

# The Blue Mountains Future Story Phase 2 What We Heard Report

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# Executive Summary

Phase 2 of The Blue Mountains Future Story engagement process is now complete. The following report highlights the public and local stakeholders' responses to questions regarding the vision and goals for The Blue Mountains Future Story Process. Using a variety of engagement approaches over a period of 9 weeks in June, July and August 2021, feedback was obtained on the community's sustainable practices, and their thoughts on actions and visions for the future of the natural environment, social well-being, arts and culture, the built environment, and the economy in The Blue Mountains. This feedback is one part of an overall process that will inform the vision and goals for The Blue Mountains Future Story, in addition to setting the stage for Phase 3: Action Planning, after the upcoming Committee Summit.

In Phase 2, we gathered over 2,500 points of data from 268<sup>1</sup> participants, with over 150 hours of time donated by community members to give their feedback. The number of recorded participants does not necessarily reflect the number of unique stakeholders engaged, as several individuals provided input across multiple engagement methods (e.g. by responding to a survey, attending two workshops, and two Café (music) events), and in some cases more than one person shared a single screen to participate in a workshop.

We asked the community for their long-term visions for The Blue Mountains across various engagement methods (see Section 3.2). The top 15 long-term (50 year) vision elements mentioned throughout the various surveys, events and workshops were:

- a) Maintain, protect and improve the natural environment
- b) Responsible development
- c) Respect land, clean water, and clean air
- d) Affordable housing & community
- e) Green energy
- f) Car alternatives
- g) Green infrastructure and development
- h) Diversity & inclusion
- i) Sustainability and environment leadership
- j) Tree protection and retention
- k) Balanced economy, environment, society, culture, and built environment
- l) Waste reduction/management
- m) Buy local food, services, and materials
- n) Diverse economy
- o) Public art

We asked public survey participants what their medium-term priorities were for each sustainability subject area, including: the natural environment, the built environment, the

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<sup>1</sup> Does not reflect unique stakeholders engaged due to various participants engaging in multiple engagement processes or some people participating on a shared a device.

economy, culture and social well-being (see Section 3.3 and Appendix B). The top 25 medium-term (10 - 20 year) priorities described across themes by public survey respondents included:

- a) Local learning and educational opportunities
- b) Affordable green energy
- c) Responsible consumption and production
- d) Health and well-being
- e) Peace, justice and strong institutions
- f) Job opportunities & stability
- g) Affordable housing and community
- h) Reduced inequalities
- i) Protect and improve land
- j) Climate action/reduce carbon emissions
- k) No poverty
- l) Celebrate cultural heritage
- m) Green infrastructure and development
- n) Celebration of the arts & expression
- o) Economic growth or health
- p) Gender equality
- q) Food security/zero hunger
- r) Encourage local/regenerative agriculture
- s) Responsible development
- t) Events/entertainment
- u) Innovation and entrepreneurship
- v) First Nations heritage & support
- w) Sustainable cities and communities
- x) Attract businesses and industry
- y) Community Support

We asked workshop participants what actions would make The Blue Mountains more sustainable in terms of social well-being, natural environment, local economy, arts and culture, and the built environment. Across workshops, the top 12 themes that were mentioned in the action ideation sessions were (see section 3.4 and Appendix C):

- a) Create social well-being
- b) Support local art
- c) Maintain and expand trails and paths
- d) Policy restrictions
- e) Sustainable development
- f) Public space
- g) Affordable housing & community
- h) Story telling/sharing local history
- i) Events
- j) Tree protection
- k) Pedestrian focus
- l) Development standards

We also asked what actions would make The Blue Mountains more sustainable in the Public Survey (see Section 3.5). The most supported big ideas included:

- a) Green infrastructure and development (e.g. Green development framework)
- b) Responsible development (e.g. no sprawl, density)
- c) Waste reduction/management (e.g. no plastic, accessible waste facilities)
- d) Green energy
- e) Affordable housing & community
- f) Community engagement & communications
- g) Transit (regional and rural)
- h) Build trust and respect, and collaborate with residents
- i) Redefine town vision
- j) Road solutions
- k) Transit
- l) Environmental leadership

# 1.0 Introduction

This engagement process has been guided by the “How Might We” question developed by the Sustainability Advisory Committee’s Sub-Committee. 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?”* created a baseline of inquiry to build a new Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, The Blue Mountains Future Story.

In Phase 1 of The Blue Mountains Future Story, we heard from stakeholders and the community about the current state of The Blue Mountains. We heard different viewpoints on why certain data trends were happening within the town, what aspects of the town were important to maintain, and what things were in need of change. Phase 1’s Internal What We Heard report can be found in Appendix D.

In Phase 2, we built off of what we heard in Phase 1 and asked stakeholders and the public for their visions and desires for the future. In order to adequately understand the desired future state during a time of unprecedented change, we undertook a diverse outreach and engagement strategy. The strategy would capture individual thoughts and ask residents to collaboratively develop a wide-ranging vision in addition to objectives for large-scale themes of the built environment, the economy, the natural environment, arts and culture, and social well-being. As Phase 2 nears completion and the Committee Summit approaches, this What We Heard Report will be used as one of the inputs into the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> phases of The Blue Mountains Future Story process.

The Committee Summit aims to gather diverse staff, elected officials, and community representatives together to thoughtfully incorporate what we heard in phases 1 and 2 into a community-informed vision and set of goals. By working together to uphold the environmental resilience, social and cultural vitality and economic balance, council and staff foster the trust of our community and support our region’s diverse cultural and natural heritage through thoughtful consultation and organizational excellence.

# 2.0 Process and Participation

From June 14 to August 13, an engagement process was implemented to ensure the public, local businesses, and other stakeholders could share their insights and feedback on the vision and objectives, as part of The Blue Mountains Future Story. Throughout the course of the project, we heard from 268<sup>2</sup> community participants across all engagement methods.

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<sup>2</sup> Does not reflect unique stakeholders engaged due to various participants engaging in multiple engagement processes or multiple people participating on a shared a device.

## 2.1 How We Engaged

To share questions, comments and insights, participants were encouraged to:

- Attend one of the 5 virtual public workshop sessions held between July 7 and July 15, each of which focused on a different theme of community sustainability
- Attend one of the 3 virtual music events in a Future Story Café series, held on the evenings of July 13, 14 and 15
- Provide feedback via a short online survey at a mobile phone booth which rotated through different locations in the Town from June 14 to August 13
- Provide feedback online via the project website: [tbmfuturestory.ca](http://tbmfuturestory.ca)
- Fill out a public survey in print, or online between June 14th and July 31, 2021
- Fill out a business survey in print or online between July 26, 2021 and August 13th
- Become a sustainability ambassador by providing or attending a presentation using the materials provided on the project website

### Public Survey

The approach to online engagement gave residents an opportunity to share their insights for action in a way that allowed for 24/7 access with a relatively minimal investment in time. This enabled the project team to gain a broader variety of insights into the future of sustainability at The Blue Mountains. We asked questions about the participants' personal sustainability, their visions for the future, and their big ideas to achieve those visions.

Between June 14 and July 31, the survey received 124 responses. The survey was initially launched to run from June 10 to July 16, but it was extended at the request of the Sustainability Advisory Committee until July 31.

We asked about:

- Resident Sustainability Practices
- 50-year sustainability vision
- 10–20-year priorities
- Big ideas for the future

### Business Survey

The business survey was offered online, giving business operators an opportunity to share their insights for action in a way that allowed for 24/7 access with a relatively minimal investment in time. This survey aimed to gather local insights into how businesses see the future of sustainability in The Blue Mountains.

Between July 26, 2021 and August 13, 2021, the survey received 9 responses.

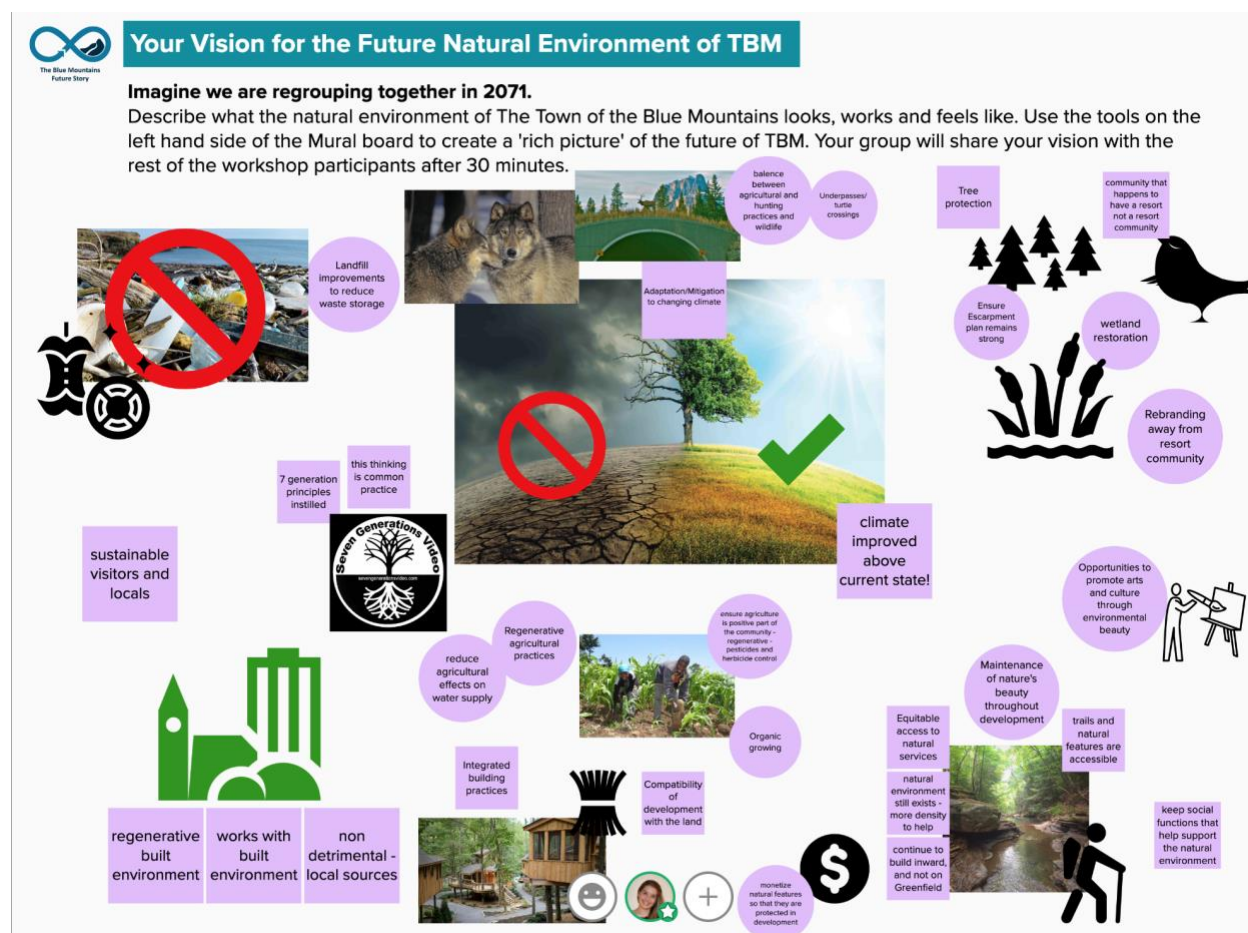
We asked questions about the sustainability measures each business has taken, their vision for the Town of The Blue Mountains, the size and industry of the business, and how established the businesses are. We also questioned businesses about their location within TBM and how often they make sustainability related decisions to reduce environmental impacts.



## Visioning Workshops

Workshops invited members of the public and targeted stakeholders to gather with key The Blue Mountains staff to explore the questions being asked about vision and objectives for The Blue Mountains Future Story, and to dive deeper into the relationships between five different sustainability themes: the natural environment, the economy, the built environment, arts and culture, and social well-being. The workshops used a dynamic mix of data, visual imagery and real-time visualization, to foster collaboration and gather insights from participants on a long-term vision for the sustainability themes.

Each workshop had a rich picturing exercise, where participants developed an image board by describing their ideal future for that topic (see image below for an example). Each workshop also asked where each key sustainability theme had overlapping opportunities for improvement with other sustainability themes. For example, if a participant came to the economy workshop, we asked them to reflect on how to improve the economy while also enhancing the built environment, social well-being, local culture, and natural environment.



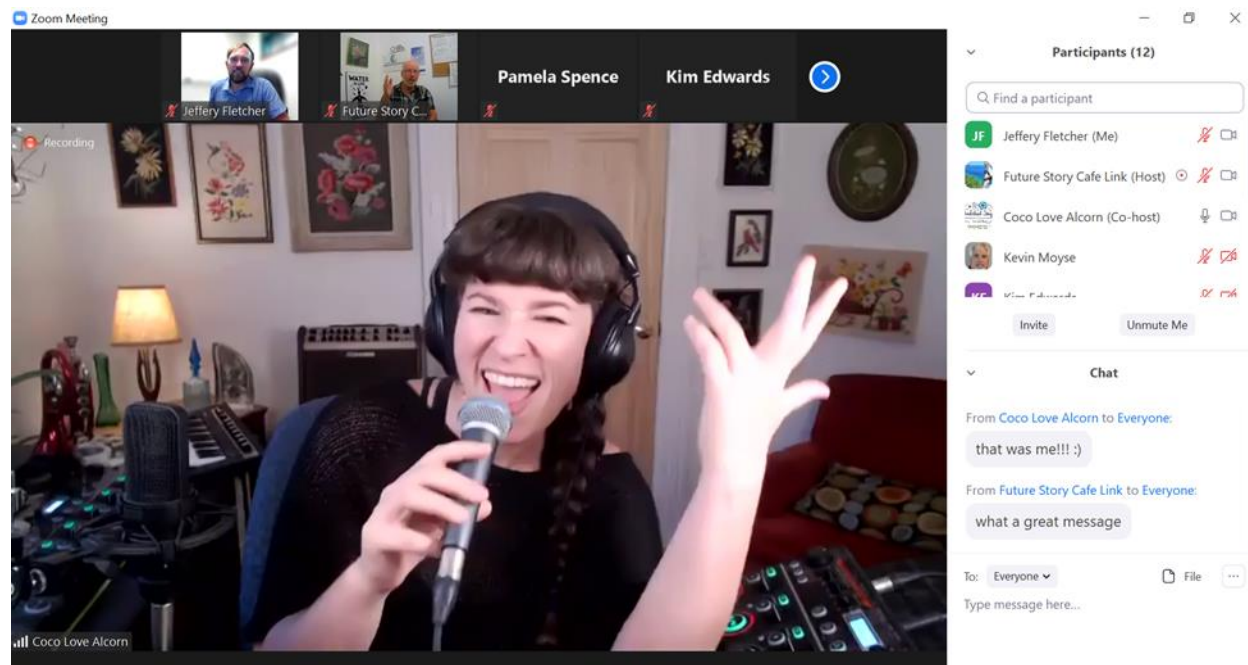
*Rich picturing exercise example.*

Between July 7 and July 15, 2021, 5 workshops were held, engaging with 68 participants. It should be noted that this number was tracked using Zoom<sup>3</sup>.

