

# TOWN OF HUNTSVILLE OFFICIAL PLAN

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

### 1.1 STRUCTURE

Huntsville  
Official Plan

1.1.1 This plan shall be known as the “Town of Huntsville Official Plan”.

Interpretation

1.1.2 This Plan consists of the text and the schedules attached hereto. The text and schedules are inter-related and should be read in conjunction with one another.

Schedules

1.1.3 The following Schedules form part of the Official Plan:

- Schedule A-1 Land Use – Huntsville Urban Settlement Area
  - Schedule A-1-1 Huntsville Highlands Secondary Plan
- Schedule A-2 Land Use – Hidden Valley Settlement Area and Hwy. 60 Corridor Policy Area
- Schedule A-3 Land Use – Port Sydney Settlement Area
- Schedule B-1 Servicing – Huntsville Urban Area
- Schedule B-2 Servicing – Hidden Valley Settlement Area and Hwy. 60 Corridor Policy Area
- Schedule B-3 Servicing – Port Sydney Settlement Area
- Schedule C-1 Transportation - Geographic Township of Stisted
- Schedule C-2 Transportation - Geographic Township of Chaffey
- Schedule C-3 Transportation - Geographic Township of Stephenson
- Schedule C-4 Transportation - Geographic Township of Brunel
- Schedule C-5 Transportation - Huntsville Urban Settlement Area
- Schedule D-1 Natural Constraints and Special Policy Areas - Geographic Township of Stisted
- Schedule D-2 Natural Constraints and Special Policy Areas - Geographic Township of Chaffey
- Schedule D-3 Natural Constraints and Special Policy Areas - Geographic Township of Stephenson
- Schedule D-4 Natural Constraints and Special Policy Areas - Geographic Township of Brunel

Appendices

1.1.4 Appendices 1 to 4 (Natural Features), are attached to this Plan and show the various types of natural features in the Town. Appendices 5 to 8 (Topographic Features) illustrate the topographic features of the area. The Appendices do not constitute a part of the Official Plan.

Application

1.1.5 This Plan applies to the entire Town of Huntsville. It replaces the 1989 Town of Huntsville Official Plan and subsequent amendments.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE OFFICIAL PLAN**

General Purpose

1.2.1 The purpose of the Official Plan is to provide a comprehensive framework to guide future land use and physical development in the Town of Huntsville. This Official Plan outlines the Town's general approach to managing change from a municipal planning and land use perspective.

Purpose

1.2.2 The Plan is intended to:

- a) adopt growth management policies to guide sustainable growth and development, conservation and preservation initiatives in the Town over the next twenty years;
- b) provide a consistent approach to the review and evaluation of development applications throughout the Town;
- c) provide guidance to Council, Committees of Council and other agencies on future development applications;
- d) provide for the preparation of "Secondary Plans" that will provide for more detailed guidance for specific areas in the Town;
- e) recognize and reinforce a strong urban centre and distinct rural and waterfront communities;
- f) recognize the financial capability of the municipality to accommodate new development and ensure major capital works are consistent with such capability;
- g) ensure that land use planning within the Town contributes to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of water related resources and aquatic ecosystems;
- h) ensure that development within the Town occurs in a manner that will minimize public health and safety issues, including the protection of human life and property from water related hazards such as flooding and erosion;
- i) provide for the conservation and protection of the natural environment, including wetlands, woodlands, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI), fish and wildlife habitat, and lakes, rivers and streams; and,
- j) recognize opportunities for public involvement in the land use planning process.

### **1.3 BASIS**

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Context                             | 1.3.1 This Plan provides an updated land use planning and policy framework for the Town of Huntsville, which builds on the original Huntsville Official Plan, the District of Muskoka Official Plan, Provincial Policy initiatives, the Huntsville Economic Development Strategic Plan (2002), and specific initiatives undertaken by various ratepayer organizations in the Town, particularly lake management plans.   |
| Economic Development Strategic Plan | 1.3.2 The Economic Development Strategic Plan recognizes that an up-to-date Official Plan is an important component of the overall development strategy for the Town. The Economic Development Strategic Plan specifically notes that: “We must prepare for inevitable growth and change, and accomplish this in a manner that honours our past, and preserves and protects those principles and objectives that have made us what we are. Chief among these is the protection and enhancement of our unique environment”. |

### **1.4 TIME FRAME**

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|---------------|--|
| Time Frame    | 1.4.1 This Plan is generally based on a twenty year time frame, however, it does not have a specific terminal year.  |
| 5 Year Review | 1.4.2 The Plan will be reviewed periodically, and modifications made to the Plan to reflect desired changes in growth and development opportunities as well as with conservation and preservation issues. Such general reviews are expected at five (5) year intervals, or sooner depending on growth pressures. |

