

Town of Huntsville Official Plan Review - POLICY BACKGROUND PAPER

A Growing Community – Rural Settlement Areas

BACKGROUND:

- In addition to the fully municipally-serviced Urban Settlement Area and the Hidden Valley Settlement Area, there are several other smaller Rural Settlement Areas that are categorized as “Communities” in the Muskoka Official Plan (MOP) that generally function as smaller service centres in the Town.
- The MOP currently identifies the following four Communities within the Town of Huntsville: The Locks, Port Sydney, Utterson and Novar. These communities vary in terms of their mix of land uses and character. Except for one development (Clarke Crescent) in Port Sydney which is serviced by municipal water, all other development in Communities has occurred on the basis of private individual wells and sewage treatment systems.
- The Town Official Plan does not use the category of “Communities”. However, it identifies Port Sydney as a Settlement Area and lands within this designation are subject to a number of different land use sub-designations. Further, the Town Official Plan identifies Novar and Utterson as Rural Settlements and there are policies that generally limit growth to infilling and limited expansion of the existing built-up area of the settlement.
- While the Locks is shown conceptually in the Muskoka Official Plan as being located on the south side of the Huntsville Urban Area, on the west side of Fairy Lake, the Town’s Official Plan does not make reference to it as a Rural Settlement.
- Generally, given their location and lack of municipal services, Rural Settlement Areas are smaller in size and growth is anticipated to be slower than the Urban Settlement Area.

POLICY CONTEXT:

Provincial Policy Statement (2014):

- 1.1.4.1 Healthy, integrated and viable rural areas should be supported by:
- a) building upon rural character, and leveraging rural amenities and assets;
 - b) promoting regeneration, including the redevelopment of brownfield sites;
 - c) accommodating an appropriate range and mix of housing in rural settlement areas;
 - d) encouraging the conservation and redevelopment of existing rural housing stock on rural lands;
 - e) using rural infrastructure and public service facilities efficiently;
 - f) promoting diversification of the economic base and employment opportunities through goods and services, including value-added products and the sustainable management or use of resources;
 - g) providing opportunities for sustainable and diversified tourism, including leveraging historical, cultural, and natural assets;
 - h) conserving biodiversity and considering the ecological benefits provided by nature; and
 - i) providing opportunities for economic activities in prime agricultural areas, in accordance with policy 2.3.

- 1.1.4.2 In rural areas, rural settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development and their vitality and regeneration shall be promoted.
- 1.1.4.3 When directing development in rural settlement areas in accordance with policy 1.1.3, planning authorities shall give consideration to rural characteristics, the scale of development and the provision of appropriate service levels.
- 1.6.6.3 Where municipal sewage services and municipal water services are not provided, municipalities may allow the use of private communal sewage services and private communal water services.
- 1.6.6.4 Where municipal sewage services and municipal water services or private communal sewage services and private communal water services are not provided, individual on-site sewage services and individual on-site water services may be used provided that site conditions are suitable for the long-term provision of such services with no negative impacts. In settlement areas, these services may only be used for infilling and minor rounding out of existing development.

Current Muskoka Official Plan:

- B.3 Objectives:
To strengthen the settlement structure of Muskoka as a composite of urban, rural and waterfront areas by focusing growth to Urban Centres and supporting appropriate development in Community, Rural and Waterfront designations, which maintains the character and integrity of each of these areas.
- C.49 In accordance with the Provincial Policy Statement and in consultation with the Area Municipalities, Muskoka will identify targets for intensification and redevelopment within Urban Centres and Communities. C.49 In the interim, when considering development applications, the District and Area Municipalities will support opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing through intensification in appropriate locations, subject to the following criteria:
 - a) Existing and planned services can support new households in the intensified area;
 - b) The proposed intensification is compatible with the existing built form; and
 - c) The proposed intensification is located within close proximity to appropriate community facilities and public open space.
- D (Pre-
amble) Communities are small development nodes that generally function as service centres for the immediate rural and waterfront areas. They are expected to grow more slowly and at a density that can be serviced with private individual services. The scale and function of individual Communities will be determined by the Area Municipality and are expected to accommodate a variety of land uses.

