



# Staff Report

## Planning & Building Services – Planning Division

**Report To:** COW - Operations, Planning and Building Services  
**Meeting Date:** February 4, 2025  
**Report Number:** PBS.25.004  
**Title:** Follow Up Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review  
**Prepared by:** Shawn Postma, Manager of Community Planning

### A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report PBS.25.004, entitled “Follow Up Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review”;

AND THAT Council accept the recommendations set out in this Report and proceed to adopt Official Plan Amendment No. 5, being the recommended Official Plan Amendment, directing Staff to forward to the County of Grey for final decision;

### B. Overview

This report is a follow-up to [Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review \(PDS.24.141\)](#) presented to Committee on December 10, 2024. Following thorough discussion, the Committee voted to receive the Recommendation Report but did not proceed to adopt the final Official Plan draft. Based on the following resolution passed, Council directed Planning Staff to prepare a further Staff Report for consideration:

#### Resolution - Majority (Voted), Recorded

2	Moved:	Councillor Hope
	Seconded:	Deputy Mayor Bordignon
	Result:	The motion is Carried

THAT, with respect to Staff Report PDS.24.141, entitled “Recommendation Report – Official Plan 5 Year Review”, Council directs staff to include the Master Drainage Plan within the Official Plan Amendment No. 5, when available;  
AND THAT Council direct staff to provide a further staff report, for Council consideration that will include:

1. Options for building heights and densities
2. Parkland dedication
3. Time and budget invested in the Official Plan Review, to date
4. Further linkages to the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment regarding Attainable and Affordable housing
5. Substitute the words ‘encourage appropriate’ to ‘justify’ access points in residential developments with specific reference to the Georgian Trail
6. Tree protection

The purpose of this follow-up Recommendation Report is to provide Council with additional information on the above topics, as well as options to consider in changing the draft recommended Official Plan. Following the recommended changes outlined in this Staff Report, and any further changes directed by Council, Official Plan Amendment 5 will be updated, then adopted by By-law by Council, then forwarded on to the County of Grey for final decision.

**C. Background and Analysis**

**1. Housing Needs Assessment**

A Housing Needs Assessment was prepared and released by Parcel Economics in collaboration with SGL Planning & Design Inc. in 2023 to inform the Official Plan Review and recommend policy updates. The purpose of the Housing Needs Assessment was to review:

- The current state of the housing market (town demographic profile, inventory of housing, and affordability analysis),
- How much affordable housing is needed, and
- What policy tools are available to encourage more affordable housing in the Town.

The Housing Needs Assessment identifies five housing “gaps” in the Town and recommends policies to improve housing outcomes for current and future residents. The Housing Needs Assessment reviewed trends in demographics (age groups and migration), tenure (owner and rental), housing type (single detached, apartments, etc.) and affordability.

The table below notes the gaps identified by the Housing Needs Assessment and how these gaps have been addressed through updates to the draft recommended Official Plan.

<u>Housing Assessment Gaps</u>	<u>Recommended Official Plan Updates</u>
<p><b>Affordable Housing (Ownership and Rental)</b></p> <p>Based on the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment, there is a need for approximately 215 affordable housing units in the Town, while forecasts indicate that as many as 40% of new units could need to be affordable to accommodate population growth.</p>	<p>Section A3.11 “Affordable and Attainable Housing” was added to the draft Official Plan, setting out a goal to provide an appropriate housing supply and range of housing choices to meet the needs of present and future residents. Strategic objectives were added directing the Town to further address the gaps in the Town’s housing inventory identified in the Housing Needs Assessment, as well as to establish minimum targets to ensure affordable and attainable housing units are achieved as part of new residential and mixed-use developments.</p> <p>Section D7.4 “Affordable and Attainable Housing” was added to the draft Official Plan. New policies require all development proposals with more than 10 residential dwelling units to demonstrate how affordable housing units can be provided. The</p>