### **1.5 PLANNING CONTEXT**

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Planning Act                  | 1.5.1 This Official Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 17 of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended, and is intended to focus on desired outcomes. |
| Provincial Policy Statement   | 1.5.2 This Official Plan is intended to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and have regard to other provincial agency policies.                                   |
| Muskoka Official Plan         | 1.5.3 This Plan conforms with, and complements policies detailed in the District Municipality of Muskoka Official Plan in all areas where the District has jurisdiction.                 |
| Role of Huntsville in Muskoka | 1.5.4 This Plan advances a policy framework which recognizes a distinct role for Huntsville in the District of Muskoka, as noted in Section 2.3.   |

## 2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 VISION

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| Vision           | 2.1.1 | The Official Plan establishes the overall direction for managing growth and development in Huntsville while providing a strong thrust toward protection, conservation and preservation of significant features of the natural environment. The Plan outlines a vision that ensures that land use changes are in the public interest, enhance the Town's quality of life, and are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.   |
| Encourage Growth | 2.1.2 | There is both a recognition and a desire that Huntsville will continue to grow and that it will continue to change. Orderly, sustainable growth is actively encouraged. As part of its growth, there is a concurrent commitment to maintain and enhance the quality of life in the community, and to ensure that growth is compatible with those cultural and natural features that have helped to define the character of the Town.   |
| OPA#6<br>Balance | 2.1.3 | The Official Plan provides a balance among various sometimes competing factors, including economic, social and environmental factors. All public and private development and redevelopment within the Town should reflect the sustainability principles contained within the Unity Plan, as follows:<br><br><b>Our Sustainability Principles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide a long term guide for this community that balances economic, social and environmental needs.</li><li>• Promote a good quality of life for everyone in the community.</li><li>• Achieve a strong and resilient economy and thriving social environment.</li><li>• Protect and restore biodiversity and natural ecosystems. Provide this community with the necessary tools to be good stewards of the environment.</li><li>• Build upon positive characteristics of this community including its human and cultural values, history and its natural and economic systems.</li><li>• Foster participation and enable a collaborative effort to work toward a common, sustainable future.</li><li>• Enable continual improvement of the sustainability plan through ongoing monitoring of plan performance and community needs, and through good governance.</li></ul> |
| Heritage         | 2.1.4 | Growth and change will occur in a manner that respects and honours the Town's rich and diverse heritage, and preserves and protects those features that have helped shape the Town. Chief among these is the protection and enhancement of the Town's unique natural environment.  |
| Quality of Life  | 2.1.5 | This Plan recognizes and supports Huntsville as a modern, vibrant, prosperous and competitive community that maintains a high level of protection for the quality of life and environment.   |

Access to  
Lakes and  
Rivers

2.1.6 The quality of life in Huntsville is enhanced as a result of access to the lakes and rivers.

Cultural  
Heritage

2.1.7 Council recognizes the importance of cultural heritage resources. Council will encourage the identification, restoration, protection, maintenance and enhancement of cultural heritage resources. Cultural heritage resources include, but are not restricted to, archaeological sites, buildings and structural remains of historical and architectural value, and human-made structures, heritage conservation districts or landscapes of identified historic and scenic interest.

Guiding  
Principles

2.1.8 The Official Plan will:

- a) ensure that the change anticipated in the Town enhances or maintains the quality of life that is fundamental to the residents of Huntsville;
- b) promote the wise stewardship of public and private resources;
- c) provide for positive, sustainable forms of development;
- d) protect those features of the natural and cultural environment that are identified as important to the Town and its residents, the District and the Province;
- e) direct growth and settlement to appropriate locations;
- f) promote diversification of the Town's economy, building on its resource and tourism base;
- g) promote and plan for the efficient use of land, infrastructure and services;
- h) improve and maintain the Town's communication and transportation infrastructure; and
- i) support Huntsville as a regional centre for commercial, health and education services.

## **2.2 COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

Huntsville as a  
"Community of  
Communities"

2.2.1 Huntsville can very much be described as a "community of communities": the urban community focused on the "town proper", the lake communities, the residents of the smaller settlements such as Port Sydney and Utterson, the tourist centres focused on Hidden Valley, and the rural community. While having individual characteristics, needs and wants, each reflecting its own specific "sense of place", each of these communities contributes to the overall "sense of belonging" that represents Huntsville. All of these communities have evolved and will continue to evolve with a close connection to the lakes, wetlands and forested landscapes of the Town.