### Musical Events (Future Story Café Workshops)

Three musical events during the Future Story Café series invited community members to gather with The Blue Mountains staff, Barry Randall, and three musical acts (Drew McIvor with Abby Woodhouse, Burton Glasspool Overdrive, and Coco Love Alcorn) to explore the questions being asked about The Blue Mountains Future Story, and to dive deeper into the nuance of the subject. The aim of the workshop was to attract stakeholders who may not have been interested in a typical workshop or survey with compelling local musical performances, and engaging participants in simple real-time polling and questionnaires to gather input between two musical sets.

Three events were held on July 13, July 14 and July 15, 2021, with a cumulative total of 39 participants (not counting two Town staff and two event facilitators) across the three sessions. Of these, 26 participants provided input to the Future Story project using the provided online engagement tools. This number is not an accurate reflection of the total number of unique stakeholders engaged, as several people attended two or even all three Café events, some people attended only small portions of the events with limited or no input, and some attendees included two or more people joining through a single Zoom account. Participation in these events was not limited to The Blue Mountains residents and included attendees from outside the Town.



Musical Events - Coco Love Alcorn Session

<sup>3</sup> Does not reflect unique stakeholders engaged due to various participants engaging in multiple workshops or some people participating on a shared a device.

## Websites

Using a project page on YourView The Blue Mountains, the Town's portal for online surveys and project information, the Future Story team shared project details, advertised engagement sessions, provided means for feedback and displayed milestone updates on project development. This site was often accessed through a unique URL used in social media and direct outreach: <http://TBMFutureStory.ca>.

Between June 10 and July 31, the YourView project page received 697 unique visits, 16.9% of which engaged with an online survey after the survey's extension. Other visitors used the website to find information, download ambassadors, print survey materials, sign up for workshops, complete the business survey, or to learn more about sustainability.

The Town's official website also hosted, and continues to host, project information for the Future Story project including a project overview, a link to the YourView project page, and workshop information in addition to registration links. This website can be found at: <https://www.thebluemountains.ca/community-sustainability-plan.cfm>

## Future Story Mobile Kiosk

A phone booth was retrofitted to include information boards with information about the Future Story project and a QR code linking to a short survey for people to submit their ideas for a sustainable future. This Future Story Mobile Kiosk was placed in high-traffic locations to inform and engage the community 'where they are at', out and about in public spaces. The boards were focused on educating passers-by, while also giving people an open and convenient way to contribute.

Participants responded to two questions via the phone booth online survey. The first question asked for details regarding the big picture ideas that will promote a sustainable future in TBM, and the other considered why the big picture ideas were important to them as individuals.

Between June 14 and August 13, the Mobile Kiosk generated 18 ideas and helped spread awareness of the project throughout the community.





Phase 2 Future Story Mobile Kiosk outside of the skatepark

### Ambassador Resources

Throughout the engagement process, ambassador materials were created and distributed to engage and inform members of the public along with stakeholders who were unable to attend the workshop events. These conversations supported a broader and deeper understanding of both the assets and challenges related to the ambassadors' vision for the future, and future actions.

Between June 10 and July 16, 2021, 7 materials were downloaded, and one ambassador session was held by the Blue Mountain Village Association for 7 participants. It should be noted that the ambassador materials were to be used by the community, and we are unable to track the number of participants who may have been engaged using these materials.

### Written Correspondence

Throughout the duration of Phase 2's engagement, the project team has received 3 letters of correspondence through email, the project website, and mail. These documents' feedback is included with survey and workshop feedback where requested or appropriate.

## 2.2 Engagement Communication

Engagement opportunities were communicated using the following:

- A travelling phone kiosk at the following locations:
  - Pedestrian bridge near Town Hall
  - Loree Forest Trailhead
  - Ravenna Country Market
  - Blue Mountain Village
  - Skateboard park
  - LE Shore Library
  - Craigleith Heritage Depot
- Physical posters throughout the Town for Musical Events (17 locations)
- Chamber of Commerce Signage
- The Blue Mountains' websites for the Community Sustainability Plan and on YourView The Blue Mountains
- Print/online newspaper and magazine advertisements in Collingwood Connection, Collingwood Today, Town of The Blue Mountains Widget, Blue Mountain Review, Rampt, and Mountain Life Magazine
- Radio advertisements on 95.1 The Peak FM
- Video mention in the Mayor's Update Video
- Social media advertisements on the Town's Twitter page, the Chamber of Commerce's channels, musician channels for the music events, and through key stakeholder and members of the public and their networks, including "The Forum / Town of The Blue Mountains" Facebook page
- Direct Mail Outs to all Town residents
- Direct invitations to all Phase 1 participants
- Direct invitations to all Town staff
- Direct outreach to over 50 stakeholders via email
- Direct invitation to all business associations
- Town notices in both June and July
- Ambassador outreach to multi-stakeholder agencies including the Blue Mountains Village Association, Blue Mountains Ratepayers Association, The Climate Action Network, and the Thornbury BIA.

## 2.3 Who We Heard From

The engagement process engaged 268 participants. This is not a count of unique stakeholders engaged as several people took part in multiple engagements (e.g. both the Public Survey and Visioning Workshops), and a few others included more than one person taking part through just one account. The number of responses or points of contact and conversation are detailed below:

- Public survey: 124 responses
- Mobile phone kiosk: 18 participants
- Visioning workshops: 68 participants
- Website: 697 visitors
- Business survey: 9 responses
- Ambassador Program: 7 downloads, 7 known presentation participants
- Written Correspondence: 3 letters/emails
- Music events: 39 participants

## 2.4 Our Approach to Engagement

We received feedback in Phase 1 that residents wanted to see more diverse ways in getting involved beyond survey feedback. In Phase 2, we ensured that there were many ways to get involved, and multiple forms of communication approaches including both physical and digital formats.

The proposed communications and engagement tactics in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 above were initially brainstormed in a collaborative workshop with Sustainability Sub-committee members and staff on May 12, 2021. This way, our engagement techniques use a community-first approach.

## 3.0 What We Heard

The following section shares the questions that were asked as part of the community engagement process paired with what was heard from participants in response to these prompts.

### 3.1 Personal Sustainability

**What is the most sustainable thing you do?**

Methods used to ask: Public Survey

Most frequent responses with number of responses:

- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (44)

- Sustainable purchasing (20)
- Reduce transportation emissions (20)
- Compost (19)
- Buy local (15)
- Waste reduction/management (15)
- Reduce electricity (14)
- Reduce plastic (13)
- Sustainable diet (12)
- Personal gardening (10)
- Buy less (9)
- Active transportation (8)
- Reduce water use (8)
- Naturalization/biodiversity/habitat (8)
- Plant trees (7)
- Reduce contamination (6)
- Repurpose (6)
- Green building (5)

### What are some sustainable actions your business has taken?

Methods used to ask: Business Survey

When discussing sustainable actions taken by businesses in TBM, businesses mentioned composting & recycling, installing energy efficient features such as windows, furnaces, and hot water tanks, the reduction of plastic use, switching to LED lights and timed lighting, growing a garden, ethically sourced diamonds & lab grown diamonds, using better quality items to reduce waste and working with local materials/service providers.

“Mercury free watch batteries, ethically sourced gold and diamonds, including emphasizing lab grown diamonds.”

“Recycling program. Customers can recycle their beauty empties from any beauty brand for 10% off. We are recycling friendly and are currently working on reducing our packaging all around for our brand.”

### What is a sustainable thing you want to do: Community

What is a sustainable thing you want to do, but you don't or can't? Why is this a challenge?

Methods used to ask: Music events, public survey

Theme	Total Number of Occurrences	Music Event number of occurrences	Public Survey number of occurrences
Use transit or green transportation alternative	45	10	35
Waste reduction/management	30	12	18
Implement green electricity	27	13	14
Adequately recycle due to recycling/compost limitations	15	4	11
Improved governance/government	8	1	7
Buy local and eat local food	7	4	3
Protect environment	6	1	5
Reduce carbon emissions	5	4	1

Actions mentioned 4 or fewer times include: green building, plant trees, change diet, reduce waste, sustainable purchasing, reduce development, reduce water, be welcoming and supportive of new residents, compost, access local healthcare, use community website for re-useables, improve trail variety, water recycling, pesticides/herbicides on roadways, get involved, work locally, reduce electricity, reduce deliveries, enjoy nature, participate in environmental stewardship, naturalization/biodiversity/habitat, reuse, go to music festivals



### What is a sustainable action you have wanted your business to make: Business

Question: What is a sustainable action you have wanted your business to make, but have been unable to, and why?

Method used to ask: Business Survey

Some businesses expressed regrets about not being able to take some actions that would promote sustainability in The Blue Mountains. Some of the actions businesses would have liked to take include providing closer/better housing for staff members, the elimination of travel to suppliers, conducting capital updates to their HVAC/energy systems and buying more hyper-local supplies.

“Reducing energy consumption is difficult without large capital investments that don't always have a ROI that is financially sustainable.”

“Ontario is considered local, I would love to shrink that area, at times our demand out-weighs the available supply and costs are at times only retail or higher instead of wholesale.”

### How often do you make sustainable choices?

Methods used to ask: Public Survey, Mobile Phone Kiosk Survey

Preamble: We want to know how often you make sustainable choices – ways of reducing your personal impacts on and/or improving the world around us. How often do you make sustainable choices?

Response	Public	Business
All the Time (I make a habit of investing time and money into making my life more sustainable)	29%	44%
Often (I try to make sustainable choices everyday)	57%	56%
Sometimes (I make sustainable choices when they are easy to access)	14%	0%
Rarely (I make sustainable choices when directly asked to)	0%	0%
Never (I have to focus on my present needs)	0%	0%

## 3.2 Long-Term Vision (50 years)

### Public Survey: What would you like The Blue Mountains to be like in 50 years?

Methods Used to ask: Public Survey

Format: Themes (number of responses matching this theme): Description

Preamble: Describe your vision: What would you like The Blue Mountains to be like in 50 years? You may wish to expand on one or more of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (optional), or share your personal long-term vision for the community.

**1. Maintain, protect and improve the natural environment (44):**

- a. Retain the same amount of natural resources that are currently available in The Blue Mountains, ensure they remain accessible, and improve the environment over time. There were specific references to protection and enhancement of the Niagara Escarpment, natural beauty, shoreline, mature trees, parkland and wetland areas, watersheds, and wildlife.

**2. Responsible development (35)**

- a. Ensure development does not extend into green space, helps to rehabilitate green space, is small in house/unit size, is dense, has a housing mix, has planned growth that is respectful of infrastructure needs, and is respectful of the surrounding character of the Town.

**3. Respect land and clean water (25)**

- a. Shift attitudes and actions towards land and water bodies by educating others on environmental needs and repercussions, giving land 'person status,' ensuring rainwater is used productively, residents act as environmental stewards, and water sources and land is not polluted or littered with garbage.

**4. Affordable housing & community (22)**

- a. Ensure there are affordable places for people to live and access services.

**5. Green energy (22)**

- a. Transfer traditional energy sources to renewable resources such as solar, wind, or geothermal, and provide funding opportunities for these incentives locally.

**6. Car alternatives (21)**

- a. Support carbon-burning car alternatives for transportation, including electric cars, improved transit options, designated parking zones with shuttle services, and encouraging more active transportation (see below for more details).

**7. Green infrastructure and development (19)**

- a. Encourage new development and infrastructure to be environmentally sustainable, with net zero technology integration, low impact development, all of which are resilient and will last overtime.

**8. Tourism (20)**

- a. Tourism came up in a variety of ways. Some respondents requested less reliance and more management of tourism or short-term residents (7), while others supported continued tourism as is (6), and others requested that tourism continue to exist, while also increasing community focus (7).

**9. Job opportunities & new industry (16)**

- a. Create well paid job opportunities, including entrepreneurship opportunities, and attract new businesses (including environmental businesses) to ensure families and youth are able to stay in the area.

**10. Walkable, trails and active transportation (15)**

- a. There is improved walkability within towns, and trails are better connected and maintained throughout the municipality and region. These participants did not mention that these improvements were to be car alternatives.

**11. Accessible amenities (14)**

- a. Ensure Town amenities remain accessible, particularly the Georgian Bay shoreline. Other accessible amenities described include healthcare facilities (1) and recreational activities (11).

**12. Maintain size (14)**

- a. Maintain or limit growth within the municipality.

**13. Waste reduction/ management (13)**

- a. Plastic reliance is minimized/eliminated, it is easy to recycle, and all recycling is recycled (not wasted), with little waste going to landfill.

**14. Infrastructure Improvements (13)**

- a. There is adequate and resilient infrastructure being built along with development, particularly for water and roadways, including more complete streets.

**15. Diverse (11)**

- a. The community is diverse in age, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity.

**16. Agriculture (11)**

- a. There is a focus on agriculture retention and enhancement, farm to table sales are the norm, and there is increased encouragement of regenerative agriculture.

**17. Maintain character & heritage (10)**

- a. Ensure that heritage (physical, cultural, and agricultural) and character is maintained, particularly in light of new development.

**18. Environmental focus or leadership (9)**

- a. Government and the community are seen as green leaders, and pursue environmental actions as a top priority.

**19. Healthy (9)**

- a. Respondents envisioned a physically and mentally healthy future population and generation.

**20. Trees (9)**

- a. Preserve, protect, and plant trees. Unique example: arboretum.

**21. Welcoming and inclusive (8)**

- a. A friendly environment to all residents and visitors.

**22. Diverse, sustainable and local food options (8)**

- a. Support farm to table initiatives, community gardens, local food production, and diverse food experiences in town centres.

**23. Green economy (8)**

- a. Businesses to adopt sustainable practices, offer waste-free and other sustainable options, and to not push needless consumption.

#### **24. Recreation (8)**

- a. Retain the recreational features that make The Blue Mountains a centre for outdoor activities, including trails, skiing, and watercraft recreation.

#### **25. Education (7)**

- a. Support lifelong learning, and educational opportunities, particularly in regards to informing the community about environmental stewardship.

#### **Other themes included:**

Green space (6), Vibrant downtown and businesses (6), Carbon emissions & climate action (5), Basic needs met (5), No traffic (5), No density (5), Economic growth & stability (5), Youth support (4), Support innovation (4), Reduce pesticide/herbicide use, particularly on roadsides (4), Vibrant music art and culture (3), Maintain quality of life (3), Complete communities (3), Age in place and senior supports (2), Disagreement that climate change is a priority (2), No light pollution (1), Enhanced sense of community (1), Social justice leaders (1), Self-sustaining (1), Active community (1), Live within our means (1), Entrepreneurship (1), and Volunteer opportunities (1).

#### **Business Survey: What would you like The Blue Mountains to be like in 50 years?**

Methods used to ask: Business Survey

Preamble: Your answer can be broad and/or personal, but we invite you to consider the role of the business community in helping create a sustainable future and imagine how your own business might operate in an ideal future for The Blue Mountains.

Businesses in The Blue Mountains have big ideas and visions to improve the community. The businesses surveyed mentioned the promotion of well-being, better access to affordable housing and childcare, a need for increased diversity (cultural, social and economic), more family-oriented activities, environmental protection, more sustainable development and sustainable business practices.

“A community focused on all well-being including people and planet.”

“Any vision of TBM will not be possible without addressing the needs of people to find jobs, and therefore, business growth must be an integral part of any vision. Housing affordability remains a significant barrier to entry for the area as well...”