The size and density of Communities are of District interest related to the maintenance of the surrounding rural or waterfront community; the management of significant natural areas; the

impact on water quality and the provision of required municipal services.

- D.10 Development will proceed on the basis of individual services and at a density that will avoid future servicing problems. Private communal services may be considered for resort development where technically feasible based on the proposed use and scale.
- D.11 Small scale multiple unit residential development may be permitted in locations where it can be adequately serviced based on recommendations from a hydrogeological study and provided the units remain in one ownership.
- D.12 Only infilling of a minor nature will be permitted except where more detailed policy provides otherwise and under such servicing conditions as deemed necessary, subject to the following:
- a) the uses are restricted to those of a non-toxic, low effluent producing nature;
 - b) a private waste disposal system can be accommodated on the lot to the satisfaction of the authority having jurisdiction; and
 - c) The development is consistent with future growth strategies.
- D.13 An expansion to the boundaries of a Community will proceed by Local Official Plan amendment and will be considered based on a growth management study that addresses the needs of the Community [Note: additional criteria are identified].
- D.14 Where a New Community is proposed it will be subject to the policies of this Plan and in particular to the Community Building section and will meet the following criteria:
- a) Have a minimum of 300 lots/units;
 - b) Be serviced with a municipal water and sewage system; and
 - c) Be consistent with future growth strategies for Muskoka.
- D.15 New Community will proceed by amendment to this Plan which will provide site specific development policy. The amendment will:
- a) Define the primary function and focus of the Community;
 - b) Identify the principle components of the Community;
 - c) Establish the phasing of the development, and require that major recreational amenities be included in the first phase; and
 - d) Provide for municipal services.
- I.27 Institutions will be encouraged to locate in Urban Centres and Communities.

Muskoka Official Plan Policy Directions Report:

- #6 The MOP should include a policy that indicates that firstly, Urban Centres then secondly, rural settlement areas should be the focus of growth and development.
- #7 The MOP should establish the boundaries of each settlement area (Urban Centres and Communities) on the schedules to the Official Plan.

- #9 The MOP should include policies that require the local municipality to determine how much growth is to occur within individual rural settlement areas, in a manner that is consistent with the PPS 2014.

First Draft – Muskoka Official Plan:

- B2a) The settlement areas in the District are the focus of growth in the District and their vitality and regeneration shall be promoted.
- B2b) There are two types of settlement areas in the District - Urban Centres where municipal sewage services and municipal water services are provided and Community Areas, where municipal sewage services and municipal water services are not provided.
- B2c) The limits of the Urban Centres and Community Areas are shown on Schedule ____ to this Plan.
[Note: the draft schedules were not available at the time of completing this Policy Background Paper; however, it is noted that it is the intent of the Draft Muskoka Official Plan to delineate the Communities.]
- D3 a) Objective:
Maintain and promote the Urban Centres and Community Areas, particularly downtown areas and main streets as the focal points for commerce activity in the District.
- B13.1 c) Where municipal sewage services and municipal water services are not provided, municipalities may allow the use of private individual on-site sewage services and private individual on-site water services. Where private individual on-site services are proposed within a Future Service Area for municipal services, the private services shall be designed and installed in a manner that facilitates future connection to municipal services.
- B13.1 d) Major new development in Community Areas may be required to be supported by a settlement area capability study that includes a hydrogeological assessment in accordance with Section B13.4 of this Plan.
- B13.3 c) The extension of municipal sewage services and/or municipal water services beyond the boundary of an Urban Centre may only be considered to address failed services and/or public health concerns or to facilitate installation for works that have been determined to be in the public interest.
- B13.3 d) Where municipal sewage services and municipal water services are not provided in an Urban Centre, Community Area, Waterfront Area or Rural Area, individual on-site sewage services and individual on-site water services may be used provided that site conditions are suitable for the long-term provision of such services with no negative impacts, provided that treatment capacity for hauled sewage from individual on-site sewage services exists,

and provided that such services do not generally provide service on more than one legally conveyable lot, parcel of tied land (POTL) or vacant land unit in accordance with the following:

- i) In a Community Area, these services may only be used for infilling and minor rounding out of existing development;

12.1 Objectives for Community Areas

- a) Recognize the role of Community Areas as service nodes for the rural and waterfront areas.
- b) Recognize the unique character and history of each Community Area when making decisions on applications for development and infrastructure;
- c) Encourage the development of complete small-scale communities, with opportunities for housing, employment, learning, and accessing amenities and services.