Distinctive  
Character

2.2.2 The distinctive character of Huntsville is influenced by and reflected in a variety of features:

- a) It is heavily influenced by the natural environment – the many lakes and rivers and the kilometres of shoreline within its boundaries; its proximity to the recreation opportunities of Algonquin Provincial Park to the east and Arrowhead Provincial Park within its boundaries, and immediately to the north of the urban area; the tree covered rolling hills and ridgeline panoramas; and the significant wetlands that provide wildlife refuge;
- b) It is influenced by its history – as a crossroads, a logging/lumber centre and as a tourist destination with its historic camps and lodges, and its role as a “working town”;
- c) It is reflected in its historic settlements – Port Sydney, Utterson, Novar, Hidden Valley, and in Huntsville’s historic downtown core;
- d) It is influenced by the way in which natural and man made features have developed a coexistence, resulting in a community commercial core that straddles the water in downtown Huntsville, and settlements that are oriented to their waterfront – Port Sydney with Mary Lake and Muskoka River, or their topography – Hidden Valley and Peninsula Lake; and
- e) Topography that affords interesting vistas and views, and has resulted in curving streets and steeper roads, small, relatively isolated residential neighbourhoods, and challenges for the Town’s transportation and servicing infrastructure.

## 2.3 REGIONAL AND OTHER INFLUENCES

Regional  
Influence

2.3.1 Huntsville is the northernmost Town in Muskoka, and the largest urban centre between Orillia and North Bay. Huntsville is also the western gateway to Algonquin Park. Huntsville’s influence is regional, providing services north and west into Parry Sound and east into Haliburton and Algonquin Park. The industrial base draws on a regional supply; the tourism, cultural and retail commercial sectors serve the local and broader communities. This role as a regional centre is recognized and will continue to be promoted.

Regional  
Service Centre

2.3.2 Huntsville is intended to be a regional focus and service centre for economic, cultural and recreational activity in the District of Muskoka and for residents and visitors from other areas.

## 2.4 OBJECTIVES

### 2.4.1 Economic Development

Economic  
Development

2.4.1.1 Economic expansion is encouraged to provide a high level of service to local residents and property owners, to provide

employment opportunities, and to provide a destination for visitors. Economic development is focused on:

- a) Protection and expansion of the industrial land base;
- b) Strengthening the downtown core as a location for commercial, office, business services and cultural activities;
- c) Providing for a variety of commercial activities that service and draw from a larger regional area that is beyond the corporate limits of the Town;
- d) Stimulating and encouraging the growth of the tourist industry through a supply of accommodation facilities, amenities, tourist destinations, activities, and an attractive natural environment;
- e) Providing training and education opportunities to enhance and develop a qualified labour force in the Town;
- f) Providing support for the second home community; and
- g) Providing the infrastructure and support facilities needed to attract and keep a qualified labour force in Huntsville.

Land Need

- 2.4.1.2 A variety of industrial, commercial and institutional lands need to be identified to provide for affordable development sites with appropriate levels of municipal services.

## 2.4.2 Environment

Environment

- 2.4.2.1 The natural environment – the rocks, trees and water – and the skyline help define the inherent character of Huntsville. This Plan recognizes the critical importance the natural environment plays in ensuring the quality of life in Huntsville. The Town is committed to the protection and enhancement of:
- a) the quality of various features of the natural environment;
  - b) significant natural sites including the Axe Lake Wetland, the Novar Bog, the Big East River Delta, and any other sites that may in future be identified, representing key environmental features;.
  - c) significant fish and wildlife habitat areas and lands affected by environmental hazards;
  - d) the natural landscape, shorelines, natural panoramas or vistas, clean air and the night sky representing the dominant visual characteristic of lands and lakes outside the identified urban areas; and

- e) the concept of the “urban forest” within urban areas, with a commitment to maintaining and expanding a treed environment as an integral component of the urban landscape.

Stewardship  
Ethic

2.4.2.2 This Plan endorses a stewardship ethic for shore lands that will include landscape naturalization, improved on-site retention and treatment of pollutants, improved compatibility with the natural environment.

Sound  
Environmental  
Planning

2.4.2.3 New development will be considered within the context of sound environmental planning. The redevelopment of existing properties should adhere to current environmental, stewardship and planning standards, with a commitment to the use of “best available technology” and/or “best management practices”.

Skylines

2.4.2.4 The naturally-treed skylines throughout the community represent an aspect of natural heritage that is immediately evident to residents and visitors. These skylines shall be retained in their natural condition as the basis for view-scapes that compliment the town.

