

## ● **Huntsville's future: beautiful, environmentally responsible, vibrant and warm: a true community**

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### ○ ***What we value as a community***

We should build our town so that it continues to support our values. So to begin with, we should review those values.

We have a way of life rich in cultural, sporting, artistic, musical, theatrical, religious, intellectual, hobby and social opportunities because of a **very active tradition of volunteering**.

We welcome and cherish members of **all generations**.

We have **workers** skilled in building and maintaining luxury homes, and in providing every kind of service for vacationers and the retired.

We have excellent **service workers** who support our retail shops, hotels, resorts and restaurants.

We attract and keep **creative people** of all types.

We have a **beautiful natural environment**.

We have a happy community because we know each other. Huntsville is different from most of the places where modern North Americans live because **very few of us commute** to or from another place. We work, play, worship, study and live in one place. So we know each other better than most North Americans know each other, and this makes us very warm as a community.

We should explicitly acknowledge these values in our master plan, so that we do not attach excessive value to less important objectives.

### ○ ***Plenty of Inexpensive Housing (but not “cheap” housing)***

Many communities like ours around the world have been destroyed because the housing becomes too expensive for many of the kinds of people that we need to live our values. Canmore is an example. Artists, service workers, construction workers, devoted volunteers, young families with stay-at-home parents, pensioners and every locally-raised young person must be able to live here if Huntsville is to keep its unique spirit, creativity and range of opportunity.

If there is always a healthy supply of vacant houses and apartments, prices will stay reasonable and older housing will tend to provide cheaper accommodation for those who need it. To ensure a constant supply of housing, we should make sure that it is easy and fast to get permission to build within the town envelope. We should also make it easy for a family to build its own house. At the moment, the process is so complex that land is in effect reserved for developers.

We do not need to build purpose-built “affordable housing”. The luxury homes of today become beautiful but affordable homes for the less affluent as they age, as long as there is an ample supply.

### ○ ***The Appearance of Wilderness, with Plenty of recreational housing***

We should stop development of our lakeshores and roadsides now, to preserve the natural views that

remain. At the same time, we should allow development behind a screen of natural lakeshore and roadside, so that we can enjoy the appearance of wilderness but still provide housing and resorts. Let this hidden development be dense, so that it is cheap to service and does not cause high taxes, as widely-dispersed development does. The same kind of concept has allowed Algonquin Park, for instance, to be a wilderness park along the shores of lakes, but also be the home of an active logging industry behind that wilderness screen.

### ○ ***A tiny city in a Wilderness Setting***

Within the town and around the town, we should also preserve the feeling of wilderness, while allowing plenty of development to provide the housing we need. To do this, designate an outer boundary for development, and freeze **development permanently within a broad ring beyond that boundary, surrounding the town with wilderness and “countryside”**. Within the town itself, establish and enhance parks, but allow development to become much more dense than it is now. Substantially increase allowed lot coverage throughout the town itself, so that we can provide housing and services at affordable prices for plenty of people. Leave the remaining wilderness wild.

The towns and cities of Spain provide a wonderful example of this. Typically on one side a street ringing a town, there are buildings, and on the other, there is countryside stretching as far as you can see, essentially unchanged for a hundred years or more. Towns are very efficient, and there is tax money available to build beautiful parks and plazas in the town. In Madrid, there is a wilderness park which starts deep in the city and extends far out into the countryside. In urban areas, it is protected by fencing. Beyond the fence, you can see large numbers of truly wild animals, right in the city.

### ○ ***Low environmental impact***

By keeping the town dense, we will allow a way of life that is truly environmentally responsible. A dense town consumes less energy, allows people to live without cars, and requires fewer resources to service.

### ○ ***Safety***

The great urban planner Jane Jacobs explains that by having “eyes on the street” at all times, you greatly improve the safety of a town. (For this and other luminous ideas about planning a great town, her book [“The Death and Life of Great American Cities” should be required reading for Huntsville planners and planning committee members.](#))

### ○ ***Lakeshore Development, without consuming any more lakeshore.***

Strive for a very high ratio of undeveloped lakeshore to developed lakeshore. Require that any development of the lakeshore contribute heavily to the maintenance of existing natural shoreline.

Allow existing cottages to become much bigger and more luxurious, but ensure that building is only permitted on condition that a large contribution is made to funds for the acquisition and preservation of shoreline.

Encourage developments which cluster housing near, but out of sight from, the shoreline, and with shared access to waterfront.