“A welcoming, inclusive community that leverages its small town feeling but embraces technology and protects its agriculture and natural resources.”

## Public and Stakeholder Workshops - Thematic Visions

Methods used to ask: Visioning Workshops, Music Event, Ambassador Program

We asked workshop, musical event, and ambassador participants to create a rich picture or describe how they envisioned The Blue Mountains in 50 years, in regards to 5 identified subject areas: the natural environment, the economy, the built environment, arts and culture, and social well-being. There were differing numbers for each workshop, and differing levels of involvement by participants. The top 5 themes from each visioning workshop included:

- Cultural Sustainability
  - Diversity & Inclusion (10)
  - Public art (9)
  - Community support (8)
  - Indigenous history/ practices (8)
  - Music (8)
- Economic Sustainability
  - Diverse economy (18)
  - Sustainability leadership/ best practices (16)
  - Affordable housing & community (12)
  - Regenerative agriculture (12)
  - Career opportunities (11)
- Natural Environment Sustainability
  - Clean air/ water (16)
  - Tree Protection (13)
  - Waste Reduction/ Management (10)
  - Wildlife protection (7)
  - Limit herbicide/pesticide/fertilizer use (7)
- Built Environment Sustainability
  - Green infrastructure and development (27)
  - Public transportation (18)
  - Bike share/ cycling network (12)
  - Net zero emissions (12)
  - Pedestrian focus (10)
- Social Sustainability
  - Diversity & inclusion (18)
  - Community support (15)
  - Community (7)
  - Healthcare (6)
  - Local agriculture (6)

## 3.3 Medium-Term Priorities (10-20 years)

We asked participants in the Public Survey what their top priorities were for sustainability over the next 10 - 20 years. We asked the community this using 5 pillars for sustainability, including: the natural environment, social, culture, built environment, and economic sustainability.

## Top 20 medium-term priorities

The top 25 priorities mentioned across themes when asked about medium-term (10-20 years) sustainability priorities were:

### **1. Learning and education**

- a) Subthemes: culinary education, support life-long learning, new and challenging opportunities, environmental and sustainability education, local culture and history in schools, post-secondary school, trades college, arts education outside of school.

### **2. Affordable green energy**

- a) Subthemes: target % for wind and solar, solar water heaters, resilient infrastructure, no TCE, assist households in affording personal green energy, renewables, mandatory energy efficiency regulations, methane power.

### **3. Responsible consumption and production**

- a) Subthemes: No barriers to recycling, reduce construction waste, encourage businesses to recycle unique goods (e.g. clothing, furniture), waste-less, plastic-free, or Styrofoam-free business practices, public education of how to use less, easy access to recycling facilities.

### **4. Health and well-being**

- a) Subthemes: Mental health supports, doctors and medical personnel, expanded long term care facilities, social health and wellness programs, healthcare program innovation.

### **5. Peace, justice and strong institutions**

- a) Subthemes: Reduce size of government, reduce red tape, government responsive to local community needs, business supportive policy and zoning.

### **6. Job opportunities & stability**

- a) Subthemes: Decent paying jobs, full time long-term jobs, non-tourism jobs, tech jobs, living wage, meaningful work and training opportunities.

### **7. Affordable housing & community**

- a) Subthemes: Affordable for youth, families, and seniors to stay in the area with affordable or attainable housing for those who need it (examples listed include tourism/service workers, and those who grew up in the area).

### **8. Reduced inequalities**

- a) Subthemes: Generally, this was stated independently, but some mentioned that this was also largely tied to affordable housing, and basic needs met for all. Some mentioned that the focus should be on equity rather than equality.

### **9. Protect and improve land**

- a) Subthemes: The environment, biodiversity, and wildlife that are on land.

### **10. Climate action/reduce carbon emissions**

- a) Subthemes: Net-zero, carbon neutral, climate action as main driver, reduce carbon emissions, plant trees.

### **11. No poverty**

- a) Subthemes: Basic needs met.

### **12. Celebrate cultural heritage**

- a) Subthemes: Heritage, settlement groups, celebrate history, share stories and educate about history, local events.
- 13. Infrastructure**
  - a) Subthemes: Infrastructure before new development, planned infrastructure, water management, road improvements.
- 14. Celebration of the arts & expression**
  - a) Subthemes: Artistic expression, retain artists, retain arts businesses, become an arts hub.
- 15. Economic growth or health**
  - a) Subthemes: Economic health of local businesses, planned or sensitive economic growth, balance growth with local business health.
- 16. Gender equality**
  - a) Subthemes: Often tied together with other social issues like diversity.
- 17. Zero hunger**
  - a) Subthemes: Stated independently as “zero hunger” in reference to the Sustainable Development Goal.
- 18. Agriculture**
  - a) Subthemes: Support local agriculture, encourage home gardening, regenerative farming practices, support succession planning.
- 19. Responsible development**
  - a) Subthemes: No subdivisions, development improving/not damaging natural features, build away from car reliance, “sustainable cities and communities,” limits on house size
- 20. Events**
  - a) Subthemes: Arts and culture events, Cultural Heritage events.
- 21. Innovation and Entrepreneurship**
  - a) Subthemes: Research and innovation investments, become an incubator community, partner with educational institutions, agricultural innovation.
- 22. First Nations heritage & support**
  - a) Subthemes: Indigenous practices, history education, a return to First Nations principles, 7 generations.
- 23. Sustainable cities and communities**
  - a) Subthemes: stated independently as “sustainable cities and communities,” with some mention of density, and communities built in close proximity to one another
- 24. Attract businesses and industry**
  - a) Subthemes: Diversify economy, open to new business opportunities, large employer, small manufacturing, more agri-tourism, environmental business, arts and culture businesses.
- 25. Community Support**
  - a) Subthemes: Support existing community and special interest groups.

Detailed medium-term priorities for each survey question can be found in Appendix B.

### 3.4 Actions - Workshop

In our visioning workshops we asked participants to share their ideas for improving the workshop topic at hand, in regards to the other 4 identified sustainability pillars. For example, if a participant came to the economy workshop, we asked them to reflect on how to improve the environment while also enhancing the built environment, social well-being, local culture, and natural environment.

Across workshops, the top 16 themes that were mentioned in these action ideation sessions were (number of total occurrence):

1. Social Well-being (33)
2. Local Art (30)
3. Trails and Paths (28)
4. Policy Restrictions (26)
5. Sustainable Development (25)
6. Public Space (24)
7. Affordable housing & community (24)
8. Story telling/sharing local history (22)
9. Events (21)
10. Tree Protection (21)
11. Pedestrian Focus (20)
12. Development Standards (20)
13. Bike share/ cycling network (19)
14. Municipal collaboration (19)
15. Green Infrastructure and development (18)
16. Agriculture (18)

It should be noted that there were some participants who came to multiple workshops, which may have influenced the frequency that certain themes were recorded. As such, we have reported the individual results for each unique question asked in Appendix C.



### 3.5 Actions - Surveys

We asked for residents' big ideas for future sustainability in the form of a public survey, business survey, and the mobile phone booth survey.

#### Big Ideas: Community

Question: What big ideas do you have to help the community become more sustainable and reach your vision for the future?

Methods used: Mobile Phone Kiosk Survey and Public Survey

Theme	Description	Survey Count	Phone Kiosk Survey Count	Total Count
Green infrastructure and development	Ensure new developments are sustainable.  Unique ideas: Create a green development framework, improve and build green infrastructure,	10	1	11
Responsible development	Ensure that development takes the natural environment impacts and lived experiences into account (i.e. no sprawl, respectful of character, etc.)	9	1	10
Waste reduction/management	Ensure recycling sites are accessible, reduce plastic; have efficient uses of recycling and diversify recycling options; reduce waste; and educate people about waste.  Unique Ideas: Make TBM plastic free	10	0	10
Green energy	Create a green energy plan; make green energy affordable and accessible to homeowners; wave, solar, methane, wind, or combustible energy.	6	1	7

Theme	Description	Survey Count	Phone Kiosk Survey Count	Total Count
Affordable housing & community	Increase affordable housing stock by requiring developers to have a percentage of units be affordable and/or attainable	6	1	7
Community engagement & communications	Ensure that community is engaged in town activities and there is communication about opportunities regularly	6	2	8
Transit	Create a dependable and accessible regional and rural transit system.	7	1	8
Build trust and respect, and collaborate with residents	Ensure that residents are a part of community conversations, and collaborate with each other and the local government on projects. Build trust among long term residents and tourists.	8	0	8
Redefine town vision	Define how TBM will continue to be a resort community or a suburban community, redefine the city as a sustainability hub, or the healthiest community and recreation hub.	5	0	5
Road solutions	Unique ideas: complete streets with natural components (highway 26), more parking, less parking, walkable streets, consider roundabouts or by-pass (highway 26).	9	0	9
Environmental leadership	Become an environmental leader	5	1	6

*Actions with 4 or fewer responses: Improve infrastructure before new development, support existing community and special interest groups, take action now, arts and culture hub, government improvements (staffing, responsiveness, less red tape), climate action, learning and education, local food, minimize traffic, create healthy community, access waterfront and nature,*

*sustainability education, seek best practices & advice, more accessible recreation and activities, improve government, support agriculture and gardening, regional collaboration on sustainability issues, regenerative agriculture, mentality shift, create unique attractions, design for future generations, support business and innovation, manage tourism, plant and protect trees, integrated parkland, gradual change, welcoming and inclusive, tourism, job opportunities and stability, community and business hubs, rainwater recycling, no development/density, diversify economy, green business, no pesticides, respect land and clean water, improve livability, support equality, youth engagement, maintain, protect and improve natural environment, new committee, Senior supports (no LTC facilities, yes LTC facilities).*

Some detailed unique ideas mentioned in this survey include:

“Is there a local jobs wanted/jobs available board? Hard to find gardening help. Should open it up to enterprising kids/seniors wanting to stay active, the two groups could help each other.”

“I would have retrofit the old IGA into a large marketplace for year-round local vendors as well as a place to sell used furniture, a food court, and a gathering space that could be rented out or used for community functions.”

"The town itself can plant native plants, edible perennials etc. in their planting (ie. cenotaph, town hall) to provide habitat and food for wildlife and insects. They can include signage to indicate which plants are planted and why. Rather than using common landscaping plants..."

“Build a local sustainable water harvesting program. Build and implement a town [storm water management] plan to preserve existing lands and properties. Overcome the monoculture of green front lawns. Enforce the trees act especially on properties that are up for development or are having transfer of ownership.”

“Sustainable sanctuaries!!! There are not only eco-friendly and ethical, but they are also incredibly beautiful and pristine. Plus, they are a tourist attraction that could fall under sustainable tourism. It would be so cool to have an animal sanctuary in the area that rescues animals from slaughterhouses. There are a ton in the states, such as Lancaster Farm Sanctuary that doubles as a place of education. ”

“...Create a ""Reuse Store"" at the municipal transfer station. Townspeople would drop their reusable goods in this facility instead of dumping them into the garbage bins. Staff (job creation!) would check over, repair and organize donations in what would be a combination open-air lot and closed-to-the-elements building. ""Customers"" would browse the ""store"" and take what they need. This would divert so many usable goods back into hands that need them, thereby reducing the burden on landfill, and supporting people's economic well-being.”

“Apply the First Nations precautionary principle of looking to the future 7 generations. Let not 'growth' be your guiding light. Give the land and water a voice. Use common sense and old

fashioned simplicity (e.g. a natural burial site to preserve ecosystems and cut costs of maintenance and carbon output)..."

"I would like to see local graphic artists to present a visual vision of the Town. And musical and literary artists engaged to present a vision for an arts center. And a committee of entrepreneurs develop a plan for an agriculture and other business partnership. Finally, the town should start a committee, if one doesn't already exist, to prepare for the next big crisis, whatever it might be."

### **Big Ideas: Business**

Question: What big ideas do you have for the local business community to contribute to broad community sustainability in the future?

Methods used: Business Survey

When asked how the local business community can contribute to community sustainability, themes such as affordable housing, energy saving renovations (windows, doors etc.), smart growth, diversity & inclusion, public transportation and more community engagement were common recommendations for the Town of Blue Mountain.

"Aggressive attainable housing plan for the young, young families and seniors to continue to make our community home. "

"Businesses should be diverse enough that residents will have little need to travel out of the area to shop"

### **Why are those big ideas important to you?**

Methods used: Phone Kiosk survey

The ideas shared regarding why the themes were important to each person helped us to understand the unique perspectives of the participants and the reasons behind the vision they have for TBM. Below are the underlying motives that shaped the big picture ideas according to the participants of this engagement activity.

1. To address housing concerns for low-income earners
2. Parks and greenspace
3. Climate change mitigation/adaptation – see award winning plans such as Portland
4. There is too much garbage in TBM
5. Use more clean energy/ promote net zero emissions
6. Freedom of choice to live naturally

## 4.0 Next Steps

Once this What We Heard report has been reviewed and revised by staff and the Sustainability Advisory Committee, it will be circulated to committee members attending the Committee Summits in September, 2021. The findings from this report will directly inform the creation of a community vision and goals, as key words, objectives and ideas will be used in a series of committee summits, so that any created materials directly reflect the community's voice.

For more information on the project and to stay in touch with the process, please visit:  
[TBMFuturestory.ca](https://TBMFuturestory.ca).

Thank you to all who participated! We are grateful for your time and appreciate the energy you have put into planning for the future of The Blue Mountains Future Story.

# Appendix A: Demographics

Submitted to Jeffery Fletcher  
August 23, 2021



We asked survey, ambassador presentation, and music event participants to report their demographics in addition to their survey responses. The following summarizes who we heard from.