### 2.4.3 Employment

Employment

2.4.3.1 Expanding employment opportunities for existing and new residents is a critical component of the Town’s development strategy. New and expanded employment areas will be identified and developed in health services, education, manufacturing, telecommunications technology, service commercial, recreation and tourism.

Business  
Expansion

2.4.3.2 The retention and expansion of existing businesses is critical to maintaining and diversifying the Town’s employment base.

### 2.4.4 Tourism

Tourism

2.4.4.1 Tourism will continue to play a key role in Huntsville. The combination of existing resorts and camps located along the shorelines of the lakes, downhill skiing facilities, golf courses, a historic downtown, a heritage museum and proximity to two major Provincial Parks have provided Huntsville with a superior tourism infrastructure. Huntsville is committed to the long-term health of its tourism sector and will actively promote new tourist commercial opportunities, parks, trails and tourist destinations.

Trails

2.4.4.2 Huntsville will capitalize on its location along both the Trans Canada Trail and the Park-to-Park Trail.

### 2.4.5 Culture and Heritage

Downtown  
Huntsville

2.4.5.1 The downtown core of Huntsville is recognized as a key cultural and heritage feature. The core includes a traditional downtown and an extensive relationship with the waterfront/shoreline. The

Town is committed to the long term health and improvement of the downtown, as the focus of the community and as a vibrant and distinct commercial and cultural destination as well as a residential neighbourhood. Redevelopment in the downtown will support the heritage integrity of the core.

Cultural Heritage

2.4.5.2 The Town's cultural heritage goes beyond its historic downtown commercial core and includes buildings and areas that are of historical and architectural interest. The Town will identify its cultural heritage resources and strive to conserve those resources that are of a local and regional significance.

Heritage Values

2.4.5.3 Cultural heritage resources in the municipality shall be managed in a manner which perpetuates their functional use while maintaining their heritage value and benefit to the community.

Cultural Heritage Goals

2.4.5.4 In order to achieve this goal, Council:

- i) will limit the demolition, destruction or inappropriate alteration of cultural heritage resources within its legislative mandate;
- ii) may encourage development adjacent to cultural heritage resources to be of an appropriate scale and character;
- iii) will encourage and foster public awareness, participation and involvement in the conservation of cultural heritage resources;
- iv) will facilitate research into the cultural heritage of the Town and identify methods for its preservation, conservation and enhancement.

Heritage Waterways

2.4.5.5 Important waterways include the Big East River which is designated as a Heritage Waterway, the Muskoka River and numerous lakes. These waterways are a natural and recreational asset to the Town. The long term protection of the natural features of these waterways and their shorelines is a core feature of this Plan.

Archaeological Resources

2.4.5.6 Significant archaeological resources contribute to the character of the Town and need to be identified, evaluated and conserved.

Stewardship

2.4.5.7 Cultural heritage identification and conservation will be accomplished through public and private stewardship and partnering with heritage and other interested organizations in the community.

Historic portages

2.4.5.8 Historic portages are part of the Town's cultural heritage, these need to be identified and conserved.

## 2.4.6 Open Space and Recreation

Open Space and Recreation

2.4.6.1 The open space and recreational resources of the Town are integral components of the quality of life in Huntsville. The open space system in Huntsville will include a series of nodes and

linkages. Linear corridors/trails will be developed to connect major features in the Town, and will enhance the development of the Trans Canada Trail and the Park-to-Park trail system, and/or other recreational trail systems. Similarly, portages are an integral linkage in linear water based corridors and should be preserved as points of public access to waterways.

Public Access  
to waterways

2.4.6.2 Improved public access to waterways is encouraged in appropriate locations.

Parks Master  
Plan

2.4.6.3 A Parks Master Plan will be prepared to review the existing and future needs for municipal parkland and provide specific policies that will guide the responsible and orderly development of municipal parkland.

### 2.4.7 Housing

Diversified  
Housing Base

2.4.7.1 A diversified housing base, reflecting the varied needs of its residents in the settlement areas, waterfront and rural communities will be provided.

Affordable  
Housing

2.4.7.2 Developing more affordable housing opportunities both on a rental and home ownership basis is an important component of the Town's economic development strategy. The Town will explore a variety of means to increase the supply of affordable rental and ownership housing, including encouraging residential conversions, development or disposal of appropriate Town owned or other public lands, intensification in the downtown core, and lower cost home ownership opportunities, and providing for an appropriate inventory of lots available for development.