	<p>direction provided in the draft Official Plan sets out to achieve a minimum target of 30% of new housing, or units created by conversion, to be affordable. The submission of an Affordable/Attainable Housing Report is required as part of a development application, to demonstrate how the application provides (or does not provide) the type, size and tenure of housing required to address the Town’s affordable housing target.</p> <p>Section B2.13 “Building Height” contains a new policy stating that maximum building height within Thornbury along Highway 26 may be increased to 5 storeys without amendment to the Official Plan if facilities, services and matters (community benefits) are secured to the Town’s satisfaction under a Community Planning Permit System. In this case, facilities, services and matters, could include the requirement to provide affordable housing units.</p>
<p><b>Purpose-Built Rental Housing</b></p> <p>There are currently no purpose-built rental units in the Town. Renter households are in the secondary rental market and likely renting larger, more expensive housing typologies (singles, semis, rows) than may be desired. The lack of housing stock in the primary rental market could also contributing to the higher incidence of cost burdened households and households in core housing need.</p>	<p>The provision of a range of unit types and tenures is encouraged throughout the draft Official Plan to ensure that a viable amount of rental housing continues to be available (Section A3.11 and D7.4). There are limitations in planning authority to “require” purpose-built rental projects, however encouraging a broad range of tenures in the Official Plan provides the direction for future programs and incentives.</p> <p>New policies seek to maximize the development potential of mixed-use sites in the Downtown Area (Section B3.3). The location and type of these buildings in the Downtown area can include a strong residential rental component that along with the proposed increased height policies will deliver new projects to address this housing gap.</p> <p>Additional Residential Unit policies (Section B2.7) encourage the construction of additional rental properties. Prior to the construction of, and in the development of, new ground-related housing, including single-detached, semi-detached and townhouse dwellings, a policy has been added for developers to consider design options that would</p>

	<p>allow up to two additional residential units per property to be accommodated.</p>
<p><b>Smaller Housing Units</b></p> <p>There is a lack of smaller housing units (including townhomes and apartment units). Previous policy changes implemented by Council have seen a slow increase in the number of new townhouse and apartment units, however approximately 80% of the housing stock in the Town remains single detached dwellings. Of all housing units, nearly 70% of households in the Town could be considered “over-housed”, as there are more bedrooms than persons in the dwelling unit. A portion of these households may consider living in smaller housing units (one and two bedrooms) if they were available. This would provide a better match with household size and will be more affordable than larger housing units even if they do not meet the definition of “affordable”.</p> <p>The need for smaller housing units is anticipated to increase in the future. There is a very predictable pattern when it comes to housing type and the age of residents, whereby people move out of single detached housing and into smaller apartment units as they age. This is due to larger dwelling units becoming more difficult to maintain and less need for space.</p>	<p>The Town has increased density targets to promote the development of more townhouse and apartment units in new projects, with the overall goal of increasing housing mix across the Town. This approach acknowledges the importance of intensification in creating a wider range of housing options throughout the Town, with a particular focus on Thornbury/Clarksburg as the Primary Settlement Area. The Town encourages compatible infill and intensification within established neighborhoods to support this goal. Additionally, the construction of additional dwelling units, the conversion of large homes into multiple units, and the development of purpose-built employee housing are permitted to further diversify housing availability.</p> <p>The draft Official Plan recognizes that residential intensification promotes a walkable community, minimizes land consumption, makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and services and provides for a broader and more inclusive range of housing options.</p>
<p><b>Seniors Housing and Long-Term Care</b></p> <p>The Town has a higher proportion of residents over 60 years of age, relative to Grey County and the Province. Despite the large share of residents over the age of 60, there is</p>	<p>Objectives and policies throughout the draft Official Plan specifically encourage the development of special needs housing, including seniors housing and long-term care facilities in the Town.</p> <p>Policies have been added throughout the draft Official Plan to encourage a broader mix of housing</p>