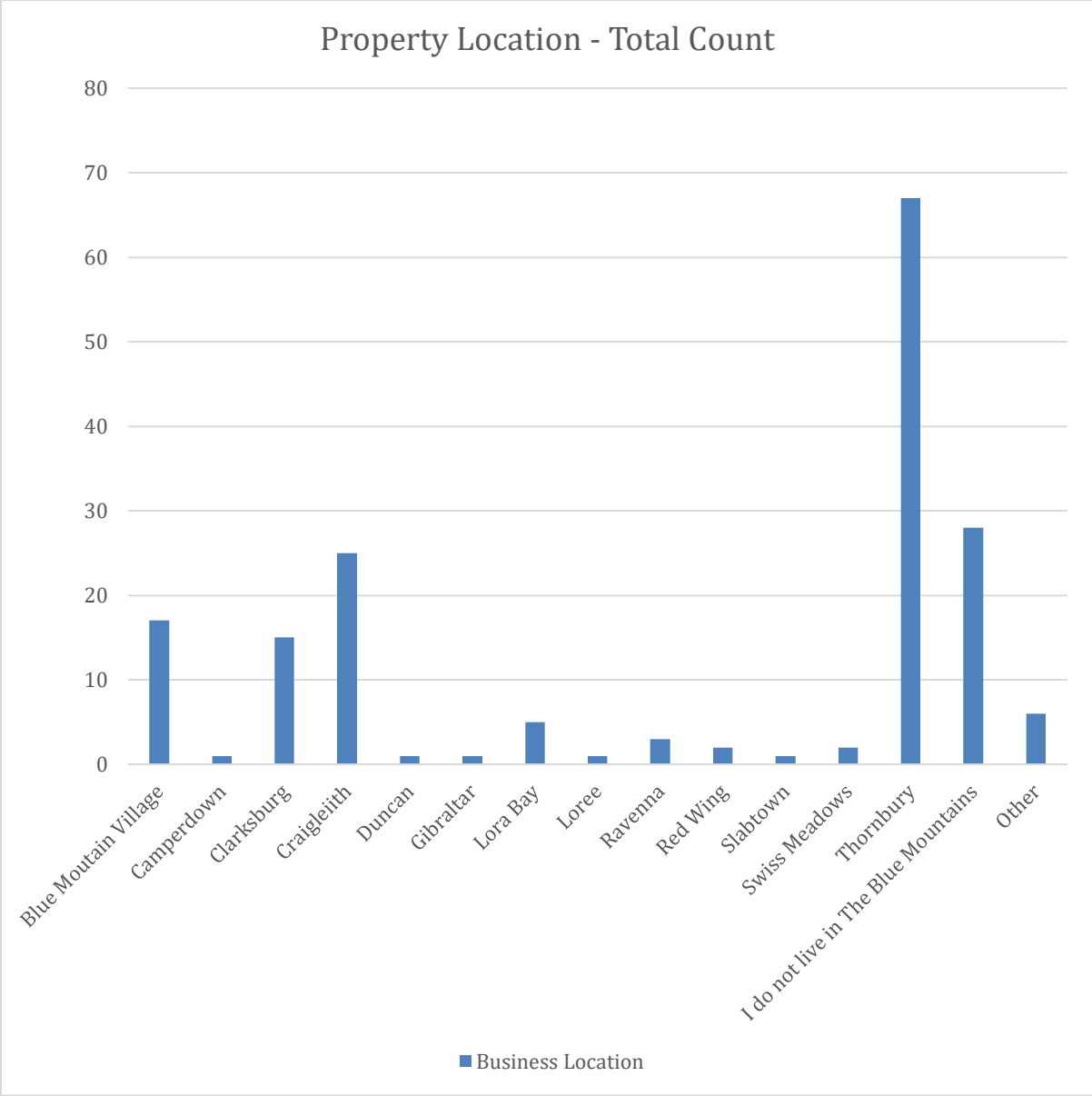
## Property/ Business Location

Where is your property or business located in the Town of The Blue Mountains?

Geographic Area	Total Count	Music Event	Business Survey	Public Survey	Ambassador Presentation
Banks	0	0	0	0	0
Blue Mountain Village	17	0	4	13	0
Camperdown	1	0	0	1	0
Castle Glen	0	0	0	0	0
Clarksburg	15	0	1	14	0
Craigleith	25	3	0	17	5
Duncan	1	1	0	0	0
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0
Gibraltar	1	0	0	1	0
Heathcote	0	0	0	0	0
Lora Bay	5	0	1	3	1
Loree	1	0	0	1	0
Osler	0	0	0	0	0
Ravenna	3	0	0	3	0
Red Wing	2	0	0	2	0
Sandhill	0	0	0	0	0
Slabtown	1	0	0	1	0
Swiss Meadows	2	0	0	2	0

Geographic Area	Total Count	Music Event	Business Survey	Public Survey	Ambassador Presentation
Thornbury	67	9	3	54	1
Victoria Corners	0	0	0	0	0
I do not live in The Blue Mountains	28	20	0	5	3
Other (please specify)	6	0	0	6	0

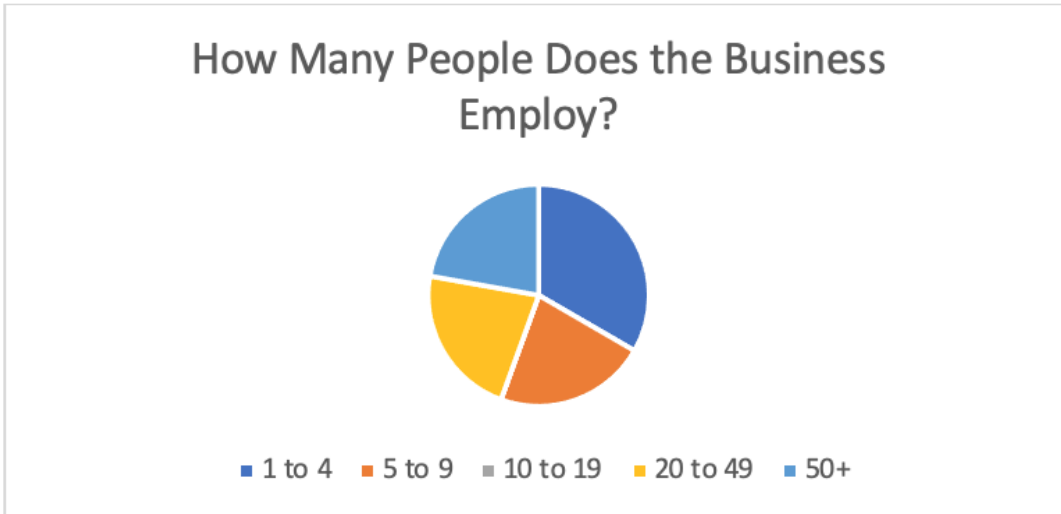




## Business-specific demographics

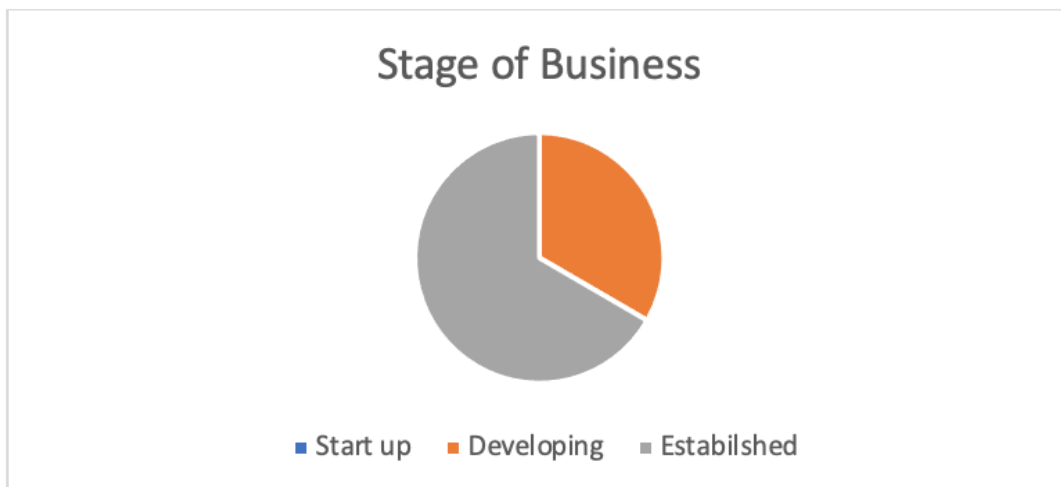
### Number of Employees

Question: Approximately how many employees does your business employ? (total number of individuals working full-time, part-time and seasonal)?



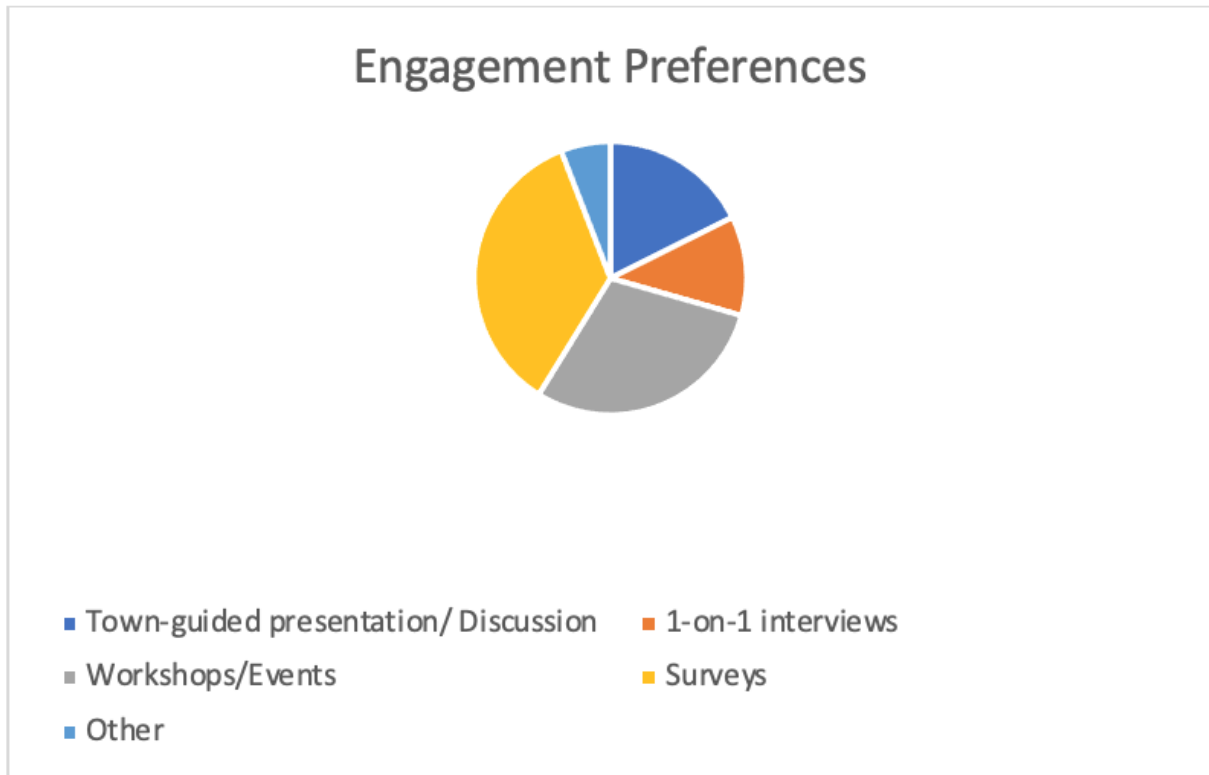
### Stage of Business

Question: Which of the following stages best represents your business?



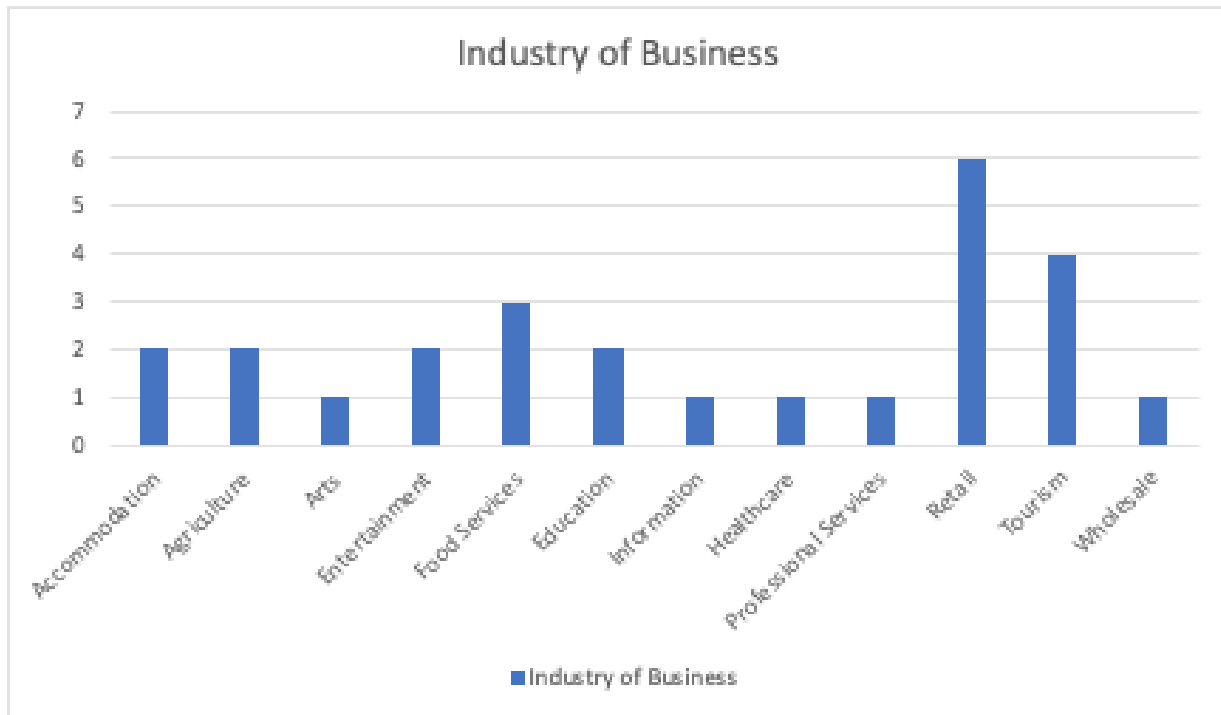
### Engagement Preferences

Question: How would you prefer to be engaged in future stages of The Blue Mountains Future Story – including action planning (identifying local actions for the Town and community members to take) and implementation?



## Business Industry

Question: Please indicate which industry your business operates within? Pick all that apply.



## Public Survey Demographics

### Residential/ Employment Location

Question: Please select the option that best describes yourself. I am responding to this survey as a \_\_\_\_\_.

Survey Response	Number of Responses
Town of The Blue Mountains Resident (full-time/part-time, property owner, renter)	102
Both a resident and a business owner	13
Working in the Town of The Blue Mountains but living elsewhere	2
Visitor (Where are you visiting from?) Please indicate in the 'other' box below	1
Other (please specify)	6

### Resident Type

Question: What type of resident do you consider yourself?

Survey Response	Number of Responses
Full-time, Year-Round	90
Part-time, 6 Months - 11 Months	15
Seasonal, 6 Months or Less	7
Flex, Live in the Town but work outside of the community	1
I do not live in The Blue Mountains	11

### Household Size

Question: Including yourself, how many people currently live in your household?

Survey Response	Number of Responses
I do not live in the Town of The Blue Mountains	6
1-2 people	82
3-4 people	32
More than 5 people	3

### Age

Question: What is your age?

Survey Response	Number of Responses
18-24	1
25-34	4
35-44	7
45-54	23
55-64	36
65+	53

# Appendix B: Detailed Survey Feedback

Submitted to Jeffery Fletcher  
August 23, 2021



The following sections summarize the medium-term priorities outlined in the public survey by the individual questions asked for more detail.

## Cultural Sustainability

Preamble: Cultural sustainability includes several UN SDGs, such as Quality Education (4); Gender Equality (5); Reduced Inequalities (10); Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (16); and more. Locally, it may include activities, pastimes and events, arts and expression, cultural heritage and education.

Question: What are your top three priorities for local cultural sustainability over the next 10-20 years?

Themes with 5 or more responses included:

- Learning and education (62)
- Reduced inequalities (29)
- Celebration of the arts & expression (25)
- Events (16)
- Peace, justice and strong institutions (16)
- First nations heritage & support (15)
- Celebrate cultural heritage (15)
- Gender equality (11)
- Arts buildings and infrastructure creation and access (8)
- Diversity and inclusion (7)
- Community support (7)
- Affordable housing & community (5)
- Recreation access (5)
- Arts and recreation services (5)

## Economic Sustainability

Preamble: Economic sustainability includes several UN SDGs, such as Affordable and Clean Energy (7); Decent Work and Economic Growth (8) which can also be thought of as Economic Health; Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (9); Reduced Inequalities (10); and more.

