

Town of Huntsville Official Plan Review - POLICY BACKGROUND PAPER

Community Resiliency

BACKGROUND:

- In 2010, Town Council approved the Unity Plan, which is a long range plan to address environmental, social/cultural and economic issues in Huntsville, put action plans in place and monitor the effect of these actions over time. The Vision of this plan is that: ***“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.”***
- The major theme of the Unity Plan was how sustainability could be defined at the local level. The document references that for Huntsville, sustainability is about:
 - protecting and valuing the natural environment - not using natural resources faster than they can be replenished;
 - recognizing and acknowledging that there are limits to growth and development;
 - recognizing that communities must prepare for climate change;
 - retaining Huntsville’s small rural Town feel;
 - ensuring the community can foster its thriving arts and cultural community;
 - recognizing and celebrating its strong sense of belonging and history; and
 - ensuring there are economic opportunities to attract and retain youth while balancing the needs of all our residents, visitors and businesses.
- The Unity Plan was developed around three key pillars of sustainability; environment and economy to encompass these core values of the community. As it relates to land use planning, the Unity Plan states that 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.
- In the context of land use planning, the Provincial Policy Statement refers to communities being sustainable and resilient. Resilience refers to the ability of a system (community) to respond to disturbance and still retain basic function and structure.
- Increasingly, resilience is a term used in the context of adaptation to climate change. For example, Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017, which has just received First Reading, and is proposed to amend the *Planning Act* by adding a subsection requiring an official plan to ***“contain policies that identify goals, objectives and actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and to provide for adaptations to a changing climate, including through increasing resiliency.”***
- Interestingly, both the vision of the 2010 Unity Plan and the 2017 Strategic Plan envision a resilient local economy. Through the consultation process to develop the Town’s Strategic Vision, participating ratepayers identified the need for a strong, diverse and resilient economy that provided a variety of year-round full

time and well-paying job opportunities. They felt that this could be accomplished through attracting innovative and creative 'knowledge based' industry companies to the community by leveraging quality of life Huntsville offers.

- Including the concept of resilience in an official plan means creating policies which consider the pillars of sustainability, environment and economy and guide land use change so that a community's unique cultural and natural features and character that are valued by its residents are protected.

POLICY CONTEXT:

Provincial Policy Statement (2014):

Pt IV The long-term prosperity and social well-being of Ontario depends upon planning for strong, sustainable and resilient communities for people of all ages, a clean and healthy environment, and a strong and competitive economy...

Strong, liveable and healthy communities promote and enhance human health and social well-being, are economically and environmentally sound, and are resilient to climate change.

- 1.0 Efficient land use and development patterns support sustainability by promoting strong, liveable, healthy and resilient communities, protecting the environment and public health and safety, and facilitating economic growth.
- 1.2.3 Planning authorities should coordinate emergency management and other economic, environmental and social planning considerations to support efficient and resilient communities.
- 1.3.1 Planning authorities shall promote economic development and competitiveness by:
 - c) encouraging compact, mixed-use development that incorporates compatible employment uses to support liveable and resilient communities;

Current Muskoka Official Plan:

Although the overall intent of the document is to create a resilient community, there are no specific references to the concept of resilience.

Muskoka Official Plan Policy Directions Report:

34 The MOP should include policies that recognize the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change by fostering resiliency of communities and requiring the consideration of climate change through the planning process, including environmental protection, health and resource considerations.

First Draft Muskoka Official Plan:

B18.1 It is the objective of this Plan to:

- f) Adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change through the creation of resilient communities;

B18.9

- a) Muskoka’s weather is changing. Muskoka is to expect hotter, drier summers with more heat waves and more intense rainfall events, and warmer and milder winters. These changes will impact how the District and Area Municipalities plan for development and redevelopment, infrastructure and the public realm to ensure the area remains resilient to changing weather from economic, health, social, emergency services and environmental perspectives;
- b) The District recognizes that the creation of resilient communities and ecosystems will be required to address climate change. In doing so, the Districts supports a climate change lens being applied to the review of policy and development applications.

F1.1 b) It is the objective of this Plan to:

- x) Minimize the potential for invasive species to impact biodiversity and improve the ability to adapt to and mitigate climate change by fostering resilient ecosystems;

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.

Huntsville Official Plan:

Although the overall intent of the document is to create a resilient community, there are no specific references to the concept of resilience.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Climate change is a critical issue for all of Muskoka and will likely manifest itself in more extreme weather events that will result in more intense impacts on hazard lands (ie flooding and wildland fires). The Muskoka Watershed Council has written a [background paper](#) on how climate change is anticipated to impact Muskoka. This paper recommends that through Official Plan Review processes, and in consultation with MNRF and DMM, area municipalities should ensure that regulations and advice governing built struc-

tures in floodplains are appropriate, and based on accurate, up-to-date information on likely patterns of water level fluctuations on our lakes and waterways in coming years. At present the Official Plan does not contain policies respecting climate change adaptation.

- Broader global, country-wide, provincial and regional factors influence the economy in Muskoka and the Town, particularly trends in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).
- The majority of the considerations outlined in all of the other Policy Background Papers are applicable to the need for policy development to facilitate community resiliency.

SUMMARY:

A review of best practices from other municipalities across Muskoka has revealed that the following policy approaches may assist in addressing some of the considerations:

- Resiliency refers to more than just climate change and economy and the policies should reflect this theme throughout the Official Plan.
- The introduction and context section of the Official Plan should be based upon principles which ensure that Huntsville continues to be a healthy and resilient community.
- Ensuring the comments of the summary sections of the Environment and Natural Hazards Policy Background Papers are addressed in official plan policy will enable environmental resiliency and adaptation to climate change.
- Ensuring the comments of the summary sections of the Environment, Natural Hazards, Transportation and Healthy Community Policy Background Papers are addressed in official plan policy will facilitate economic as well as community health resiliency.