<p>limited seniors housing and long-term care homes, limiting opportunities for aging in place.</p>	<p>types (including smaller units), purpose-built rental and affordable ownership/rentals, which overall are intended to help meet the Town’s seniors housing gap.</p>
<p><b>Workforce Housing</b></p> <p>There is a significant need for workforce housing. A sizable share of the Town’s workforce commute from neighbouring municipalities. This gap is most noticeable for employees in the accommodations and food services industries, which have relatively low wages. Ideally, employment and housing should be balanced such that housing stock in a community is affordable based on local wages/salaries.</p>	<p>Section B2.18 “Employee Housing” has been added to the draft Official Plan, noting that the Town will promote a diversity of housing types, densities, and tenures to support the needs of a range of workforce groups including purpose-built employee housing. Employee housing is permitted in any residential designation in close proximity to major employment uses and centres, subject to an implementing Zoning By-law amendment.</p>

As addressed above, Section D7.4 “Affordable and Attainable Housing” of the draft Official Plan sets out the following new policies, directing the Town to achieve and provide for affordable housing and attainable housing by:

- Requiring all development proposals with more than 10 residential dwelling units are required to demonstrate how affordable housing units can be provided; **(Options regarding this policy are discussed below).**
- Planning to achieve a minimum target of 30% of new housing, or units created by conversion, to be affordable;
- Utilizing incentive programs, Community Improvement Plans, community planning permit systems, supportive zoning by-laws, strategic reductions of development fees, and/or alternative site development standards (either offered through the County or Town) that reduce the cost of construction and maintenance of services for affordable housing units;
- Requiring all development proposing ground-related housing, including single-detached, semi-detached, and street townhouse dwellings to consider design options that provide purchasers the ability to have up to two residential units within the main building and/or an additional dwelling unit in an ancillary structure;
- Encouraging the use of innovative building methods (such as prefabricated housing or modular housing) to help to reduce the cost of housing, and consider adopting pre-approved designs for certain housing typologies (including additional residential units

and single, semi-detached and townhouse units) to accelerate the planning approvals process;

- Requiring the submission of an Affordable/Attainable Housing Report as part of a development application, demonstrating how the application provides the type, size and tenure of housing required to addresses affordable housing needs and meet the affordable housing target of this Plan;
- Maintaining an inventory of viable surplus Town-owned properties to be sold or leased that have been deemed appropriate for the development of affordable housing at or below market value; and
- Working with the County to identify and pre-zone sites, including vacant or underutilized sites, for affordable housing.

***Affordable Housing Policy Options:***

The intent of the first policy in the list above is to ensure that consideration for the provision of affordable housing units is a required part of the development approvals process for all developments with more than 10 dwelling units. While there is no legislative authority for the Town to require the provision of affordable housing unit, the Town’s policies are clear that affordable housing is required to meet the needs of current and future residents, and as such, this policy would require planning decisions to be based on an assessment for why or why not affordable housing units are provided.

Based on comments received regarding the first policy in the list above, Planning Staff recommend the following options for consideration:

<u>Policy Options</u>	<u>Anticipated Outcome</u>
<p>Recommended: No change to the proposed policy requiring all development proposals with more than 10 residential dwelling units to demonstrate how affordable housing units can be provided.</p>	<p>The intent of the recommended policy is to ensure the consideration for the provision of affordable housing units is required as part of the development approvals process. While there is no legislative authority for the Town to <u>require</u> the provision of affordable units, this policy would require planning decisions to be based on an assessment of <u>why or why not</u> each development is providing affordable housing units. As the Town’s policies now speak to encouraging affordable housing throughout, any new development would need to justify why they are not providing affordable housing units in line with the direction of the draft Official Plan. The policy is a strong first step that signals the Town’s aspiration for more affordable housing units.</p>

