | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | |
| T16, G3: Enhance education, marketing and promotion of the local agricultural industry and lifestyle | Action | U | | U | | | | | | | | | | | | U | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U |
| T8, G1: Ensure that all residents have access to healthy, nutritious foods | Action | U | | | U | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U)

### 3.8.5 What local experts say

When presented with some of the agricultural data represented in section 3.8.1, we asked local community representatives and experts What contributes to agricultural sustainability in TBM? Some responses they reported included:

- Climate of the area;
- Local partnerships for sales through restaurants;
- Local farm sales via farmgate or farmers market;
- Agri-tourism;
- Soil health - nutrient cycling and farm diversity;
- Regenerative agriculture;
- Transitional support services;
- Value and educate about local agriculture;
- Rewards for sustainable agriculture; and
- Technology advancements.

We also asked the representatives Where there were opportunities to improve agricultural sustainability in TBM, to which they brainstormed:

- Regenerative farming practices;
- Agri-tourism;
- Local marketing of direct farming opportunities;
- Encourage high value add to improve income or find market value for crops;

- Preserve agricultural lands;
- Diversify crop species;
- Connect farmers with one another for services, youth connection, and to sell produce;
- Find alternatives to pesticides and fertilizers;
- Do a deep dive locally to understand if organic and regenerative agriculture is possible;
- Celebrate farming successes; and
- Educate the community on agricultural and gardening practices.

### 3.8.6 What the public says

The rural lifestyle was voted as being the fourth-most unique elements of TBM, while agricultural opportunities were ranked ninth. This aligns with the shared love of the aesthetics of the area, without the connection to the agricultural practices themselves. During an interview, one farmer highlighted in reference to local tourism that "many people come up here for the view [and] agriculture is the view."

Local agriculture was highlighted as one of the best things in TBM as many residents appreciated having fresh and healthy food options grown close to them. There was also a large acknowledgement of the agricultural history that makes up the area due to their unique climate. There was also a brief mention on the markets that TBM residents have access to.

Some other themes that came out in interviews with local residents included:
- **Agriculture protection:** We spoke in length to two farming households; one who mainly rents and provides services and has a supplemental income, and one who farms full time. Both farmers, and some other residents spoke to the need to protect and appreciate farmland, both for production and for views.
- **Agricultural environmental considerations:** One of the interviews raised that many of the farmers in TBM already have an existing environmental plan. These plans are not recorded by OMAFRA, hence why many may not know about them. Additionally, one farmer spoke about which grants they apply to; instead of changing their practice for the sake of the grant, they often apply for grants that they're already progressing towards.
- **Shared agricultural services:** One interviewee spoke at length about their family's experience providing combining, bailing, and threshing services to the local farmers in the area. These shared services are a way to provide a more immediate income source in comparison to cash crop farming, and provided the local community with equipment that they might otherwise not have had. He went on to speak about how these services need to be hyper-local, and are often spread by word of mouth.
- **Farming partnerships for new farmers:** Both farmers spoke at length about some unique partnerships they have with people trying to get into the farming sector. One farmer splits a herd of cattle with a new resident to the community who cannot take care of their cattle full time. The unique partnership provides the farm interviewee with a source of income, and provides the new farmer with the ability to supplement his income while still farming for passion. The other farmers spoke about the farmers that assist them on their farmland. They often try to connect these farm workers with the landlords they lease land from, in the case that ownership becomes an option.

# 3.9 Government and partnerships

Government and partnerships are mentioned often as important components to building sustainable practices as sustainability is an encompassing concept larger than the Town administration alone. Best practices and policy support partnerships within and outside of the local community, to ensure that sustainability actions are achievable, and have far-ranging impacts. The local public is generally positive toward the current Council, mentioning that they are approachable, and feel like a voice of the people. There is however a disconnect between TBM residents and recent developments.

**3.9.1 Best practice**

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:** Government and partnerships are highlighted in two UN SDGs:

- Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Action areas within this goal include transparency, and the inclusion of people with different ethnic origins, religions, gender, sexual orientations or different opinions.
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals: to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development through promoting citizen action groups, partnering with businesses towards sustainability, and supporting the SDGs partnership platform.