Question: What are your top three priorities for local economic sustainability over the next 10-20 years?

Themes with 5 or more responses included:

- Affordable green energy (57)
- Job opportunities & stability (42)
- Economic growth or health (24)
- Infrastructure (20)
- Affordable housing & community (17)



- Innovation & entrepreneurship (15)
- Attract businesses and industry (13)
- Support small and local business (9)
- Health and wellness (9)
- Reduced inequalities (8)
- Peace, justice, and strong institutions (8)
- Responsible development (7)
- Buy local food programs (5)
- More housing – not necessarily affordable (5)
- Car alternatives (5)
- Environmental jobs and working conditions (5)

Other unique themes:

- High speed internet or rural internet (4)
- Create a community work hub (3)

## The Natural Environment Sustainability

Preamble: Environmental sustainability includes several UN SDGs, such as Affordable and Clean Energy (7); Sustainable Cities and Communities (11); Responsible Consumption and Production (12); Climate Action (13); Life Below Water (14); Life on Land (15); and more.

Question: What are your top three priorities for local environmental sustainability over the next 10-20 years?

Themes with 5 or more responses included:

- Responsible consumption and production (50)
- Protect and improve water (39)
- Protect and improve land (34)
- Climate action/reduce carbon emissions (34)
- Affordable green energy (32)
- Manage water (14)
- Sustainable cities and communities (12)
- Agriculture (10)
- Responsible development (9)
- Plant and protect trees (9)
- Infrastructure (5)
- Biodiversity/native species (5)
- Car alternatives (5),

## Social Well-being

Preamble: Social sustainability includes several UN SDGs, such as: No Poverty (1); Zero Hunger (2); Good Health and Well-Being (3); Quality Education (4); Gender Equality (5); Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (16); and more.

Question: What are your top three priorities for local social sustainability over the next 10-20 years?

Themes with 5 or more responses included:

- Health and well-being (61)
- Learning and education (44)
- No poverty (32)
- Peace, justice and strong institutions (21)
- Zero hunger (20)
- Affordable housing & community (17)
- Gender equality (9)
- Diversity & equality (7)
- Job opportunities and stability (13)
- Agriculture (5)
- Support community and special interest groups (6)

## Built Environment Sustainability

Preamble: The Built environment includes buildings (i.e. homes, businesses and community centres) and infrastructure (i.e. roads, trails, docks and marinas), and overlaps with many UN SDGs such as: Clean Water and Sanitation (6); Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (9); Responsible Consumption and Production (12); and more.

Question: What are your top three priorities for local sustainability in the built environment over the next 10-20 years?

Themes with 5 or more responses included:

- Infrastructure (32)
- Water and sanitation (29)
- Responsible consumption and production (27)
- Green infrastructure and development (22)
- Walkable, trails and active transportation (17)
- Car alternatives (12)
- Responsible development (10)
- Respect land and clean water (10)
- Development with green space (9)
- Limit development (9)
- Affordable housing & community (9)
- Industry, innovation and infrastructure (6)
- Innovation (6)
- Maintain, protect and improve natural environment (6)
- Density (5)
- Recreation & activities (5)

# Appendix C: Detailed Workshop Feedback

Submitted to Jeffery Fletcher  
August 23, 2021



In our visioning workshops we asked participants to share their ideas for improving the workshop topic at hand, in regards to the other 4 identified sustainability pillars. For example, if a participant came to the economy workshop, we asked them to reflect on how to improve the environment while also enhancing the built environment, social well-being, local culture, and natural environment. The following lists the top 5 most frequently mentioned actions for each question asked across workshops. In instance where there were ties, there will be more than 5 ideas mentioned.

## Economy and Social Well-being

How can we improve our local economy while also enhancing the social well-being of our community?

The top 5 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Affordable community (9)
- Affordable housing (8)
- Social well-being (6)
- Diverse economy (5)
- Career opportunities (4)

## Economy and Built Environment

How can we improve our local economy while also enhancing the built environment of our community?

The top 5 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Local business/ economy (12)
- Sustainable development (8)
- Development standards (7)
- Policy restrictions (7)
- Bike share/ cycling network (6)

## Economy and Local Culture

How can we improve our local economy while also enhancing the local culture of our community?

The top 5 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Local art (17)
- Art education (5)
- Art studio/ hub (4)
- Local business (4)
- Community support (4)

## Economy and Natural Environment

How can we improve our local economy while also enhancing the natural environment of our community?

The top 5 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Sustainable development (5)
- Green infrastructure and development (5)
- Carbon credits (4)
- Responsible tourism (4)
- Job opportunities and stability (4)

## Natural Environment and the Built Environment

How can we improve our natural environment while also enhancing the built environment of our community?

The top 5 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Sustainable development (13)
- Tree protection (10)
- Policy restrictions (9)
- Balance (7)
- Green infrastructure and development (7)

## Natural Environment and Social Well-being

How can we improve our natural environment while also enhancing the social well-being of our community?

The top 12 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Social well-being (5)
- Environmental education (4)
- Accessibility (4)
- Trails and paths (3)
- Community garden (3)
- Native plants (3)
- Sustainability leadership/ best practices (3)
- Parks/ greenspace (3)
- Waste reduction/ management (3)
- Trails and paths (3)
- Sustainable community (3)
- Protect natural environment (3)

## Natural Environment and Local Culture

How can we improve our natural environment while also enhancing the local culture of our community?

The top 6 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Regenerative agriculture (5)
- Natural environment (5)
- Trails and paths (4)
- Sustainable community (4)
- Events (4)
- Agriculture (4)

## Built Environment and Social Well-being

How can we improve our built environment while also enhancing the social well-being of our community?

The top 5 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Social well-being (14)
- Age in place (10)
- Public space (9)
- Parks/ greenspace (9)
- Accessibility (9)

## Built Environment and Local Culture

How can we improve our built environment while also enhancing the local culture of our community?

The top 8 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Public space (10)
- Heritage (8)
- Local culture (6)
- Storytelling/ local history (5)
- Art studio/ hub (5)
- Parks/ greenspace (5)
- Trails and paths (5)
- Public square (5)

## Social Well-being and Local Culture

How can we improve our social well-being while also enhancing the local culture of our community?

The top 5 most commonly mentioned ideas shared for the above include:

- Storytelling/ local history (9)
- Events (9)
- Promotion (7)
- Art studio/ hub (7)
- Art programming (6)

## Appendix D: Phase 1 Internal What We Heard Report

Submitted to Jeffery Fletcher  
August 23, 2021







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# Executive Summary

The 6-week Phase 1 Future Story engagement process is now complete. The following report highlights what the general public, local stakeholder groups, and committee members have said in response to our questions regarding The Blue Mountains Future Story: Community Sustainability Plan. Using a variety of engagement approaches, feedback was obtained on the current state of the environment, the community, the cultural importance, and the economy in The Blue Mountains [TBM]. This feedback will inform the Current State Report, which is the first of three reports to inform The Blue Mountains Future Story.

Themes across all engagement tactics included:

- Natural features and recreation activities were the most commonly mentioned positives of living and visiting The Blue Mountains. Similarly, natural area preservation was mentioned as being important to residents. The preservation of natural spaces, in addition to the retaining of clean air, water, and appreciation for the outdoors will be key in future phase messaging.
- Small town feel and sense of community were also strong reasons why people choose to stay in The Blue Mountains.
- There is a reported tension between new residents, tourists and long time-locals that has increased during COVID-19. To overcome this, community members suggested more community events post-COVID-19, increased education materials, and welcome packages for new residents.
- The Blue Mountains is highly affluent, and in need of affordable housing, programming and food access alike - this was highlighted in all forms of engagement.
- There has been a large amount of growth reported by residents during COVID-19, with a series of developments that the community has felt disconnected from. There has been increased tension and questioning of how this growth is being managed.
- Traffic and tourism management have come up as tension points in the community as a result of the increased traffic from COVID-19 and new developments. The Transportation Master Plan will help to facilitate these discussions further.
- There is a want for an updated community vision with the wealth of changes that have occurred over the past year, as residents feel disconnected from some government decisions.
- Small businesses are important to everyday life in TBM, and it is anticipated that resident support for them post-COVID will continue to grow.
- There is a breath of knowledge in the Blue Mountains, both professional and agriculturally that will be tapped into for action planning phases.

- Active lifestyle and lifelong learning opportunities were both mentioned as necessary supports for physical and mental health in TBM. Community amenities like the library and the natural features of the area are valuable to both keeping people happy, but also for improving their health.
- Residents and stakeholders alike are calling for a diversified economy away from the heavy reliance on tourism, and the precarious jobs and housing needs that it creates in the area.
- Green procurement and development documents have been highlighted as helpful options in guiding new development to build sustainably in TBM.

## 1.0 Introduction

There are three key phases to The Blue Mountains Future Story:

### **Phase 1: Assessing the community's current state (December 2020 - April 2021).**

This phase will surface the current realities of TBM's context (including data, trends, policy, experience, and perspectives). The engagement in this phase focuses on storytelling and asks professionals and community members what makes TBM unique, and will be paired with current state research, policy direction, and best practice research for the Current State Report.

### **Phase 2: Developing a vision for the future of the community (April 2021 - September 2021).**

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 3: Finalizing the Community Sustainability Plan (October 2021 - January 2022).**

This phase will develop a plan for the future that bridges the gap between what was surfaced in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and turns ideas into meaningful action steps grounded in TBM's unique context. This phase of engagement will ensure that we are proposing what the community wants for the future of TBM.

This What We Heard Report summarizes the findings for engagement and communications tactics in phase 1, which focuses on the current state of sustainability in TBM.

## 2.0 Process and Participation

From January 18 to February 26th, an engagement process was implemented to ensure the public, municipal and community stakeholders could share their insights and feedback on the current state of sustainability in The Blue Mountains, as part of the The Blue Mountains Future Story. Throughout the course of the phase, we heard from 310 community participants.

### 2.1 How We Engaged


To share questions, comments and insights, people were encouraged to:

- Attend the stakeholder workshop sessions held on February 18th on Zoom.
- Provide feedback via social media using the hashtag #tbmfuturestory.
- Provide feedback online via the project website: online survey, print survey, ambassadors network, spreading social media and poster imagery.
- Request a print survey on the website, through the Blue Mountains Review, or through the library delivery service.
- Be interviewed and share personal lived experiences from the Blue Mountains
- Become a sustainability ambassador.

#### Online Survey

The approach to online and print engagement gave residents an opportunity to share their insights for action in a way that allowed for 24/7 access with a relatively minimal investment in time. This enabled the project team to gain a broader variety of insights into the current state in The Blue Mountains. We asked questions about resident favorite parts of living in TBM, what could be improved, what makes the Town unique, and the story of the Town in the current state.

Between January 25th and February 26th, the survey received 261 responses, and print surveys continue to increase this number.

	<u>SURVEY</u>	Number of responses
	The approach to online and in person engagement gave residents an opportunity to share their insights for action in a way that allowed for 24/7 access with a relatively minimal investment in time. This enabled the project	261

	<p>team to gain a broader variety of insights into the current state in The Blue Mountains.</p>	<p><b>Dates open</b></p>
	<p><b>What we asked:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the best things about The Blue Mountains?</li> <li>• What changes would make our community even better?</li> <li>• Please rank the following aspects of the The Blue Mountains that make the community unique in order of importance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Natural features including the Georgian Bay Shoreline, the Niagara Escarpment, Nipissing Ridge, etc.</li> <li>○ Active recreation and eco-tourism draws in the community (ski resorts and clubs, trails for cycling and hiking in the Niagara Escarpment, and sailing in Georgian Bay, etc.)</li> <li>○ Strong ties between local area services and businesses (Owen Sound, Meaford and Collingwood) including transportation, business, and employment connections</li> <li>○ The rural lifestyle</li> <li>○ Small town, village and hamlet feel and connection between neighbours</li> <li>○ Agricultural opportunities</li> <li>○ The Town's location and relationship with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)</li> <li>○ A mix of residents who are both full-time and seasonal</li> <li>○ A diverse mix of businesses, including products, experiences, and services</li> <li>○ Arts and culture scene, including public programs and commercial creativity and galleries</li> <li>○ Local government that develops ties between community needs and municipal services</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>January - February <b>25 - 26</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Other</li> <li>● In your opinion, what else makes the Town of The Blue Mountains unique?</li> <li>● How would you describe life today in the Town of The Blue Mountains in 100 words or less?</li> <li>● Demographic questions</li> </ul>	
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## Workshops

Workshops invited targeted stakeholders to gather with key The Blue Mountains staff to explore the questions being asked about The Blue Mountains Future Story, and to dive deeper into the nuance of the subject. Using a dynamic mix of data, visual precedents and real-time visualization, the aim of the workshop was to gain insights into data trends in the community.

Between February 18th and February 26th, a data walks workshop was held, followed by a data walk survey for those unable to attend, engaging with 39 (27 in person, 12 via survey) stakeholders.

## User Experience Interviews

When addressing significant systems change, the lived experiences of residents are often missed. This can then lead to a detachment from the proposed change and solutions to the community it is intended to help. To address this issue, we underwent a set of discovery interviews with local residents to understand life in the community in a precise way - leading to a more contextualized understanding of the current lived experience in The Blue Mountains.

Between February 26th and March 4th, we interviewed ten varied residents and workers to understand the diversity of lived experiences in The Blue Mountains.

## Website

With a client website the team shared project details, advertised engagement sessions, provided means for feedback and displayed ongoing developments as the process unfolded.

Starting on January 18th to date, the website received 1500 visits: 1,146 aware participants, 561 informed participants, and 225 engaged participants.