<p>Remove policy in response to comments received.</p>	<p>The development industry has signaled their general support for affordable/attainable housing in the Town. Further comments received from the development industry have expressed concern for this policy, particularly the <u>requirement</u> to provide affordable housing units, as this is not within the Town’s legislative authority granted by the Province at this time. However, the intent of the policy wording is to require the <u>demonstration</u> of how affordable housing units can be provided. Therefore, a development can still choose to not provide any affordable housing but will be required to justify their reasoning why through the submission of an Affordable/Attainable Housing Report. This Report will require the demonstration of how the application provides the type, size and tenure of housing required to addresses affordable housing needs and meet the affordable housing target of the Official Plan.</p>
<p>Amend the policy as follows: “All development proposals with more than 10 residential dwelling units are encouraged to provide affordable housing units”.</p>	<p>Previous wording of this policy in the draft Official Plan <u>encouraged</u> instead of <u>required</u> all development proposals with more than 10 units to provide affordable housing. The word encourage still sets the Town’s aspiration for the development of affordable housing units, however does not set any direction that applicants must specifically respond to through their development application.</p>

**2. Building Height and Density**

Several of the Official Plan Review Background Papers assessed the Town’s current height and density framework in relation to recent housing growth and projected future growth. The Background Papers presented as part of Phase 1 included Growth Management, Housing and Height and Density. The overall results of these Background Papers recommended gentle increases to overall densities to encourage a broader mix of housing types within residential areas, as well as looking at taller building heights up to 4 or 5 storeys in appropriate locations.

A Housing Needs Assessment and Building Height Study were prepared as part of Phase 2. The Housing Needs Assessment demonstrated that the Town needs more affordable housing and a greater mix of housing to meet current and future needs. Building on the Phase 1 recommendations, the Building Height Study provided a more detailed review of building heights, including graphic renderings, where taller buildings up to 5 storeys may be appropriately permitted across the Town based on a mapping exercise and the draft proposed intensification and greenfield criteria. Afforded by Thornbury’s proximity to existing amenities, as well as the presence of a range of suitable lot sizes and development opportunities, the Highway 26 Corridor was identified as a favorable location for taller building heights. The

Building Height Study set out options for permitting taller buildings as-of-right or requiring an Official Plan Amendment and/or Zoning By-law Amendment for each application.

Following further public consultation and comments received from Council, the recommended location for taller buildings was narrowed to a maximum of 4 storeys only along the Highway 26 Corridor in Thornbury (Downtown Area designation) through a Zoning By-law Amendment. 5 storeys can be achieved where a community benefit (such as affordable housing or other benefit to the satisfaction of Council) is received as part of the project. In all other areas, the maximum height of 3 storeys would be maintained, including along Bruce Street in the Downtown Core and in the rest of the Town (with the exception of Blue Mountain Village where a maximum of height of 5 storeys is already permitted). Any development above 3 storeys in these locations is not encouraged and will require an Official Plan Amendment.

An update to the Town's Community Design Guidelines remains in development and will be finalized once direction is received on the proposed building heights and density through this Official Plan Review. These Guidelines will be subject to further public consultation to ensure that the desired built form and site layout for new projects supports the existing character and sense of place. All development will also be subject to intensification criteria as set out in the draft Official Plan (Section B2.16), which include preserving and enhancing existing trees and vegetation, ensuring compatibility with the surrounding built form, and maintaining appropriate architectural details. To ensure a smooth transition in height, development must adhere to a 45-degree angular plane, with setbacks and/or step-backs incorporated as needed. Along Highway 26, a building setback of 12 to 16 metres will be required to preserve and enhance the area's open landscape character. Additionally, developments must minimize impacts related to shadow, overlook, massing, grading, drainage, traffic, access, circulation, and privacy.