**The ICLEI Montreal Commitment and Strategic Vision:** Sustainable governance and management is highlighted as one of the supporting accelerators for other pathways towards sustainability. They mention that sustainable development is a collective effort, and they commit to prioritizing diversity and inclusivity across administrations and communities., strengthening cooperation at a regional scale, bringing the voice of citizens to the global sustainable development debate, and fostering strong partnerships to advance global sustainability.

Resilient Development is one of five pathways highlighted in the ICLEI Commitment, which focuses on the anticipation, prevention, absorption, and recovery from shocks and stresses, including those from "rapid environmental, technological, social and demographic change, and to improve essential basic response structures and functions."[xxxiv] Some actions that were highlighted to support this pathway include prioritizing resilience in local governments, strengthening systems to respond to stressors, and enhancing trust in administration using transparency.

**Project Drawdown review:** Project Drawdown highlights partnerships and government- related actions as accelerators to achieve climate change goals including the importance of setting climate change goals across administrations, altering rules and policy to align with climate change needs, shifting capital to finance climate change actions, changing behaviour like building power towards climate change, and improving technology through partnerships.

**Federal Sustainable Development Strategy:** Government and partnerships are related to two Federal Sustainable Development Strategy goals: greening government, and connecting Canadians with nature.

**Sustainable Waterloo Region Partnerships:** Best practices focus on partnering with other agencies such as non-profits to further regional sustainability goals. The Sustainable Waterloo Region Partnerships initiative is a part of Green Economy Canada, which is an organization that helps launch and grow green economy hubs across Canada. It is run by a social enterprise non-profit that helps businesses and the region to become more sustainable. Their mission is "to catalyze transformation to sustainable systems of energy, mobility and buildings to build a cleaner, more diverse economy," and their program focuses include: organizational sustainability practices, commuting behaviour, regenerative buildings, community GHG impacts and electric vehicles.

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**3.9.2 Policy**

Some local government and partnerships policy objectives regarding sustainability include:

- Create programming for land stewardship and land acquisition;
- Lead by example for sustainability initiatives;
- Consult with and take indigenous voices into consideration when protecting and managing cultural/archaeological heritage; and
- Promote opportunities to work with the First Nations and Metis in seeking mutually beneficial and socially- and environmentally-sustainable economic development opportunities.

**3.9.3 2009 ICSP direction**

| Goal | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T12, G1: ensure that The Town continues to assume a leadership role in implementing sustainable actions. | Action | U | | | | U | | | U | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | |
| T13, G1: Create a strong vibrant regional community | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | |
| T13, G2: Explore the option of future amalgamated single tier community and its local government | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | |
| T4, G2: Service groups and agencies engage with each other and community members to enhance community life | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | | | | | | | | | |
| Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**3.9.4 What the public says**

"Local government that develops ties between community needs and municipal services" ranked 7th for the things that make TBM unique, while strong ties between local area services and businesses (Owen Sound, Meaford and Collingwood) including transportation, business, and employment connections ranked 8th.

Government was brought up multiple times in public engagement outreach, in both positive and negative ways. Residents reported an appreciation for the local government, particularly for how approachable Council and administration are. There was mention that this Council in particular felt to be making decisions on behalf of the people.
Government was also commonly referenced to regarding frustrations with administration, Council, and planning (due to recent urban development), or praise for transparency, approachability, and involvement opportunities in local government.

# 3.10 Health and safety

Health and safety refers to multiple factors in TBM including: access to medical facilities, improving active and healthy lifestyles of residents, and promoting resident safety. Residents stay in their community because of the accessibility to nature, and a healthy active lifestyle and other communities. As the population ages, there is a reported need for medical facility expansion, or retention more locally.

### 3.10.1 Best practice

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**
One SDG reflected in local health and safety is Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing. This goal aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Some actions within this goal include making and promoting healthy choices, including education, safe sex and vaccination, as well as supporting healthy lifestyles.

**Whitby Green Standard:** Health and Happiness is one of the Town of Whitby Green Standard's 10 action areas, and includes related action areas of: public/boulevard trees; access to parks and open space; parkland and open space provision.