## 2.2 Engagement Communication

Engagement opportunities were communicated using the following:

- Website content for 1. Bang the Table and 2. Town Special Project pages

- Online survey
- Print survey
- One-pager project overview
- Ads for Collingwood Connection, Collingwood Today and Blue Mountain Review
- Signage with Chamber of Commerce
- Social media posts
- Sustainability awareness materials (social media posts and topic-specific posters with QR codes spread throughout the Town)
- Engagement posters
- Coffee Chats
- Sustainability Ambassadors promo materials (print/digital ads, Coffee Chat guide, draft asks to help spread the word with posters, etc.)
- CSP FAQ
- Media release to all Town papers, radio stations, and websites on the distribute list from The Town
- Email update to TBM subscribers (used media release)
- Project noted in Mayor's weekly YouTube video
- Direct invitations to 37 key stakeholders - and a follow up data walks online survey
- Facebook promotion on The Blue Mountains Residents Forum
- Two week campaign and link to project page placed on the Town Waste Resource App
- Post and link to project page on the Town's Solid Waste Disposal Site Google Places page
- Project email created ([sustainability@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:sustainability@thebluemountains.ca)), and features on project websites and all print materials distributed
- School engagement

## 2.3 Who We Heard From

### **Stakeholder Organizations Represented in data walk and follow up survey:**

- TBM residents
- Sustainability Committee Members
- Agricultural Committee Members
- Communications Advisory Committee Members
- Economic Development Advisory Committee Members
- Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority
- Grey Sauble Conservation Authority
- Grey County Representative

- Niagara Escarpment Commission
- Blue Mountains Public Library
- Museum Advisory Council
- Georgian Bay Youth Roots
- Grey Bruce Public Health
- The Blue Mountains Chamber of Commerce
- Institute of Southern Georgian Bay
- The Grey Bruce Sustainability Network
- Blue Mountains Ratepayer Association Members
- Council members
- Town Staff:
  - Manager of Roads and Drainage
  - Manager of Water and Wastewater Services
  - Manager of Parks and Trails
  - Manager of Development Engineering
  - Manager Sustainability & Solid Waste
  - Director of Operations
  - Sustainability Coordinator
  - Director of Community Services

### **Online Survey Representatives:**

Online

Type of resident:

- Full-time, Year Round: 168
- Part-time, 6 Months - 11 Months: 28
- Seasonal, 6 Months or Less: 32
- Flex, Live in the Town but work outside of the community: 3
- I do not live in The Blue Mountains: 13

Property Location:

- Banks: 1
- Blue Mountain Village: 42
- Castle Glen: 1
- Clarksburg: 29
- Craigleith: 33
- Gibraltar: 1



- Heathcote: 3
- Lora Bay: 22
- Loree: 2
- Osler: 1
- Ravenna: 5
- Red Wing: 3
- Sandhill : 1
- Slabtown: 1
- Swiss Meadows: 2
- Thornbury: 71
- Victoria Corners: 9
- I do not live in The Blue Mountains: 24

**"I am responding to this survey as a \_\_\_\_\_."**

- Town of The Blue Mountains Resident (full-time/part-time, property owner, renter): 206
- Business owner in the Town of The Blue Mountains: 3
- Both a resident and a business owner: 18
- Working in the Town of The Blue Mountains but living elsewhere: 4
- Visitor (Where are you visiting from?) Please indicate in the 'other' box below: 5
- Other: 18

Number of people in Household (including self)

- I do not live in the Town of The Blue Mountains: 8
- 1-2 people: 158
- 3-4 people: 56
- 5 people or more: 23

Age

Under 19: 24

18-24: 2

25-34: 2

35-44: 10

45-54: 32

55-64: 81

65+: 97

The engagement process engaged 310 stakeholders. The number of responses or points of contact and conversation are detailed below:

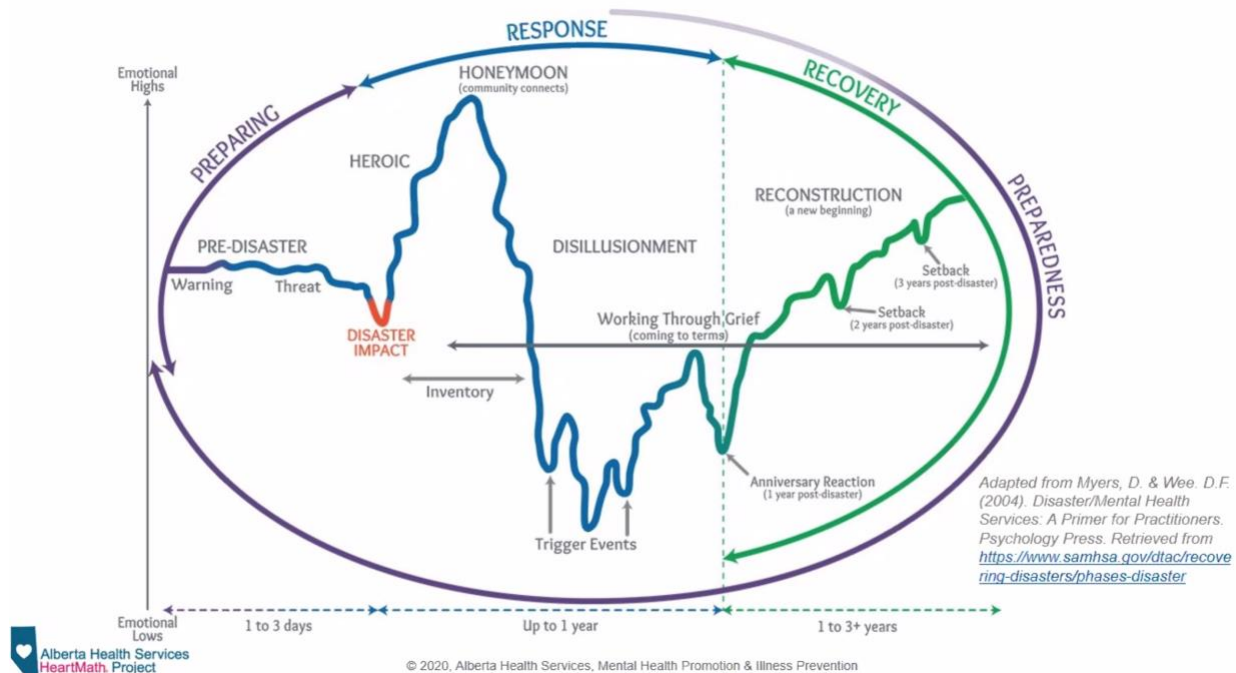
- Online Survey: 261 responses
- Data Walk & Supplementary Survey: 39 participants
- Discovery Interviews: 10 participants (to date)
- Website: 1500 visitors

## **Interviews**

Interview respondents were members of the community from a variety of different demographics, and included unique backgrounds that make up The Blue Mountains.

## **2.4 COVID-Environment at time of Engagement**

The following is a brief discussion on what was happening in the community in regards to COVID-19 during phase 1 of engagement. The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching impacts on communities, varying from immediate health challenges to adjustments to daily behaviours due to lockdown measures to ongoing issues of mental health. The following is a graph provided by Alberta Health Services which displays the emotional response a population has to traumatic disaster relief. Assuming that 'disaster impact' hit when Ontario entered into its first lockdown on March 17th, there may have been a spike in emotional highs and community solidarity, as neighbours checked in on one another, and pulled together to combat the impending doom that was COVID-19. It is hard to identify when this 'honeymoon phase' ended in The Blue Mountains, as summer brought a decrease in numbers and increase in physical activity outdoors. It is apparent that the 'trigger events' in the area would be correlated with additional lockdown measures within the area, with influential events and dates being: province-wide mask mandate (October 3rd), a strict province-wide shutdown mandated by the province (December 26, 2021 for 28 days in The Blue Mountains area), cases continuing to climb, peaking on January 8th in Ontario, second declaration of emergency in Ontario with new stay at home orders (January 12th for January 14th), new federal travel restrictions (January 29th), declaration of emergency expired (February 8th), stay at home order lifted in Grey (February 16th).



**Phase 1 of engagement ran from January 18th to February 29th.** The majority of the engagement was during this stay at home order and can be assumed to be associated with a period of emotional lows. The effects of these emotional lows are reflected in the everyday behaviours and involvement of residents in events, engagement, the news, among many other activities associated with the increased stress, anxiety and depression associated with COVID-19.

The psychological and behavioural symptoms that result from the increased stress, anxiety and depression induced by COVID-19 can include: virus-related worries and insecurity, feelings of being overwhelmed by events, powerlessness, a negative vision of things or daily events, feelings of discouragement, insecurity, sadness, anger, difficulty in concentrating, withdrawal, insularity, difficulty in making decisions, increased use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco and/or medication.<sup>1</sup> These symptoms affect multiple aspects of civic life and should be heavily weighed when reviewing the responses gathered during this phase of engagement.

These considerations should be taken into account when reviewing engagement feedback, both in terms of numbers, but also in terms of focus and reported stresses. It is advised that we take the findings from this report into consideration, but understand that the community is under

<sup>1</sup> Stress, anxiety and depression associated with the Coronavirus Covid-19 disease. (n.d.). Retrieved March 01, 2021, from <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/stress-anxiety-and-depression-associated-with-the-coronavirus-covid-19-disease/#c47201>

higher levels of collective stress over a longer period of time than many have experienced in their lifetime.

Similarly, these considerations have greatly affected our understanding of data in The Blue Mountains, as there have been reported changes in full time population, and an increase in population which is not yet recorded in census or County data, but has been seen in recent waste counts, and through public accounting. This will affect the current state reporting.

## 3.0 What We Heard

The following section shares the questions that were asked as part of the community engagement process paired with what was heard from participants in response to these prompts.

### 3.1 Online Survey

#### Unique Prioritization

Question: Please rank the following aspects of The Blue Mountains that make the community unique in order of importance (1 being most important and 12 being least important). The top preferences from most supported to least supported were:

Choice	Average Ranking	Count												Ranking
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Natural features including the Georgian Bay Shoreline, the Niagara Escarpment, Nipissing Ridge, etc.	2.16	128	63	26	8	8	1	0	4	3	4	3	1	1
Active recreation and eco-tourism draws in the community (ski resorts and clubs, trails for cycling and hiking in the Niagara Escarpment, and sailing in Georgian Bay, etc.)	3.15	60	77	34	26	9	4	6	6	5	4	9	3	2
Small town, village and hamlet feel and connection between neighbours	3.46	35	52	86	20	14	8	6	9	2	8	3	3	3
The rural lifestyle	5.42	9	22	28	44	20	26	32	22	19	13	7	1	4

Choice	Average Ranking	Count												Ranking
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
A diverse mix of businesses, including products, experiences, and services	5.81	3	5	17	39	53	35	31	22	18	14	3	2	5
Arts and culture scene, including public programs and commercial creativity and galleries	6.18	7	4	9	36	28	30	48	28	23	14	8	4	6
Local government that develops ties between community needs and municipal services	6.83	8	8	6	16	26	32	20	44	21	19	33	5	7
Strong ties between local area services and businesses (Owen Sound, Meaford and Collingwood) including transportation, business, and employment connections	6.85	1	2	18	14	25	40	29	22	32	33	16	2	8
Agricultural opportunities	7.47	3	3	10	14	19	23	21	31	38	32	31	11	9
A mix of residents who are both full-time and seasonal	7.47	1	7	7	13	17	23	19	31	31	41	33	9	10
The Town's location and relationship with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).	7.61	6	6	10	20	24	15	16	14	21	34	45	25	11
other	10.37	2	0	3	0	4	5	6	1	11	10	21	67	12

## In your opinion, what else makes the Town of The Blue Mountains unique?

Overarching themes for other uniques pick up on some of the subtleties of the above mentioned, and are detailed more in the following three open ended responses.

- Recreation and outdoor activities (35)
- Small Town feel (29)
- Scenery and Natural Beauty (27)
- Four-seasons activities (24)
- Sense of Community (19)
- Niagara Escarpment (15)
- Georgian Bay (14)
- Friendly (13)
- Arts and culture community (13)
- Small or local business (13)
- Retail services - mostly restaurants (12)

- Government - approachable and progressive (12)
- Local Agriculture (12)
- Blue Mountain & Blue Mountain Village (12)

### What are the best things about the Town of The Blue Mountains?

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
Recreation and outdoor activities (98)	The leading highlight from The Blue Mountains remains the recreation and outdoor activities. The community reported that recreation activities like cycling (20), golf (7), hiking (26), skiing (39), snow sports (7), and water sports (6) 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.
Natural Features (90)	It is not secret that the natural features are a highlight in the Blue Mountains experience, and also correspond with the recreational activities names above. The most common natural features and access features that were mentioned include: Blue Mountain (27), Georgian Bay (38), harbour (8), natural or wild landscapes (6), Niagara Escarpment (17), beaches (12), forests and trees (11), lakes and rivers (12), parks, open, and green space (20), and trails (52). Top trails that were highlighted include Georgian Trail (13), and the Bruce trail (5), among others.
Small town feel (58)	Small Town feel was highlighted often by respondents, particularly when referring to the feel of the downtown businesses and neighbourly friendliness and connection. Some top sub themes similar to small town feel include: rural charm (11), friendliness of neighbours and residents (22), and the quaint feeling of the towns (7). Small Town feel was also mentioned often as an element residents were afraid of losing (see following questions).
Accessibility (50)	Many respondents mentioned that the best thing about the Town of Blue Mountains was it's access to unique and necessary support, either in the Town or in close proximity. Examples of accessible elements include: amenities (14), medical professionals and facilities (5), nature (18), other Communities

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
	like Collingwood, Owen Sound, Meaford and the GTA (5), the waterfront (10), retail services particularly restaurants and food (33), and unique experiences (11).
Scenery and Natural Beauty (50)	Many respondents mentioned that their initial attraction to the area was due to its natural scenery and beauty. Specific elements that were mentioned include the view of the bay when coming in from the city, the pastoral view of the agriculture, and the view of the mountain, hills, and valley.
4 season activities (30)	There was a large focus on the 4-season attractions that the area promotes, mentioning that the trail network and ski trails provide for year-round entertainment outdoors.
Not Urban (23)	Many of the respondents mentioned that they moved here from the GTA, and compared the benefits of the community as not being urban like Collingwood, or their previous community. Some highlights for them included the lack of chain stores, congestion, crowding, highrise development and sprawl. This is in contrast to the reported views in question 2, as many believe that the area is starting to take on these characteristics.
Sense of Community (21)	The sense of community was highlighted separately from small town feel, as some individuals simply liked to feel a part of the community either through involvement, or neighbourhood bonding.
Local agriculture (18)	Local agriculture was highlighted most in this category 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.
Small communities (17)	Though more people specified they enjoyed the feeling of living in a small town, some specified that it was the limited population of these areas that adds to their appeal. There was a focus on the appreciated diversity among these towns, and that each is made up of communities who know each other well.
Quiet and relaxed lifestyle (15)	Many reference TBM as quiet and relaxed, particularly in comparison to their previous residences in the GTA and other

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
	communities. The mentioned a slower pace, relaxed feeling, and quiet setting.
Active lifestyle (12)	Residents highlighted that they enjoyed the active and outdoor lifestyle that is promoted in TBM. There was also mention of how they like that there are multiple like-minded healthy residents as well. 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 (9).
Small or local business (12)	There was much appreciation for the small and local business that make up the Town, as they are unique, and residents knew the owners and could see the direct benefit of purchasing locally.
Government (12)	Residents reported an appreciation for the 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. This is contrasted in some government associations in question 2.
Clean air (10)	Clean air was mentioned by respondents often.
Downtown (10)	The character and walkability of downtown, particularly Thornbury's downtown, were highlighted as attractive features for living in TBM.
Other themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water - natural (7)</li> <li>• Wildlife (4)</li> <li>• School, education, learning opportunities (7)</li> <li>• History (4)</li> <li>• Well managed growth (4)</li> <li>• Library (3)</li> <li>• Events and live entertainment (6)</li> <li>• Diverse opportunities (5)</li> <li>• Arts and culture community (8)</li> </ul>

### What changes would make our community even better?

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses for "What changes would make our community even better?"



Primary themes were a want to manage and influence the Town's development to ensure it gives back to the Town, a want to manage traffic and tourism, a want for a new recreational facility, a call to protect the natural environment and heritage of the area, to increase affordable housing, and the improve the conditions of infrastructure, mainly for transportation needs. These are described in detail below.