[note: there is a numbering issue and there are no objectives numbered d through e]

- f) Encourage the provision of an appropriate range and mix housing;
- g) Use infrastructure and public service facilities efficiently while ensuring the density of development can be sustained by private individual on-site water and sewage services;
- h) Encourage the provision of an appropriate range of employment opportunities;
- i) Promote the diversification of the economic base through the provision of small scale commercial and industrial uses that supply goods and services, including value-added products and the sustainable management or use of resources; and,
- j) Encourage the establishment of opportunities for sustainable and diversified tourism, including the leveraging historical, cultural and natural assets.

12.2 Permitted Uses

Permitted within the Community Areas will be subject to meeting servicing and other requirements as set out in this Plan and the Area Municipal Official Plans. In general, growth in Community Areas will be limited to infill and minor rounding out of existing development and shall be restricted to uses that are sustainable on private individual on-site services.

12.3 The boundaries of the Community Areas as shown on Schedule ____ to this Plan shall be shown on Area Municipal Official Plans.

Town Strategic Documents:

Strategic Plan– Vision A vibrant, inclusive, healthy community which inspires innovation and growth, celebrates the arts, culture, and heritage, promotes recreation while developing a resilient economy founded on social caring and environmental stewardship.

Unity Plan – Vision Huntsville is a vibrant, welcoming and healthy place in which to live and play as we foster innovation, celebrate arts, culture heritage, and recreation, develop a strong and resilient economy and follow an ethic of social caring and environmental stewardship.

Goal 5 Land Use Planning: Huntsville will become a model of sustainable community

development, by incorporating the principles of smart growth, sustainable design and green buildings into all land use planning decisions. This will include a commitment to the protection and maintenance of Huntsville’s rural small town character and vibrant downtown, both of which are valued by the community.

Huntsville Official Plan:

Policies Relevant to Port Sydney (Section 6, Port Sydney Settlement Area)

- 6.1.1 Port Sydney is an historic settlement that has developed primarily as a Recreational and Residential community with a variety of commercial functions to serve the local market area.
- 6.1.2 The land use pattern is typical of waterfront communities, with residential development along the waterfront together with mixed residential and commercial functions in the core area. The public beach and public waterfront at the mouth of the Muskoka River, coupled with the significant views of the lake and river at this location all contribute to the distinctive character of the village. A significant amount of in-depth residential development has also occurred.
- 6.1.3 Existing development in the settlement is generally serviced by private water and sewage disposal systems. One development in Port Sydney (for 43 lots to be developed in phases) is serviced by a piped municipal water system.
- 6.2.1 Due to servicing costs and constraints it is not envisaged that Port Sydney will be serviced by an expanded municipal water supply and/or sewage disposal system. Outside the area designated as water service area on Schedule B-3, new development will proceed with individual water supply and sewage disposal services.
- 6.3.1 The Village Core is characterized by a mix of low density residential development, commercial and institutional development at a limited scale. Historically, the core of the Village of Port Sydney consisted mainly of those lands identified as Village Core. Over the years, this area has developed a distinct character, becoming recognized as a quiet, clean and quaint core with significant summer tourist activity. Specific policies to reflect and protect the character of this core area are appropriate.
- 6.4.1 In the Residential designation, the only permitted use shall be single detached dwellings with the exception of residential conversions and bed and breakfast establishments
- 6.4.2 New residential development shall proceed by infilling or limited lot creation that is consistent with the provisions of the Provincial Policy Statement and shall be at a low density of development.
- 6.4.3 In general, the minimum lot area shall be 1 hectare (2.5 acres); and the minimum lot frontage shall be 60 metres (200 feet) for new lot creation.

