

STAFF REPORT:**Planning**

REPORT TO: Mayor and Members of Council
MEETING DATE: December 3, 2007
REPORT NO.: PL.07.141
SUBJECT: County of Grey, Growth Management Strategy
PREPARED BY: Cindy Welsh, MCIP, RPP
Senior Policy Planner

A. Recommendations

THAT Council does receive Staff Report #PL.07.141, “County of Grey, Growth Management Strategy” for information purposes.

AND THAT Council forward this report to the County of Grey Planning and Development Department for review and consideration.

B. Background

The County of Grey has retained Malone Given Parsons Ltd. and the Centre for Spatial Economics to prepare a Growth Management Strategy as part of the County’s Official Plan five-year review. The Town of The Blue Mountains staff supports the development of a Growth Management Strategy for the County.

Two documents have been drafted which form the basis of the Strategy being: *Grey County Growth Management Strategy Growth Allocation and Issues Report*, November 2007, and *Grey County Growth Management Strategy Report*, November 2007. The Strategy is based on population, household and employment growth prospects to 2031 and land supply analyses. It addresses the following: growth expectations; growth allocations to the County’s area municipalities; the proportion of growth expected to be accommodated by existing designated land supply and intensification within existing settlement boundaries; the proportion of growth expected to be accommodated on existing lots of record in the County’s rural areas; and the proportion of growth expected to be accommodated by the designation of new lands for urban development through expansions to existing settlement boundaries.

The *Growth Management Strategy Report* recommends strengthening the role of the County’s settlement areas, emphasizing the role of intensification and redevelopment, and limiting the expansion of settlement areas and rural development. The report presents draft changes to a number of sections of the current County Official Plan as well. Recommendations that have been put forth include the following:

- Policies emphasizing that housing and employment growth are to be directed to designated settlement areas and growth in agricultural and rural areas should be limited.

- Small scale commercial and industrial policies be refined and updated. The majority of employment should be directed to settlement areas.
- Consent and subdivision policies be strengthened to further limit lot creation in agricultural and rural areas.
- Policies be created that specify settlement versus rural growth targets.
- Policies be created that establish minimum targets for intensification and redevelopment within the County's built-up areas.
- Policies be created to encourage area municipalities to identify locations best suited for intensification and redevelopment.
- Policies be created that establish minimum targets for the provision of affordable housing within the County.
- Policies be created to recognize the importance of compatible development.
- Policies be created to enable the creation of such tools as Community Improvement Plan areas which in turn enable funding under Provincial government programs.
- Policies be created that specify the requirement that area municipalities establish and implement phasing policies to ensure the orderly progression of development within settlement areas.
- Settlement area expansion policies be strengthened by requiring a comprehensive review that demonstrates that sufficient opportunities for growth are not available through intensification, redevelopment, or vacant settlement area land to accommodate the anticipated demand.
- Policies be created requiring a vacant residential lot inventory be carried out by the County annually.
- The Official Plan be revised to incorporate policies defining the need to undertake comprehensive analyses prior to considering settlement boundary expansions.
- Policies be modified to reflect a hierarchy of hamlet areas based on criteria established by the County.

Generally staff agree with the direction of the Growth Management Strategy as it makes good planning sense.

The following comments pertaining to the Growth Management Strategy are being provided for review.

1. The Town believes that growth management should be as comprehensive in nature and should either address resource based recreation within the Town of The Blue Mountains or not address our municipality at all (i.e. leave us to do our own Growth Management Strategy). It would appear that Thornbury/Clarksburg are affected only, and that is why the population and growth projections are so low (i.e. does not take into account seasonal population). Lora Bay may also be affected in that it is designated urban in the County Official Plan as well. In reviewing the report, we cannot decipher if resource-based recreation is addressed such as Craigleith, Camperdown and Lora Bay.
2. The County should clarify the intent of "infill development" for the primary settlement areas identified in the County's Official Plan.

3. The County should confirm that this does not apply to the Recreational Designated areas of the County, particularly the Town of The Blue Mountains.
4. The Strategy should address the large percentage of “baby boomers” who will be relocating to the Town of The Blue Mountains as they begin to make the transition into retirement.
5. There should be an added section entitled “Influence of Commuter Growth into the County”. This section should focus on commuters coming into the County to work. There is merit to how these individuals affect the economy of the County.

The County has circulated this Strategy to area municipalities for comments with a short turn around time. Both Town of The Blue Mountains staff and Council have not had an opportunity to comprehensively review this Strategy within the timeframe posed by the County. We are prepared to offer the above preliminary comments. After a thorough review is conducted by the Town, additional comments may be forthcoming to the County by the Town.

As part of this Strategy, excerpts of the County’s Official Plan are attached with proposed wording changes. There will, however, be a future opportunity for staff and Council to comment on the draft County Official Plan policy changes in early 2008, as part of the County’s proposed five-year review public consultation, including these proposed wording changes. This will be confirmed by Monday night.

The County of Grey Planning Department will be holding a second consultation session with area planners on Friday, November 30, 2007, to discuss the Growth Management Strategy and future direction. Council will be provided with an update of this meeting at the Monday, December 3, 2007, Planning Council meeting. As part of this consultation, the County will be receiving a copy of this report.

C. Strategic Plan

Being consulted on the County of Grey’s Official Plan five-year review and being able to provide constructive comments is consistent with Strategic Plan goal:

1. *Managing growth to ensure the ongoing health and prosperity of the community.*

D. Budget Impact

There may be future anticipated costs associated with bringing the Town’s Official Plan into conformity with revised County Official Plan policies, if needed.

E. Attachment

NIL

Submitted by:

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