**Federal Sustainable Development Strategy**
Safe and Healthy Communities is one of 13 of the Federal Sustainable Development goals.

### 3.10.2 Policy

Healthy development is reflected in many local policy directions including:
- Creating development that is in line with the healthy development checklist, which includes: supporting mixed use development within 800 meters of retail, recreational centers, parks and public spaces, including a variety of affordable housing options, preserving natural heritage - trees, soil integrity, and native species, building cycling infrastructure, and conducting health impact assessments; and
- Developing healthy communities through physician recruitment, and wellbeing plans.

### 3.10.3 2009 ICSP direction

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T8, G3: Provide accessible and equitable health care services to all residents | Action | U | U | | U | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | |
| T8, G4: Explore alternative mechanisms to provide health care | Action | U | U | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Action | U | | | | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | |

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T10,G1: All residents shall have access to community services that meet psychological, social and physical needs that promote long-term prosperity within a safe and secure community | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | |
| T10, G6: Foster a safe environment for all members of the community considering their particular risk factors and needs | Action | U | | U | | U | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U |
| | tertiary | | | U | U | | | | | | | | | |

Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U)

### 3.10.4 What the public says

Active recreation and ecotourism draws in the community were ranked as the second- most unique aspect of TBM.

When asked about the best things about TBM, respondents reported many elements related to keeping a healthy and active lifestyle:

- **Recreation and outdoor activities** like cycling, golf, hiking, skiing, snow sports, and water sports were activities that keep them active and healthy in their community. These activities were often reported to be the main reason the community came here, particularly for those who reported that they were retired in this response;
- **Four-season activities,** highlighting the trail network and ski trails provide for year-round entertainment outdoors; and
- **Active and outdoor lifestyle, and the** multiple like-minded healthy residents in the community. Walkability was also mentioned due to the close proximity of services, particularly in Thornbury, and mentioned that it adds to the health and activity of the area.

When asked what improvements would make the area even better, respondents answered:

- Recreation or community centre and swimming pool for indoor sports, particularly including a pool (either indoor or outdoor), tennis courts, ice rinks, a space to host sports teams, and other needs; and
- Medical Facilities and practitioners in or close to town, or to help support the growth of Collingwood's hospital.

# 3.11 Arts and culture

In comparison to other surrounding municipalities, arts and culture is a larger part of TBM's economy. Some elements that contribute to the unique culture of the community include: small-town feel (see *Sense of Community*), agricultural history (see *Agriculture*), and public entertainment and amenities like the Blue Mountains Public Library.

**3.11.1 Best practice**

**Project Drawdown review:** One of the accelerators listed in the Project Drawdown review to achieve climate goals is to shape local culture to support climate change, including media and culture production.

**Whitby Green Standard:** Culture and Community is one of 10 action areas supported in Whitby's Green Standard. Some actions included in this standard include: art (within the site), outdoor amenity space, culture heritage resources, sustainable culture (education).

**3.11.2 Policy**

The protection and enhancement of local culture and heritage resources are included in many local policies with focuses on:

- Protecting heritage and culture resources to support the tourism and recreation sector. These areas are in particular need of infrastructure renewal and continued support, to support these year-round tourism needs;
- The conservation of built, cultural, and archaeological heritage resources. It is encouraged to have adaptive reuse of existing buildings, to both protect heritage, but also to attract and retain new talent to the area;
- Creation of archaeological management plans and cultural plan development to conserve cultural heritage;
- Flexibility when accommodating cultural activities; and
- Designing public spaces that showcase public art, creative spaces, and natural heritage and archaeological resources. Coordinate awareness for these spaces through implementing wayfinding strategies, connecting to existing trails, and other active transportation routes.