- 6.9.1 Lands designated Restricted Rural on Schedule A-3 generally act as a holding category for future development in Port Sydney. Only limited types and forms of development shall be permitted. In areas designated “Restricted Rural”, the predominant use of land shall be for uses existing as of the date of adoption of this Plan, residential infilling of single family dwellings, outdoor recreational uses or managed forestry uses

Policies Relevant to Utterson and Novar (Rural Settlement Areas)

- 9.1.3 The Rural Area also includes existing small-scale rural settlements which historically and today continue to serve as the focus of residential, commercial or institutional activity. These rural settlements include Novar and Utterson.
- 9.17.1 Rural Settlements identify concentrations of development located throughout the Rural Area, which act as small-scale service centers for the surrounding areas, or which have a particular historic focus. Rural Settlements include Novar and Utterson.
- 9.17.2 Permitted uses of land within the Rural Settlements shall be limited to the following: a) low density single detached residential uses; b) small scale service commercial and tourist commercial uses; c) institutional uses; and, d) open space and public uses.
- 9.17.3 Development within Rural Settlements will be serviced by private individual water and sewage disposal systems. Private, individual water and sewage disposal systems will not serve more than one property. Private communal services are not permitted.
- 9.17.4 Development shall be limited in scale to low water using and low effluent producing uses.
- 9.17.5 Development shall take place in the form of infilling or by limited expansion of the existing built-up area of the settlement, but will not include subdivision scale development or result in the construction of new municipal roads.
- 9.17.6 All lots shall have direct access to and frontage on a public, open and year round maintained road.
- 9.17.7 Lots shall have sufficient area to permit the installation of a private sewage disposal system and development of a potable water supply, and suitable characteristics for a building site.
- 9.17.8 Commercial uses will be at a scale to serve the Rural Settlement and the surrounding area. Commercial uses which by their economic function, scale of development and range of activities would more appropriately be located in the Huntsville Urban Area are not permitted.
- 9.17.9 Tourist commercial uses, in addition to serving the settlement and surrounding area, may also provide for the various needs of the vacationing or traveling public.
- 9.17.10 Conversions of dwellings to commercial uses may be permitted by rezoning, only where the

uses can be properly integrated into the neighbourhood and adequate facilities such as off street parking can be provided.

- 9.17.11 Structures containing commercial uses shall be designed and any lighting will be sensitive to the night sky and arranged so as to blend in with the desired character of adjacent uses.

Policies Relevant to The Locks (Rural Area)

- 9.1.1 The Rural Area includes those lands located outside any other land use designation identified in this Plan
- 9.1.2 The Rural Area provides a location for a variety of resource related uses, conservation activities, environmentally sensitive lands and wildlife habitat areas, and residential, commercial and industrial uses at a scale sustainable on private services.
- 9.5.1 Development in the Rural Area will be serviced by private individual water and sewage systems.
- 9.8.1 Rural residential development that requires the construction of new public roads is not permitted except by amendment to this Plan, with the exception of minor extensions of an existing public road, generally less than 100 metres (330 feet) in length.
- 9.8.2 Rural residential development is comprised of single detached dwellings located on large lots which front on year round maintained public roads.
- 9.8.3 Rural residential development is directed to areas where residential development exists or would be compatible with adjacent uses, and should not be located in remote, undeveloped areas.
- 9.8.4 The minimum requirements for a new rural residential lot will be:
- 4 hectares (10 acres) in lot area and 150 metres (500 feet) in frontage where the lot has frontage on a Rural Arterial road;
 - 2 hectares (5 acres) in lot area and 135 metres (440 feet) in frontage where the lot has frontage on a Rural Collector road; and,
 - 1 hectare (2.5 acres) in lot area and 60 metres (200 feet) in frontage on a Local road.
- 9.8.5 Existing draft approved plans of subdivision may be final approved and registered, notwithstanding any provisions of this Plan to the contrary. Revisions to existing plans may be considered if the intent of the Official Plan is maintained.
- 9.9.1 Commercial development in the Rural Area is defined as low density development related to the buying or selling of commodities or the supplying of services. Permitted Commercial uses include resource related commercial uses, tourist commercial uses, farm machinery and recreational vehicle sales or service establishments, building supply establishments and other similar uses. Commercial development may include residential, home based commercial, or

industrial uses, provided such uses are secondary to or in conjunction with a permitted commercial use.