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
Growth and development management (83)	<p>Growth and development management was the most common theme, and largely 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 both regionally, but also internally to administration - some felt that development did not align with the Town's Official Plan or the Planning Policy Statement. Additionally, some felt as though it was happening too fast and in a haphazard approach, rather than strategically.</p> <p>Frustrations were voiced about some of the current developments, namely the high number of gas stations, secondary homes, subdivisions replacing apple orchards, and a high rise development across from Georgian Peaks.</p> <p>Primary reasons that were documented concerning why growth management was important for respondents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fear of losing the small town character of the area</li> <li>• Environmental loss</li> </ul>
Traffic management (33)	Traffic management largely reflected 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 than previous to COVID-19.
Recreation/community centre and swimming pool (33)	There were many that called for a new recreation centre for indoor sports, particularly including a pool (either indoor or

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
	outdoor), tennis courts, ice rinks, a space to host sports teams, and other needs.
Natural Landscape Respect and protection (28)	<p>Many were concerned with the protection of the natural landscape in general. Many respondents stated that the natural environment was why they come to the area, and that it was important to protect it. Some smaller protection themes associated with this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air protection (2)</li> <li>• Forested area protection and tree planting (9)</li> <li>• Wildlife protection (5)</li> <li>• Trail improvements to these areas (3)</li> </ul> <p>The protection of these areas was often mentioned in association to new developments being a threat, or needing to consider these elements.</p>
Affordable and Attainable Housing (27)	<p>Affordable and attainable housing was mentioned often, particularly in regards to housing young families and service workers. There was mention of wanting to focus on affordable rental prices, and a focus away from deeply affordable, and instead on creating a range of housing options that are more affordable and integrated into the community.</p> <p>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.</p>
Roads and Parking Improvements (23)	Roads and parking improvements spoke to widening of the highway, and to increasing parking at trailheads with increased use of trails 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 during the summer of 2020.
Development tied to community benefits (23)	Some spoke to the need for development to be tied to community benefits such as allocated greenspace, or green building needs, or forest land dedication, or funding for cultural activities and facilities. There was an understanding by some that growth was necessary, but that it wasn't serving the community in the way they were hoping.

<b>Theme (# of occurrences)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Accessibility to waterfront and rivers (17)	Some respondents wanted improved access to the waterfront, particularly in the forms of beaches. It was reported that many of the public access spots were overcrowded last summer, and there is a want/need for more public access, particularly for residents.
Improved access (16)	Improved access to outdoor areas was highlighted through an increased want for public parks, parkettes, gardens, and trails. These improvements were often associated with benefits that could be associated with development.
Cycling and walking improvements (14)	Walkability was highlighted as a priority in the Town, as some mentioned a need for more pedestrian-only spaces and trails, in addition to sidewalk improvements. Cycling improvements largely focussed on bike lanes and connectivity, and was contrasted with the current risk of accident from having mixed uses on roads without clear delineation of space.
Public transit (13)	Public and green transit was mentioned, particularly in order to connect the rural towns in The Blue Mountains, to form greater transit connections with the GTA, Collingwood, Meaford, and Owen Sound.
Litter, water, and general pollution changes (12)	There was frustration, particularly from those under 18 about the amount of pollution and littering in The Blue Mountains. Some waste requests were made, like a decreased reliance on plastic, the purchasing of fewer things, a better distribution and supply of Town waste and recycling receptacles.
Water protection (11)	Water protection was referenced both in response to increased development, but also largely to leachate and pollution concerns surrounding the TC energy project. Water protection mainly focussed on the Bay, with few mentions to general natural heritage protection.
Small business support, protection and enhancement (10)	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 (8), particularly in regards to more food options available outside of Blue Mountains Village.

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
All ages support (10)	All ages support entails building a community that has services needed for all age demographics, particularly families (4), youth (3), and seniors (2).
Tourism Management (10)	Some respondents requested that the Town set limits or manage tourism more effectively, namely asking for caps (Venice was mentioned as an example), or for tourism attractions to be more spread out throughout the area.
Medical Facilities and practitioners in or close to town (10)	Respondents requested either bringing medical practitioners/facilities to the Town of the Blue Mountains, or to help support the growth of Collingwood's hospital.
Infrastructure improvements (10)	General infrastructure improvements (beyond roads, cycling and walking improvements), included: water and sewage (3), cell phone and internet connections (4), Hydro infrastructure improvements (1), and pier and harbour improvements (5).
Arts and Culture Activities and facilities (10)	Arts and culture activities involved the facilitation of theatre and music programs supported by the Town, and included the importance of continued library support.
Other themes	<p>Other themes less frequently mentioned include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture support (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Organic (1)</li> <li>◦ Pesticide reduction (2)</li> <li>◦ Regenerative agriculture (2)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• COVID-19 changes (5)</li> <li>• Communications and engagement improvements (6)</li> <li>• Community bonding (8)</li> <li>• Diverse residents (8)</li> <li>• Dog park (3)</li> <li>• Green/Environmentally Friendly Community (7)</li> <li>• More events (3)</li> <li>• Climate Change and GHG reduction (7)</li> <li>• High paying or living wages (4)</li> <li>• Increase Housing Stock (3)</li> <li>• Continue Maintenance (3)</li> <li>• More outdoor recreational activities (5)</li> <li>• Preserve heritage (5)</li> <li>• Safety (3)</li> </ul>

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology and Innovation Support (2)</li> <li>• Tourism Improvements (4)</li> <li>• Vision for who we are (3)</li> <li>• Welcome newcomers (4)</li> </ul>

### How would you describe life today in the Town of The Blue Mountains in 100 words or less?

A note - many of the sentiments from the previous two questions were repeated in these questions. Instead of summarizing these answers twice, only those which were not explicitly explained were described below with numeric counts documented below. A result of this may be the appearance of answers to be more negative, when in fact it is a result of consistency.

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
General Positive (60)	The most common answers to this question were short 1-10 word answers like "Idyllic," "perfect," "fun," or "Life here is my definition of happiness."
Over Development (32)	Similar to the growth suggestions when answering "What changes would make our community even better?" some respondents reported that life today feels like it's being developed too fast, or being over developed.
General negative (25)	The general negative code was largely used for comments that were upset about change in the Town, but were not specific as to what type of change they were upset about. This code was also sometimes applied when another code was mentioned in a generalized negative way, like growth, over development, or government.
Government (25)	Government is described in a variety of ways for this question, with common reference to frustrations with administration, council, and planning (due to recent development), or praise for transparency, approachability, and involvement opportunities in local government.

<b>Theme (# of occurrences)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Growth (22)	Growth was commonly referenced in regards to recent developments, and a reported increase in full time residents over the time of COVID. Feedback was mainly an ask for development and growth to be slowed, particularly for new development applications.
Not affordable (17)	Respondents noted that life in TBM is not affordable for many, particularly for their children who hope to remain in the area, for people looking for work in their service industries, and for anyone who is not overly affluent.
Busy (17)	While restrictions for COVID 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 over the summer). This was particularly true for outdoor trails, beaches, and at Blue Mountain.
Congested (18)	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.
COVID (16)	Some respondents mentioned that life simply wasn't the same due to COVID and the stay at home order.
Excessive tourism (13)	Respondents were frustrated by the high numbers for tourism this year. Correlated with this, there were doubts as to the priority of the Town - some felt like Council puts too much priority on the tourist community than their full-term residents.
Loss of small town feel (12)	When referencing development, it was often contrasted with a loss in small town feel or the environment. 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.
Engaged Citizens (10)	Engaged and involved citizens were mentioned as being a support to TBM, with the reliance on citizens in committees, social and cultural groups, and event organization.
Environmental Loss (9)	Environmental loss was mentioned in cross reference with over development, but also with tourist and new citizen actions.

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
	There is a perception that tourists are more likely to deteriorate the area because they do not have a "stake" in it.
Retirement Community (8)	Retirement community is referenced here as a series of like-minded community members who are involved after retiring to the area in recent years from other communities.
Divided Community (9)	Divided community life came up a lot in interviews, 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.
Common themes described in earlier questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet lifestyle (49)</li> <li>• Recreation and outdoor activities (34)</li> <li>• Active Lifestyle (23)</li> <li>• Scenery and Natural Beauty (19)</li> <li>• Small Town feel (19)</li> <li>• Friendly (16)</li> <li>• Small or local business (13)</li> <li>• Access to nature (13)</li> <li>• Access to other communities (13)</li> <li>• Arts and Culture Community (12)</li> <li>• Local agriculture (10)</li> <li>• Access to amenities (10)</li> <li>• Sense of community (9)</li> <li>• Access to unique experiences (9)</li> <li>• Infrastructure (8)</li> <li>• Beaches (7)</li> <li>• Access to retail services (particularly dining) (7)</li> <li>• Natural Features (7)</li> <li>• Skiing (7)</li> <li>• Cycling (6)</li> <li>• Clean air (6)</li> <li>• History (6)</li> <li>• Trails (6)</li> <li>• Tourist attractions (6)</li> <li>• Not urban (5)</li> </ul>
Other themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clubs and societies (7)</li> </ul>

Theme (# of occurrences)	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School and education (7)</li> <li>• Events and Live entertainment (5)</li> <li>• A place to grow a family (4)</li> <li>• Safety (4)</li> <li>• Urban (4)</li> <li>• Innovation (2)</li> </ul>

"The Georgian trail! The Town of The Blue Mountains is an amazing all-season outdoor playground that we feel lucky to have in our backyard. Indoors, the attractions and shops are such high quality and made with local love. It's a flavour and feeling you get when you visit all the boutiques in this area. We seem to be a community who supports small business and creative entrepreneurial ideas. That is important to us as young professionals who have just moved into the area to work from Toronto to work and live."

"Was great but now that small town feel is slowly slipping away, high density building , short term rentals, overcrowding is all changing the feel of the town. Still has got some great businesses and restaurants but traffic is becoming a major problem especially on long weekends. Still the best place to live DO NOT ruin it . "

"Relaxed atmosphere with lots of fresh air and yet close to whatever one needs for everyday living. But definitely not boring as there is plenty of culture in town and nearby. I like the tourists because they bring life and prosperity to local businesses but do not want it to take over our atmosphere to point where locals cannot enjoy our own amenities."

"We are property taxpayers for almost 40 years and in that time there have been many changes, primarily because Blue Mountains has become a destination and preferred retirement area for many. As a result, we now experience both increasing traffic issues but more amenities as well."

"Many opportunities for recreation, education, volunteer involvement are offered. There is a transition going on now due to retiring Baby Boomers, Millennials moving out of cities and COVID transplants. that is taxing the infrastructure . The pandemic is playing a huge role in the daily life of businesses and schools and individuals. We have a very uncertain idea of what is sustainable now."



"A mixture of peaceful, exciting, new and old influences, with challenges that are slowly tackled with a need to open up to new ideas and let go of old grudges, but also welcoming and enriching if you give the place time. A place where you can always find something new to experience and learn from. The best views and natural resources to enjoy and take care of. The variety of homes and buildings are spectacular and vary from unique, rustic to supermodel ski chalets yet fit together perfectly."

"Reasonable building development that is respectful of the existing community and rural surroundings."

- Affordable and environmentally sound housing with garden space. By nature, this area attracts all walks of life. If it is a retirement community then we must invite the young families to create a beautiful balance of spunk and wisdom! "

## 3.2 Workshop

### Themes

The ideas and actions from the data walks workshop revolved around the following main themes: demographics, waste, watershed health, greenhouse gases, housing, food insecurity and poverty, economy, and agriculture. These themes are indicative of data supported sustainability in The Blue Mountains.

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

Workshop attendees were shown a population by age graph and the percentage of the population 60 years old or older for multiple local regions in Ontario. The graph displayed the percentage distribution of ages of the Town of The Blue Mountains and the Province of Ontario. The Blue Mountains has a higher proportion of people over 50 than the Ontario average.

**Q1. Why is The Blue Mountains home to a larger seniors population per capita than Ontario?**

The older demographics in The Blue Mountains is attributed largely to the retirement community traits 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 to the area from more expensive inflated 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 youth cannot settle in the area. The 2016 census statistics were flagged as being different than COVID realities, but comparing to the 2020 County household maintainer age statistics, the skew remains. We will see in upcoming projections if there is a significant enough demographic change to alter the demographic considerations of the community.

**Q2. What implications does having an older population have on the long term sustainability of The Blue Mountains?**

The implications for having an older population can be summarized to be in 2 areas: there is a need to better support existing older demographics, and there is a need to long term plan to support other demographics. The Town's older population implies an increased demand in immediate services, such as healthcare and accessibility demands, and resources available in residents' former communities, like the Greater Toronto Area. There are implications for long term planning, primarily past 10 years, as these communities will be different as generations age and pass on, and more attention is proposed to be made towards attracting other demographics, to ensure it does not continue to be a monoculture. Having an absence of youth is reported to decrease career path opportunities in the area, maintain job vacancies, and further decrease the amount of youth who wish to stay in the area. There is a proposal to build intergenerational communities in The Blue mountains, starting with the types of homes - will the next generation need large, over-inflated housing sizes? It was also noted that the wisdom of these older generations can also be a great resource for the area, both in providing wisdom for younger generations, and through having the time to be involved, but also because "In the long term the businesses created by the increased spending of the senior population will provide jobs that will remain here."

**Q3. Where are there opportunities to better support youth in The Blue Mountains?**

The main opportunities for youth retention and support in The Blue Mountains that were highlighted include housing costs, higher income and diverse employment opportunities, the creation of youthful spaces, the support of youth leadership and mentorship, and unique educational opportunities in the area. Additional areas of inquiry were about technology supports like wifi hotspots, mental health and community building opportunities, and meaningful youth engagement.

## CO2

The two largest carbon dioxide equivalent emitting categories in The Blue Mountains are transportation and residential. Greenhouse gas [GHG] emissions saw a 6% drop in 2020, yet are still not enough to meet global GHG reduction goals.

### Q4. Why are transportation and residential emissions the main contributors to The Blue Mountains' community CO2 emissions?

It was proposed that The Blue Mountains has a high proportion of housing as compared to industry and commercial, with few transit and active transportation options due to the geographical spread of most of its communities. The demographic overlay was also highlighted due to the age of residents being older, and less able to use active transportation or transit to move goods. Due to the unique rural and tourism draws within the municipality, transportation options appear to be an omnipresent issue. The local preference for large homes has also been flagged as a specific issue in the area. It's documented here that we should be more cognizant of other greenhouse gases, particularly those like Nitrous oxide that come from farming particularly.

### Q5. What are some of the aspects of COVID that may have reduced GHG emissions in The Blue Mountains?

Most responses revolved around travel restrictions, both air travel, but also decreased local travel and tourism travel. Active transportation has become the activity to pass the time during COVID, and it was recorded that more people are reflecting on the nature that is around them, and perhaps thinking to protect it. Closing of businesses was also highlighted as a potential for GHG reduction during COVID-19.

- "Taking a pause to reflect on the beautiful area we are in which we need to preserve and protect from over tourism by over using. At least we are moving in the right direction!"

### Q6. Where are there opportunities to reduce carbon emissions in The Blue Mountains?

Some ideas brainstormed include:

- 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, 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
- Explore agricultural methods to becoming net zero emission with cover crops
- Education and Town being committed to sustainability through all communications

## HOUSING

These are the average housing costs in the South Georgian Bay Area. Housing is largely unaffordable throughout the area, but particularly in The Blue Mountains. The data shown includes the average housing and apartment costs in The Blue Mountains.