Based on the commentary above regarding the Town's housing needs and gaps, Planning Staff continue to recommend that gentle increases to maximum heights and densities in the Town are required. There is a strong desire to diversify the housing stock in the Town and to provide more affordable and attainable housing

***Height Policy Options:***

With respect to building heights, Planning Staff recommend the following options for consideration:

<b><u>Policy Options</u></b>	<b><u>Anticipated Outcome</u></b>
Recommended: No change to the proposed policy framework in the draft Official Plan.  Maintain maximum permitted height at <u>4 storeys</u> along the Highway 26 Corridor in Thornbury. Height increases are permitted up to <u>5 storeys</u> only where a community benefit (such as affordable housing or other	The recommended approach prioritizes intensification along Highway 26 in Thornbury through a slight maximum height increase from 3 to 4 storeys. The provision of attainable housing units is prioritized by allowing for an additional storey. The recommended policy option provides the greatest opportunities to



<p>benefit to the satisfaction of Council) is received as part of the project.</p>	<p>address the Town’s housing gaps in Thornbury including purpose-built rental housing, smaller housing units, seniors housing and workforce housing. Addressing these housing gaps, which are not necessarily “affordable housing units” by definition, is most viable in a taller 4 or 5 storey building.</p> <p>Development applications within the maximum height range will be subject to the height and intensification criteria set out in the draft Official Plan but will not require an Official Plan Amendment.</p>
<p>Maintain maximum permitted height at 3 storeys along the Highway 26 Corridor in Thornbury.</p> <p>Height increase permitted up to <u>5 storeys</u> only where a community benefit (such as affordable housing or other benefit to the satisfaction of Council) is received as part of the project.</p>	<p>This approach prioritizes the provision of attainable housing units by allowing for 2 additional storeys beyond the maximum 3 storey height.</p> <p>There are limits to this approach in addressing the Town’s other important housing gaps such as providing smaller units, purpose-built rental, seniors housing for ageing in place or workforce housing.</p> <p>Development applications beyond the 3-storey maximum (not providing affordable housing units) would be subject to an Official Plan Amendment.</p>
<p>Maintain maximum permitted height at 3 storeys along the Highway 26 Corridor in Thornbury.</p> <p>Height increase permitted up to <u>4 storeys</u> only where a community benefit (such as affordable housing or other benefit to the satisfaction of Council) is received as part of the project.</p>	<p>This approach allows for 1 additional storey beyond the maximum 3 storey height if affordable housing units are provided.</p> <p>This approach limits opportunities to address other important housing gaps such as smaller units, purpose-built rental, seniors housing for ageing in place or workforce housing.</p>
<p>Maintain maximum permitted height at 3 storeys throughout the Town, including along the Highway 26 Corridor in Thornbury.</p>	<p>It is not recommended to maintain the maximum 3 storey height across the Town. The recommendations of the Official Plan Review have carefully considered appropriate locations and opportunities where additional height could be accommodated in the Town</p>

	<p>and have set out height and intensification requirements that will ensure development is appropriate and context sensitive.</p> <p>Taller buildings are required to address the Town’s housing gaps of affordable housing, smaller units, seniors housing for ageing in place, purpose-built rental housing and workforce housing. It is generally not viable for affordable housing to be developed within the Town’s existing maximum 3 storey framework.</p> <p>Development applications beyond the 3-storey maximum (not providing affordable housing units) would be subject to an Official Plan Amendment. As there would be no height framework or criteria for taller buildings in the Official Plan, uncertainty is added for each application.</p>
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**Density Policy Options:**

With respect to density, Planning Staff recommend the following options for consideration:

<u>Policy Options</u>	<u>Anticipated Outcome</u>
<p>Recommended: No change to the proposed policy framework in the draft Official Plan.</p> <p>Community Living Area – Townhouse (25 to 50 units per gross hectare), Apartment (40 to 100 units per gross hectare), Greenfield Areas (Minimum 25 units per net hectare).</p> <p>Residential/Recreational Area – Minimum 10 units per gross hectare, Maximum 15 units per gross hectare, Minimum 40% open space component.</p>	<p>Gentle increases to the density framework have been recommended throughout the Official Plan Review to meet the Official Plan’s goals and objectives that encourage the provision of a range and mix of different housing types.</p> <p>The anticipated outcome of the recommended density increases is the provision of a mix of housing types and affordability beyond single detached dwellings. The development of new single detached dwellings will continue in the Town, however the increase in minimum density will ensure these projects include more than just this one option to provide residents more choices.</p> <p>Density increases from 20 to 25 units per hectare in primary settlement areas is</p>