- 9.9.5 The minimum requirements for a new commercial or industrial lot will be:
- 4 hectares (10 acres) in lot area and 150 metres (500 feet) in frontage where the lot has frontage on an Arterial road; and
 - 2 hectares (5 acres) in lot area and 135 metres (440 feet) in frontage where the lot has frontage on a Rural Collector or local road.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- The current MOP identifies four Rural Settlement Areas in the Town of Huntsville: The Locks, Port Sydney, Utterson and Novar. The Draft Muskoka Official Plan identifies Rural Settlement Areas as Community Areas. The Muskoka Growth Strategy (2013) does not identify a need to establish new Rural Settlement Areas, nor expand the boundaries of those which exist. In this regard, while the draft MOP does not contemplate expansions of Community Area boundaries, it is our understanding that similar to the Urban Settlement Area boundary, the MOP will also contain schedules which identify Community Area boundaries. At the time of writing of this paper, Community Areas and associated boundaries have not yet been identified and delineated.

The current Town of Huntsville Official Plan does not classify any of the Rural Settlement Areas as Communities, and with the exception of Port Sydney, nor does it delineate any boundaries. Further, each of these Rural Settlement Areas is subject to a different specific set of policies. Given that the draft MOP may be adopted ahead of the Town Official Plan, it will be important to work in tandem with the District. Further discussion is necessary to determine which Rural Settlement Areas are identified in the MOP and Town of Huntsville Official Plan as well as relevant Town policies.

- There is significant variation amongst the role, character and function of the Town's Rural Settlement Areas. Port Sydney represents a more complete community with a mixture of land uses, while others have more of a sole residential focus. Based on historic trends, the role of Port Sydney and other Rural Settlement Areas requires further analysis to determine the level of development permissions to detail how much rounding out will be permitted. In this regard, the draft MOP provides Area Municipalities with some discretion to manage growth and development within Community Areas. Further the Town may also establish detailed policies providing for other forms of development.
- The Draft District of Muskoka Official Plan indicates that full municipal services will not be established or extended into Community Areas.
- The PPS and the draft MOP limit growth within private serviced Rural Settlement Areas to minor infilling and rounding out. However, the draft MOP encourages Community Areas to function as complete communities and provide a full range of housing and employment opportunities. As a result, the extent of the range of permitted uses and where they may be directed requires further analysis.

SUMMARY:

- There is a need to evaluate the function of the Rural Settlement Areas within the Town, as well as to identify and delineate their boundaries in accordance with the Community Area policies and schedules of the draft MOP.
- Rural Settlement Areas are intended to function as service centres for rural and waterfront areas, and it is important to recognize their unique character and ability to function as complete small communities, which includes identifying a range of permitted uses and a land use structure within which they are guided.
- There is an overall intent by the District and by the PPS to direct the majority of growth to the Urban Centres, where full services are provided, as a priority. The Rural Settlement Areas (the Community Areas) are a secondary focus of growth.
- In the rural area of the Town, the Rural Settlement Areas (Community Areas) are the focus of growth. However, development within Rural Settlement Areas will continue to be on the basis of private individual services. Further, additional consideration is needed on the extent to which development will be permitted in Rural Settlement Areas given that there is a desire to ensure these communities are complete and offer a range of uses versus the PPS and MOP also identifying that development be limited to minor infilling and rounding out.
- At present, lands containing space extensive open space (golf courses) and industrial uses (pits and quarries) are included in Rural Settlement Area boundaries. As residential intensification may be incompatible on golf course lands and pit and quarry uses, some of the lands that currently include space extensive open space (golf courses) and industrial (pits and quarries) uses and may warrant exclusion.