**3.11.3 2009 ICSP direction**

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T14, G1: To celebrate and support the development of the arts and culture sector in TBM | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | | | |
| T14, G2: Create a vision that inspires and calls everyone to action, including the Town Council, staff and volunteers, the arts and culture community, residents and visitors, to support and develop arts and culture in TBM | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | | | | | | | |
| | Action | U | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T14, G3: Encourage youth participation in culture, heritage and the arts | Sub-action | U | U | | | | | | | | |
| T14, G4: Provide funding for the arts community to engage and act in partnership with the municipality | Action | U | U | U | U | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | | | U | | | | | | | |
| T14, G5: Position TBM Community as a cultural and heritage destination | Action | U | | U | U | | | U | | U | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U |
| T14, G6: Community Partners to preserve local cultural and heritage resources | Action | U | | | U | | | | | | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | | | |
| Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U) | | | | | | | | | | | |

### 3.11.4 What the public says

The arts and culture scene, including public programs and commercial creativity and galleries was ranked as the sixth-most unique aspect of TBM today.

When we asked the community where there were opportunities to improve the community, they highlighted the creation and support of arts and culture activities and facilities. Arts and culture activities include the delivery of theatre and music programs supported by the Town and the importance of continued library support.

In interviews, respondents mentioned the importance of and their connection to the history of the area, either indigenous or agricultural history that made the place what it is today. Agriculture in particular draws lessons from past generations, as one farmer noted that "generational farming is one example where you feel the impacts of the generation before." In a different light, another farmer referenced how history is the key to innovation, as he often instructs his children to "think about what your grandfather would have done."

Other interviewees highlighted the importance of community events to reflect both local culture, but also as a way to improve connections to new demographics from different cultural backgrounds.
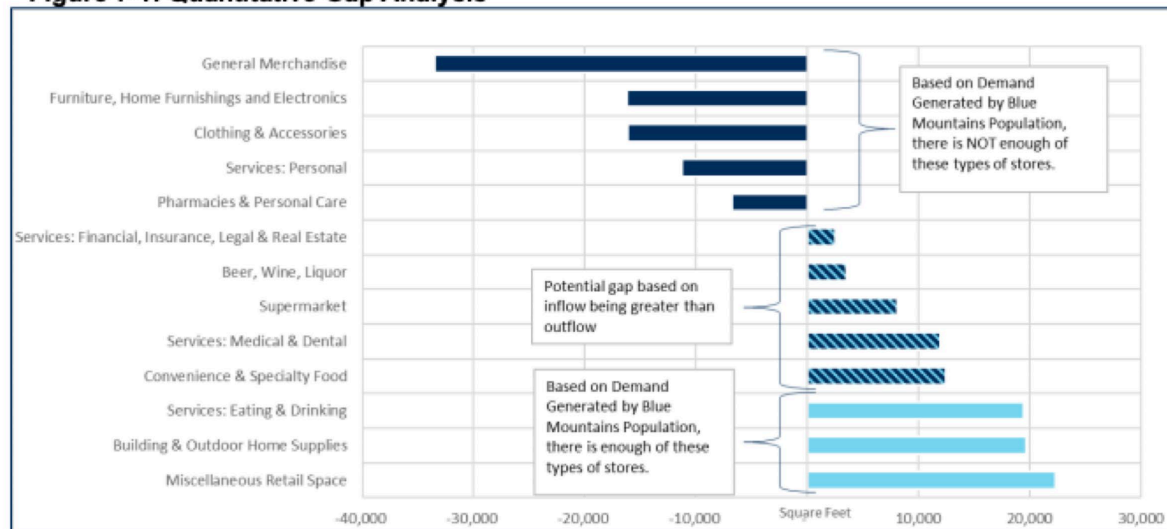
# 3.12 Local Business

Local business was highlighted as a key element that adds to the community feel in TBM. With national trends focused on buying local during COVID-19, public feedback reported a general want to see more support for local businesses in the area. This is highlighted in best practice and policy through the enhancement of downtown placemaking and vibrancy.

### 3.12.1 Stats and data

In 2020, Tate Economic Research Inc. conducted a study to analyze the commercial retail gap in TBM. The study found that The Town was in need of general merchandise, furniture, home furnishings and electronics stores, clothing and accessories, personal services, pharmacies and personal care. They identified that the Town had a surplus of eating and drinking establishments, building and outdoor supply shops, and miscellaneous retail space.



Source: Tate Economic Research Inc.