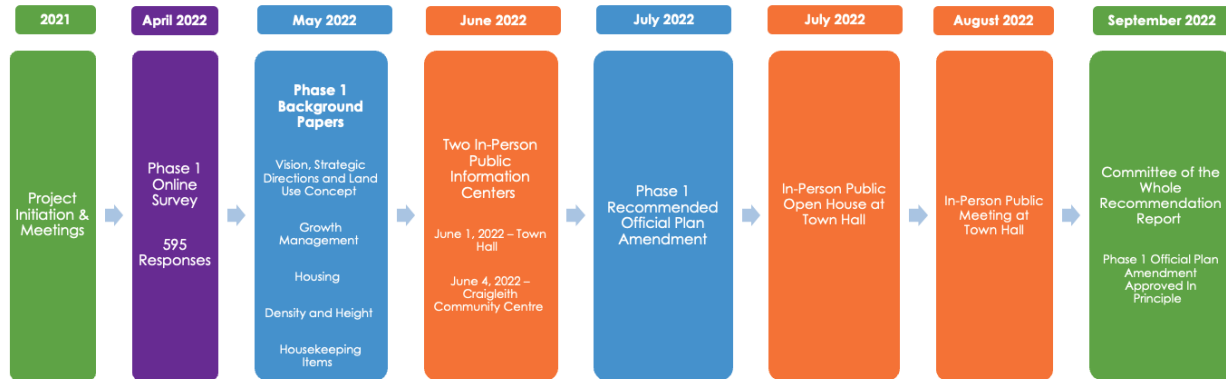
	<p>prescribed by the County through Official Plan Amendment No. 11 with little flexibility for reductions. The County plan defers to the Town to establish the appropriate density targets for the Residential/Recreational Area</p>
<p>Residential/Recreational Area - Maximum 12 units per gross hectare, no minimum density, Minimum 40% open space component.</p>	<p>It is not recommended to consider a small increase to the maximum permitted density in the Residential/Recreational Area. The slight increase could allow for additional units, however with no minimum density prescribed, developments could continue to develop at lower densities further adding to the deficiencies in the housing gaps identified above.</p>
<p>No change to the existing density framework in the in-effect Official Plan.</p>	<p>It is not recommended to maintain the existing density framework across the Town. The recommendations of the Official Plan Review have carefully considered gentle increases to minimum and maximum permitted densities in order to address existing housing gaps. If no changes are made, it is anticipated that large estate single detached dwellings will continue to be developed and there will be no development of smaller unit types which are required to address affordability, rental unit options, seniors housing, the desire to downsize, etc.</p>

### **3. Official Plan Review Time and Budget Invested**

The Official Plan Review process was initiated by the Town in July 2021 and a detailed project Terms of Reference, scope of work and Public Engagement Plan was endorsed by Council in December 2021. In March 2022, SGL Planning & Design Inc. was retained to undertake the Official Plan Review alongside a multi-disciplinary Consulting Team and Planning Staff. Five Background Papers were prepared as part of Phase 1, alongside a recommended Official Plan Amendment in 2022. The deliverables for Phase 2 of the Official Plan project were refined by Council throughout 2023 and into 2024. New Background Papers were added, and the total number of public open houses, drop-in sessions, and meetings were increased from 4 workshops, plus the Statutory Public Open House and Public Meeting, to 7 engagement sessions plus individual stakeholder meetings plus the Statutory Public Open House and Public Meeting. The number of Background Papers were increased from 9 to 12 as part of Phase 2, alongside a revised recommended Official Plan Amendment in 2024. Throughout both phases

of the Official Plan Review process, extensive online and in-person consultation was held, as summarized in **Figures 1 and 2** below.