### Q7. What contributes to high housing costs in the South Georgian Bay Area

Components noted to drive up housing costs in the area include:

- Competition among affluent owners for a desirable housing location, often close to the water or natural resource
- The sale of GTA properties allows homeowners to move up here and purchase expensive properties
- Lack of housing stock, and particularly of diverse attainable properties
- Lack of affordable housing being built
- Short term accommodations making the area more competitive
- COVID work from home mandate has caused many with money to move up here as they now have an option
- Market forces nationally

### Q8. Who is most vulnerable when it comes to housing in the region?

Identified groups included:

- Lower and middle income earners in general
- Those with low education levels
- Students and youth
- Young families
- Homeless
- Working poor and minimum wage earners
- Seniors relying on a fixed income, particularly single seniors
- Those with special needs
- Local seniors who have not experienced housing inflation

### Q9. Where are the opportunities to make housing more affordable in The Blue Mountains & area?

Opportunities brainstormed include:

- Reduced short term accommodations, or consider timeshare options for continued use
- More affordable housing - particularly rental
- Raise minimum wage to a living wage
- Incentives for higher density developments and affordable housing
- Create partnerships to enhance
- Coordinate sustainability goals with attainable housing cooperation
- Improved convincing of locals for the need of attainable housing
- Incentives for housing
- Cooperation with multiple tiers of government on Affordable Housing
- Consider alternative housing models like tiny home villages, cooperative housing, and granny suits
- Create housing using a housing strategy, not singular developments

"Require all development projects to have 10%-15% of their units be affordable/attainable for a long period of time (40-50years) and both rental or ownership. Without investing in home ownership at the start one does not capitalize on housing price appreciation to build tax-free wealth or assets. Leased housing is not the answer - an artificially lower cost to start but additional expenses mean expensive annual costs and unclear ownership rules impede capital appreciation of units."

### FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecure households are households without adequate or reliable access to food and are considered an indicator of poverty. The data provided showed that 20% of Grey Bruce Households are food insecure, and that youth workers are more likely to be in extreme poverty.

#### Q10. What contributes to food insecurity in Grey Bruce?

Some contributions that were brought up in the workshop and survey include:

- High housing prices
- Low wages and transient jobs
- Lack of access to year-round produce in grocery stores
- Lack of competition for groceries, therefore high costs
- Inability to live on your own in the area (or difficulty doing so)
- Lack of housing options
- Growing own food no longer the reality
- Mental health barriers

- Limited access to social services in area

#### Q11. Where are there opportunities to reduce food insecurity and poverty in The Blue Mountains?

- Increase living wage
- Build attainable and affordable housing
- Increase grocer competition and enhance buy local opportunities
- More gardening opportunities - community gardens, rethinking lawn space, educate on how to grow your own local food
- Education on plant based diets and computer literacy for ordering food
- Increase access to services
- Create proactive solutions that don't rely on service delivery
- Food programming for seniors
- Diversify economic base, potentially into manufacturing
- Increase education opportunities
- Affordable services like daycare

"There is relatively little poverty/food insecurity in TBM mostly because we don't have much housing that someone who is food insecure could afford. People put their money towards housing before food."

#### AGRICULTURE

Crop land has decreased in the Town, while fungicide, insecticide, herbicide, and commercial fertilizer use has increased. Blue Mountains farmers are older than the provincial average. The County and the Town have a large proportion of direct farm sales in comparison to the remainder of the province. The data shown to stakeholders for this workshop included statistics showing the increase in pesticides and herbicides, the older age of local farmers, and the proportion of farm gate sales in the area.

#### Q12. What contributes to agricultural sustainability in The Blue Mountains?

- 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
- Connections between farmers (e.g. shared farm equipment - see interviews).
- Value and educate about local agriculture to ensure more local agriculture stays
- Rewards for sustainable agriculture

- Technology advancements

### Q13. Where are there opportunities to improve agricultural sustainability in The Blue Mountains?

- Regenerative farming practices
- Aquaponics
- Agri-tourism
- Encourage and support youth transition and take over of agriculture
- Trees along sides of fields
- Direct local marketing of farm direct opportunities
- New business types - abatoirs
- Encourage high value add to improve income - or find market value for crops
- Preserve agricultural lands
- Diversify crop species
- Education and knowledge sharing for how to grow small scale market gardens
- Connect farmers with one another for services, youth connection, and to sell produce
- Find alternative pest control other than pesticides
- Fertilizer alternatives
- Do a deep dive locally to understand if organic and regenerative agriculture is possible
- Celebrate farming successes
- Educate community on agricultural practices
- Note for later: Does the town have a local ag portal for farm gate sales like he County?

### WASTE

The waste data showed the diversion rate from landfill over time. The numbers below display the total weight of recycled, composted, and landfilled waste over time. Although residential diversion rates in The Blue Mountains continue to grow, large gains in waste diversion for total waste managed have not occurred in 10 years.

### Q14. What does this data tell you about issues of consumption, environment and growth in The Blue Mountains?

- Some progress made for diversion, particularly when considered on a per capita basis
- Styrofoam reduction in waste stream
- Still a lot of waste going to landfill, diversion programs not helping that
- Buy and toss culture is strong here

- Part time residents and tourists have fewer abilities to properly dispose of waste (in Air BNBs)
- Building practices not reflective of environmental needs

#### Q15. Where are there opportunities to continue to decrease waste in The Blue Mountains?

- Public engagement for reduction, possible through data or environment days
- Circular economy
- Policy, advocacy or monetary incentives for decreased food packaging and increased business recycling
- Deconstruction should be enforced rather than demolition
- Build for quality; select products/materials that can be disposed cost effectively and safely e.g. spray foam on steel in buildings
- Framework for social procurement
- Compostable materials push
- Biofuel from waste for district heating
- Local materials
- Green building initiatives
- Town as an example - event products
- Quality products that are easy to fix
- Diversify Town's recycling program
- Recycle styrofoam Sort/reduce construction waste
- Visitor specific programming

#### WATERSHED

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. Overall, southern parts of the municipality scored higher than northern catchments.

#### Q16. If the watershed had a voice, what do you think it would say it needs?

Some representative quotes include:

- "Help me!"
- "Understand my needs"
- "Help I'm drowning in plastics"
- Headwater and source water protection
- More trees
- "I need more of your love"
- "stop pouring salt and chemicals on my wounds"



- "Respect me"
- "Maybe the Bay wouldn't speak English - maybe it would be a First Nations/Metis/Inuit language"
- More regulation and increased setbacks
- Some issues with Thornbury WasteWater Treatment Plant sewage and water taking from Indian Brook
- "Great? Please help me ! Some areas are highlighted as doing fine but what about those that are not?"
- "Stop the leaching of chemicals!"
- "The watershed has no voice. It has been smothered by chemical runoff, silt, and government apathy."

**Q17. What contributes to decreased watershed health in the northern Blue Mountains?**

- Urban expansion, intensification in sensitive areas, and not complying with legislative set-backs
- Recreation and tourism activities
- Water drainage going into sewage system and wastewater treatment plant
- Lack of incentives to rehabilitate creeks, rivers and watersheds impacted by previous developments
- Livestock in the Beaver River/Silvercreek
- Loss of forest and wetlands
- The tension between agricultural land and canopy cover
- Litter
- Humans and dogs
- Chemical runoff from parks, lawns and farmland
- Lack of education on importance and protection of the watershed

**Q18. Where are there opportunities to improve watershed health?**

- Investment in sustainable stormwater management infrastructure
- low impact development
- built form/design improvements
- regenerative farming
- Reforesting private and public lands to help retain water
- Tourism practice changes
- Ecosystem services approach to infrastructure
- Create new and expanded aquatic and land sanctuaries
- Top Down regulation of plastic manufacturing
- Create a data group to collect current information, analyze, engage the public and create action plans

- Improve aging infrastructure
- Incentives to rehabilitate wetlands- restore functionality (daylighting)
- Enforce legislative set-backs
- Municipal wide inspection of septic systems
- Salt management
- Filtration in roadside ditches
- More research into wetland replication instead of stormwater management ponds
- residential to support grey water cycling; each home/location has their own grey water support
- Eco tourism opportunity at Northwinds
- Conduct a watershed outreach campaign
- Be more aware of sensitivity of wetland areas in new developments
- Note: will focus on coordinating with Conservation Authorities

## ECONOMY

The economic graph shown displayed the distribution of employment by industry pre-COVID. In comparison to local areas, The Blue Mountains has a larger proportion of agriculture, real estate and leasing, arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services, while having a smaller proportion of health care and social assistance, retail, and manufacturing.

### Q19. What does this tell you about industry in The Blue Mountains?

- We have a strong tourism industry
- It is a rural community with a seasonal user population
- Healthcare and health professionals gap
- Not for profit organizations need to be recognized as an integral part of our economy
- Vulnerable to loss of talent and difficulties attracting talent (industry)
- Agriculture is contributing less than expected
- Diverse economy
- Danger of over-tourism, and too much reliance on tourism - low wages, low education, seasonal fluctuations, few ways to get into community in other industries
- "Not taking care of community"
- In need of diversification, training and education
- Most is in some way related to retirement and tourism

- We have neighbouring communities that have resources that we could contribute to and use ie hospital
- 1/3 of the employment (9 5 21) is in hospitality and is low wage earning.
- "If the tourism industry is hit badly (as per covid or climate change) then 35% of the workforce is in trouble!"

**Q20. Where are there opportunities to support existing industries to become more sustainable?**

- Affordable housing to bring and keep workers to our area; public transportation
- Local food markets, slow food movement
- Address agricultural efficiency, sustainability and needs
- Governmental regulations/policies need to be more clear and consistent and apply to all levels of government and sectors
- More support for older population
- Encourage youth employment opportunities
- Research and development opportunities
- Rezoning industrial lands - manufacturing vs other land uses
- Financial assistance for green businesses
- Improved transit network to move workforce.
- Promote and enforce a standard of sustainability when permits

**Q21. What are the opportunities to diversify industries to become more sustainable?**

- Expand industrial sector.
- "Create a growth sector by encouraging things like tech-hub or industry-hub to attract like-minded industries or businesses. Example film shoots, manufacturing of vaccines"
- Focus less on tourism, more year round industries
- More full time stable employment
- "Can our natural environment advantages help attract work from home options, ie tech?"
- OFDUs/ARUs properly scaled - investment in rural areas
- National advocacy groups ex. POW (Protect Our Winters) Canada
- Green initiatives and industry
- services for aging in place
- diversify opportunities, education, health care
- Value add and diversify on farm uses to take advantage of the new residential base
- "Consider the Netherlands AgriTech approach. TBM could become a powerhouse of food production."

All verbatim workshop feedback can be found at this link:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15MehEgx0940HXMLhVQHuzK\\_aNRmkzR58-m40lZuUc/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15MehEgx0940HXMLhVQHuzK_aNRmkzR58-m40lZuUc/edit?usp=sharing)

### 3.3 User Experience Interviews

User experience interviews varied slightly depending on interviewee, but the general structure consisted of a brief introduction, a walk through the interviewees typical day-in the life in TBM (first before COVID, then any changes during COVID that will make long-term effects), an exercise of discussing choices and thoughts associated with each action, a choice of their most sustainable habit, a brainstorm of possible ways to improve sustainability in the community, and a listing of one things that they would want to see retained/protected about TBM 50 years from now. The following are the themes that emerged from these conversations.

#### Themes

**The great divide: new residents and local resident tensions:** Multiple respondents mentioned the tension between long-time residents and new community members and tourists. There was a range of perspectives in terms of length of residency from both sides of this 'divide'. 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.

For those we spoke to that were new residents, they believed that the disconnect was due to COVID, and the lack of interaction between new residents and old. They also wished that there were efforts to welcome them as new residents to the Town to get oriented. Long-time residents suggested creating educational materials, with emphasis on local cultures like agriculture. Community events, both traditional and new variations were also discussed as a way to bring these groups together once COVID is over.

**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 (like hockey used to be in the area), and the old fashioned community events put on by public groups.

**Attainable Housing and High paying employment:** similar to engagement documented above, multiple people voiced these needs, particularly as their children and service workers could not find housing in the area.

**Appreciation for the natural environment:** Many respondents reflected on how lucky and grateful they are to live where they do for the natural environment and the recreational activities associated within. Many put a natural environment feature as the main thing they would retain as it was the reason why many of them moved to the area in the first place.

**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 useable. The school bus was even an extension of this, as one respondent chooses to drive his children to Collingwood each day because transit would take up 3 hours a day for his child. Another respondent however, documented this bus ride as a write of passage in small towns.

**Remote working and events:** Some respondents talked at length about how COVID has opened up the possibility of them being a part of more societies that they wouldn't travel to usually (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 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."

**Environmentally Conscious Actions:** Many interviewees were already aware of environmental efforts and how they relate back to sustainability. Some common actions that made them think of sustainability were: gardening from home, waste reduction (many a part of the styrofoam group), trail use and active transportation, shopping locally, supporting local agriculture, and

planting trees. Other sustainable actions that individuals listed that were less common included: lessening their water use with laundry and hygiene choices, purchasing long lasting products, doing recreational within close proximity to where they live and often taking active modes of transportation.

**Buying Locally:** many respondents mentioned that the pandemic spurred them to buy locally, but that they will continue to do so, because of the high quality of food in TBM, in addition to knowing who they are buying from.

**Affordable Groceries and Services:** A few interviewees spoke to the need for affordable groceries, food options and recreational activities in the area. They've 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 Town.

**Agriculture Protection:** We spoke in length to two farmers - one which mainly rents and provides services and has a supplemental income, and one that farms full time. Both farmers, and some other residents spoke to the need to protect and appreciate farmland, both for production and for views. As one of the farmers mentioned when referring to many people coming to the area for the views, "agriculture is the view - we have to try our best to maintain it."

**Agricultural environmental considerations:** A note that came up in one of the interviews is that many of the farmers in The Blue Mountains already have an existing environmental plan. Their 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. This should be considered if considering agricultural grant programs through the Town.

**The death 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 and Ontario in general. This was tied to the reduction in community cohesiveness, and the importance of these groups to pull everyone together. How might we support community organizations that seek to benefit the whole of the community to bring cohesion?

**History:** Many 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.”

**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 was 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 couldn’t 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 two farmers that assist them on their farmland, and how they try to teach them all of the tricks of the trade. They often try to connect these farm workers with the landlords they lease land from, in the case that ownership becomes an option.

**Lifelong learning:** Almost all interviewees, particularly those which were older mentioned the importance of lifelong learning. The attributed life long learning, and its associated resources (libraries, conferences, etc) to be invaluable to the long term mental health of the seniors population in the area.

Actions:

- Newcomer welcome package
- Events that welcome and educate residents about other cultures (e.g. as an addition to old fashioned Christmas).
- Education materials about the area.
- Community events to pull new and old residents together - funded and supported by the Town
- Improved trail map
- Transit to smaller communities

- Pedestrianised spaces
- Green building development
- Support community-oriented groups

## 4.0 Next Steps

This document will be incorporated with the current state research conducted to date to create a final current state document.

For more information on the project and to stay in touch with the process, please visit:  
[tbmfuturestory.ca](http://tbmfuturestory.ca)

Thank you to all who participated! We are grateful for your time and appreciate the energy you have put into planning for the future of The Blue Mountains Future Story.