*Figure 9: 2020 Commercial Retail Gap Analysis*

### 3.12.2 Best practice

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:** Local businesses help to contribute to Sustainable Development GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. This goal aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. Action areas related to this include: providing youth with education, and economic empowerment, implementing safety measures workers, primarily healthcare workers, and supporting people-centred economies promoting youth employment.
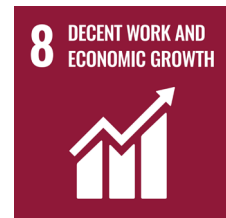
### 3.12.3 Policy

Local business is supported in policy in relationship to downtown vibrancy and placemaking to help ensure economic prosperity.

**3.12.4 2009 ICSP direction**

| Goal | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T15, G4: Attract and retain small businesses | Action | U | U | U | |
| | Sub-action | U | U | U | |
| Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C), Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U) | | | | | |

**3.12.5 What the public says**

The diverse mix of businesses, including products, experiences, and services in TBM was ranked as the fifth-most unique aspect of TBM.

We asked the public what the best things in TBM were. Their answers included:

- **Small or local business,** as they are unique, and residents knew the owners and can see the direct benefit of purchasing locally; and
- **Downtown,** for its character and walkability, particularly Thornbury's downtown.

When we asked what could be improved, respondents mentioned the protection and enhancement of small businesses. Small business support, protection and enhancement was often mentioned in alignment with retaining the local character of The Town, as well as a necessity for the Town's sustainability. The increase of everyday goods and services was also requested, particularly in regards to more food options available outside of Blue Mountains Village.

In interviews, buying and supporting local businesses was an ongoing theme, particularly during COVID-19. Many respondents mentioned that while the pandemic spurred them to buy locally, they will continue to do so because of the high quality of food in TBM and local vendors' connection with the community.

# 3.13 Education & Learning

Lifelong learning was a common theme for public interviews, as education opportunities for elderly and young populations were referenced as important for mental health and retention. Best practice supports education as important, particularly in regards to sustainable practices and lowering population growth, while improving everyday cultural habits.

**3.13.1 Best practice**

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:** Education and learning in TBM is also highlighted in UN Sustainability Goal 4: Quality Education. This goal aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning, and suggests placing education as a priority in policy and practice.

**Project Drawdown review:** Health and education are highlighted in Project Drawdown's action items to Improve Society. Education is highlighted specifically in regards to the protection and upholding of women to have ripple effects of lowering population growth, and increasing sustainability.

**3.13.2 2009 ICSP direction**

| Goal | Type | Status | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T9,G1: All residents shall have access to education opportunities that assist in attaining life-long learning aspirations | Action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U |
| T9, G2: All residents have a heightened awareness of the education opportunities available | Action | U | | | | | | |
| | Subaction | U | U | U | U | | | |
| T9, G3: Achieve collaboration, coordination and communications among many education-related organizations and groups | Action | U | U | U | U | | | |
| Establish a local education facility | Action | U | U | | | | | |
| Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U) | | | | | | | | |

**3.13.3 What the public says**

Though not mentioned directly in surveys, lifelong learning was a common theme for interviewees. Almost all interviewees, but particularly those who were older, mentioned the importance of lifelong learning. They attributed lifelong learning, and its associated resources (libraries, conferences, etc.) to be invaluable to the long-term mental health of the local population.

# 3.14 Infrastructure & Innovation

Infrastructure and innovation was highlighted as essential ensuring practices stay sustainable. It was mentioned that infrastructure improvements and resilient development practices are important in ensuring we rely less on transportation and other carbon-emitting sources. Technology advances are also important in ensuring agriculture, economic development, and naturalization practices continue to remain resilient and improve efficiencies over time.

**3.14.1 Best practice**

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:** One Social Development Goal that reflects infrastructure and innovation is Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure which is listed as an underpinning crucial element for all other aspects of sustainability.

**The ICLEI Montreal Commitment and Strategic Vision:** Innovation & science was highlighted as one of the main supporting elements to achieving ICLEI's 5 focus areas. Some consideration in the commitment include:

- Creating policy approaches to help achieve 5 focus areas;
- Using digital technologies as a tool for inclusion;
- Promoting evidence-driven and science-based policy;
- Driving innovation through partnerships and collaboration; and
- Creating space for open innovation.