**Figure 1: Phase 1 Engagement**



**Figure 2: Phase 2 Engagement**



Based on invoices provided to the Town up until the end of October 2024, the Consulting Team has spent approximately 1,300 hours of billable time working on aspects of the Official Plan Review, equaling \$171,500. Town Planning Staff have spent a comparable amount of time on the project particularly in Phase 1. Phase 2 included a larger role for the Consulting Team with Town Staff's support in reviewing and providing comments on reports and policy direction, preparing for and attending Open Houses and Committee Meetings and responding to public and stakeholder comments. Approximately 50 hours has been spent specifically for holding public engagement events and presenting to Council throughout the Official Plan Review project. Additional time/costs covered by the Town for public engagement preparation, as well as event space rentals, food and drink and print outs, plus Planning Staff overtime pay.

#### **4. Parkland Dedication**

Section D6.2.5 of the draft Official Plan sets out policies for parkland dedication. Policy language was added to the draft Official Plan that prioritizes parkland dedication over cash-in-lieu of parkland. Reflecting the County of Grey Official Plan and the recommendations of the Leisure Activities Plan, the revised policies note that the following circumstances must be met where cash-in-lieu of parkland is proposed:

- The required land dedication fails to provide an area of suitable shape, size or location for development as public parkland;
- The required dedication of land would render the remainder of the site unsuitable or impractical for development; and/or
- Existing park and recreational facilities in the vicinity of the site area, in the opinion of the Town, are clearly adequate to serve the projected increase in population.

In circumstances where cash-in-lieu of parkland is taken, Section D6.2.7 of the draft Official Plan was updated to ensure that the Town aims to allocate at least 60% of the monies received through cash-in-lieu of parkland annually.

In 2025, Planning staff intend on bringing forward a revised Parkland Dedication By-law that will serve to further outline the manner to which parkland dedication occurs in development review. An updated Official Plan will inform this by-law.

#### **5. Georgian Trail Access**

On December 10, 2024, Committee directed Planning Staff to substitute the words “encourage appropriate” to “justify” access points in residential developments with specific reference to the Georgian Trail. This specific request relates to Section A3.9.2 “Tourism and Recreation – Strategic Objectives” of the draft Official Plan where Objective 6 notes:

“Recognize and maintain the Georgian Trail as a regionally significant trail link, and to encourage appropriate access points in the long-term development of a Town-wide trail system.”

Specific direction for the trail network throughout the Town is set out in Section D6.3.5 of the draft Official Plan. Policy direction was added to the draft Official Plan that encourages the enhancement of trail linkages between residential, commercial and institutional areas wherever possible through the development process.

<b>Recommended Official Plan Update</b>
Based on the comments received, we recommend adding additional wording to Section A3.9.2 and Section D6.3.5 indicating that new vehicular crossings of the Georgian Trail shall be discouraged in order to recognize the importance of this major trail corridor, as well as

maintaining the existing tree canopy and buffering along the trail, and shall only be supported where required for access and/or safety reasons, and where removal of vegetation is limited to the greatest extent possible. Access points for new trail or walkway connections to the Georgian Trail shall also be evaluated with consideration of impacts to the tree canopy and to ensure safe and structured connection points.

## **6. Tree Protection**

Tree protection in the Town is an important element addressed through the development approvals process. Tree protection is one element that is looked at comprehensively on a site-by-site basis to determine the best approach for new development, specifically through required Tree Inventory and Protection Plans and Landscape Plans. As noted in the policies below, tree protection is addressed and encouraged throughout the draft Official Plan:

- Section B2.15 “Infill Development”: “Existing trees and vegetation will be retained and enhanced where possible and additional landscaping will be provided to integrate the proposed development with the existing neighbourhood.”
- Section B2.16 “Intensification Criteria”: “Retain and enhances existing trees and vegetation where possible and provides additional landscaping will be provided to integrate the proposed development with the existing neighbourhood.”
- Section B2.17 “Greenfield Criteria”: “Retain and enhances existing trees and vegetation where possible and provides additional landscaping.”
- Section C1 “Objectives”: “Preserve trees and wooded areas and facilitate the planting of trees, to the extent practicable, including through the development process.”
- Section D5.6 “Rural Character”: “Council shall ensure, as a condition of any Planning Act approval for development located outside of Settlement Areas and Hamlet Areas that existing trees are maintained wherever possible.”
- Section D8.2 “Tree Canopy”: “Supporting the protection and enhancement of tree canopies can contribute to improvements to air and water quality, reductions in greenhouse gases, the support of biodiversity, and enhancement of natural features and systems. It is a policy of the Town to:
  - Encourage the planting of native or non-native non-invasive tree species and vegetation that are resilient to climate change and provide high levels of carbon sequestration, particularly through new development and on municipally-owned land;
  - Implement measures to protect, enhance, and expand the tree canopy, including but not limited to:

- Requiring tree planting in areas of extensive surface parking; and,
  - Promoting development that maximizes areas for tree planting.
- Consider the establishment of a forest resource stewardship strategy and plan;
  - Require reimbursement, in the form of new trees or financial compensation, for all healthy trees proposed to be removed in development applications, based on the findings of a Tree Inventory and Preservation Plan; and,
  - Encourage tree planting by local residents and organizations, and educate residents about the benefits of planting trees on their property and the environmental impact of removing trees.”
- Section E1.2 “Community Planning Permit By-law”: “The community planning permit by-law may also include any condition or requirement that may be imposed pursuant to the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, including but not limited to the identification, protection, maintenance and enhancement of existing trees and other vegetation, including the restoration or replacement of vegetation where removed”.

#### **Recommended Official Plan Update**

Section D.8.2 of the draft Official Plan is also recommended to be updated to note that the Town recognizes the critical role of established trees on public and private lands and will prioritize their preservation wherever feasible. In addition to the multiple tree protection policies within the Plan, the Town now has standard requirements at time of application for the preparation of Tree Inventory and Protection Plans. Based on the comments received, we recommend adding an additional policy to Section D.8.2 that specifies this existing requirement for a Tree Inventory and Protection Plan. These plans are then relied upon as part of Site Plan or Plan of Subdivision overall design, including open space, hazard lands protections, and parkland siting. The Tree Inventory and Protection Plan provides the foundation for a future Landscape Plan for a development that includes enhancements to existing vegetation and new plantings where possible.

## **7. Staff Recommendation**

Based on the foregoing, minor modifications to the draft Official Plan are recommended. Planning Staff recommend Council accept the recommended edits and direct Staff to update the draft Official Plan to be prepared for final adoption. It is recommend that **Council proceed to adopt Official Plan Amendment No. 5, being the recommended Official Plan Amendment and direct Staff to forward to the County of Grey for final decision.**

## **D. Strategic Priorities**

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### **1. Communication and Engagement**

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

### **2. Organizational Excellence**

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

### **3. Community**

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

### **4. Quality of Life**

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

## **E. Environmental Impacts**

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Policies contained within the Official Plan 5-Year Review provided an enhanced level of recognition and protection of Natural Heritage features. It is noted that additional measures will be considered through implementation of the recommendations within the Natural Asset Inventory and Natural Heritage Study.

## **F. Financial Impacts**

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Policies contained within the Official Plan 5-Year Review provide for modernization and efficiencies for long term community growth with expectations that those efficiencies can also lead to long term financial benefits.

The Official Plan 5-Year Review may also be subject to appeals, which are required to be considered by the Ontario Land Tribunal.

## **G. In Consultation With**

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Town Council, Internal Town Departments, External Agencies, Town Committees, Community Stakeholders, Area Residents

## **H. Public Engagement**

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The topic of this Staff Report has been subject to extensive Public Consultation including numerous Workshops, Information Centres, Open Houses, Public Meetings, and Council



Reports. A dedicated project page on the Town website, newspaper notices, regular press releases, and project updates have been provided. Any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Shawn Postma, [planning@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:planning@thebluemountains.ca).

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Postma  
Manager of Community Planning

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### Report Approval Details

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Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Jan 24, 2025

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

**Adam Smith - Jan 24, 2025 - 12:46 PM**