Special Needs  
Housing

2.4.7.3 The Town will encourage the development of special needs housing in appropriate locations in settlement areas.

### 2.4.8 Municipal Infrastructure

Municipal  
Services

2.4.8.1 An extensive and efficient system of municipal infrastructure is critical to maintaining the quality of life in Huntsville. These include water supply, sanitary sewage disposal, roads, storm water, solid waste disposal and utilities.

Level of Service

2.4.8.2 Development will be located where an appropriate level of municipal infrastructure exists or can be made efficiently available, and will occur at a density or intensity that is supportable by the municipal infrastructure.

Fully Serviced  
Areas

2.4.8.3 Intensive uses requiring municipal sewer and water services shall be directed to the fully serviced areas of the Town.

Co-ordination  
Among Utilities

2.4.8.4 The Town will co-ordinate with the District of Muskoka, and the distributors of utilities to assist in ensuring that required services are provided when needed.

Road and  
Pedestrian  
Access

2.4.8.5 Improvements to road and pedestrian access in and through the Town will be required as growth progresses, and will be identified through the preparation of appropriate traffic studies and open space initiatives.

Non-motorized  
Corridors

2.4.8.6 The Town encourages the development and expansion of non-motorized corridors (e.g. paths, trails, sidewalks, bike lanes and portages) throughout the municipality.

Public  
Transportation

2.4.8.7 Accessible and affordable public transportation is recognized as an integral component of urban growth, meeting the needs of residents, tourists and businesses through:

- a) The provision of accessible public transportation for both able-bodied and physically challenged,
- b) The provision of transit-supportive land use guidelines designed to ensure development meets the needs of those that do not have access to an automobile,
- c) The recognition that public transportation policies support environmental, economic, smart growth, and quality of life strategies.

#### 2.4.9 Resource Development

Resource  
Development

2.4.9.1 Viable mineral resources and forest products are important components of the local economy, and need to be protected and developed in a sustainable manner.

Extraction

2.4.9.2 The orderly extraction or utilization of resources shall occur in a manner which minimizes the negative physical, environmental and social impacts of the development.

Rehabilitation  
and  
Renaturalization

2.4.9.3 Rehabilitation and renaturalization of resource sites is an integral component of resource development and will be a requirement of all resource development permits issued by the Town.

Agriculture

2.4.9.4 The agricultural sector is encouraged to expand in an environmentally sound manner.

#### 2.4.10 Universally Accessible Environment (AACPD)

Accessibility

2.4.10.1 The provision of cultural, recreational and educational facilities is encouraged to ensure accessibility by all. The development of an environment that facilitates universal access for all persons is encouraged.

## **2.5 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Growth

2.5.1 This Plan identifies areas for growth that will accommodate population and household increases generally anticipated up to and beyond the next 20 years.

Seasonal  
Population

2.5.2 The seasonal population and households are expected to continue to expand, although no specific guidelines are proposed. The expansion of the seasonal housing market and population will be based on the amount of new lot creation, and conversions within the existing housing stock.

Population  
Growth

2.5.3 The Town's population growth is expected to be a combination of younger families who chose to live in Huntsville due to its quality of life and economic opportunities, and persons at or near retirement age, many of whom have an historic attachment to Huntsville's waterfront, and many of whom will be relocating from other areas to enjoy the cultural and natural amenities of the Town. The Town has opportunities to encourage "lifestyle" developments in appropriate locations.

Growth  
Strategy

2.5.4 The Town's growth strategy will have the following characteristics:

- a) The majority of intensive residential, commercial, institutional and industrial growth will be directed to the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area where full urban services are required and available;
- b) Only low density residential growth will be permitted outside of the Huntsville Urban and Hidden Valley Settlement Areas;
- c) Commercial and industrial growth, geared primarily to the resource sector of the economy, will continue to be located in the Rural area where site specific characteristics are justified and where the uses are or can be made compatible with existing development in the area;
- d) Hidden Valley will continue to develop as a resort commercial and recreational residential destination; and
- e) Expansion of historic settlements will be limited due to a lack of municipal sewer and water services.

## **2.6 PARTNERSHIPS**

Partnerships

2.6.1 Effective community development requires the participation of a broad spectrum of residents, local organizations and governments. The Town will provide a leadership role in the future development of Huntsville, and will encourage the cooperation and active involvement of community organizations, ratepayer groups and various governmental agencies to expand and develop the infrastructure required to enhance the quality of life in Huntsville.

Stewardship

2.6.2 The quality of life throughout Huntsville will be enhanced through the adoption and support of “stewardship ethics” that focus on the preservation and enhancement of the urban, rural and waterfront living environment.