**Project Drawdown review:** The Drawdown review suggests supporting communications infrastructures specifically, to decrease travel reliance, and therefore slow the effects of global warming.

**Federal Sustainable Development Strategy**

Modern and resilient infrastructure is one of 13 of the country's sustainability priorities.

**3.14.2 Policy**

Infrastructure and Innovation underpin many local policy directions, but are explicitly mentioned when:

- GC's OP suggests supporting business activities that provide new technologies and the sharing economy;
- The PPS supports offering long-term use of land and infrastructure to ensure economic prosperity. GC's OP also recognizes that infrastructure and its renewal are integral to sustainability; and
- The PPS also specifies that telecommunications infrastructure is essential to economic prosperity in Ontario.

**3.14.3 2009 ICSP direction**

| Goal | Type | Status | | |
|------|------|--------|---|---|
|      | Action | U | U | U |

| T7, G1: optimize the municipal wastewater and stormwater systems | Sub-action | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U | U |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Legend: 2021 Status: Completed (C),Ongoing / in progress (O), Included in future operational plans (I), Never initiated (N), Unknown (U)

### 3.14.4 What local experts say

Though not directly asked about infrastructure and innovation, local experts mentioned that technology innovation and infrastructure improvements were vital to ensuring the overall sustainability of the economy and supporting agricultural practices.

### 3.14.5 What the public says

Infrastructure and innovation improvements were mentioned when we asked what improvements would make the community even better. The most commonly mentioned infrastructure improvements for transportation.

Recommended road and parking improvements spoke to highway widening and to increasing parking at trailheads due to increased use by newcomers and tourists. There were also requests to make some trailhead parking areas prioritized for resident access, due to the overwhelming number of tourists present during the summer of 2020.

Walkability was highlighted as a priority in the Town; some respondents mentioned a need for more pedestrian-only spaces and trails and to sidewalk improvements. Cycling improvements largely focused on bike lanes and connectivity in opposition to the current risk of collision due to mixed travel on the road without clear delineation of space.

Other recommended infrastructure improvements mentioned included: water and sewage, cell phone and internet connections, hydro infrastructure improvements, and pier and harbour improvements. Importance of infrastructure, particularly cellular connections, internet access, roads, and waste collection were mentioned as important to interviewees, particularly in rural areas.

Innovation was mentioned as a growing economic group in TBM by another interviewee, who suggested supporting more local entrepreneurs and other technology companies to come to The Town, and diversify the economy.

# 4.0 Next Steps

The information within this Current State Report provides an essential foundation for the TBM Future Story process. Reviewing and integrating data, policy, community views, and best practices provides a robust understanding of the current state of the community which will inform subsequent phases of the process.

In Phase 2, the process will extensively engage the community to understand their ideas for the future of TBM. Questions about the future of TBM will be framed in part by the insights and challenge questions identified in Section 2 of this report. In addition, exploration of the biggest, boldest ideas will help to build a vision and objectives for the community, setting the course where TBM should proceed in the future.

In Phase 3, the information represented in this report will serve as the starting point for the new Community Sustainability Plan. Through the generation of ideas, prioritization and selection of the actions that will have the most impact, the new plan will identify strategic, actionable steps to move from the current state towards the desired future.

Throughout the upcoming phases of work, this report will serve as a continual reference point as we answer the question:

*How might we build upon the unique attributes of the Town of the Blue Mountains while creating a shared path towards a future of increased livability, vibrancy and health of all living systems in our community?*

# Appendix A: Research Working Report

Note: This is not included in this draft document, as it has been reviewed by the subcommittee and staff. The report can be found at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FWMYIueDKoC2KxGHIz2XO1DV6R-p8Gt55Pcmyiz1JWs/edit?usp=sharing

# Appendix B: Phase 1 What We Heard Report

Note: This is not included in this draft document, as it has been reviewed by the subcommittee and staff. The report can be found at:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qmQHL18cf2c75rSuBBRA3D2CXpp7g_04S2WuRH14SKc/edit?usp=sharing

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