

## Town of Huntsville Official Plan Review - POLICY BACKGROUND PAPER

### Growing Community – Urban Settlement Area and Hidden Valley Settlement Area

#### BACKGROUND:

- Through the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), the Province recognizes that there is a variety of different settlement areas across Ontario, each having varying levels of size, density, activity, land use, and infrastructure availability. These settlement areas are required to be the focus of growth, which typically consists of intensification, redevelopment and growth within designated growth areas. In this regard, the overall intent of the PPS results in planning authorities setting out policies to detail the particular scale and function of each settlement area as well as to identify and promote intensification.
- Urban Settlement Areas are intended to function as key service nodes and the primary focus of permanent development and land use activity. Most Urban Settlement Areas in the District of Muskoka consist of a full range of urban uses, functioning as complete communities in which people live, work, learn and play. Generally, Urban Settlement Areas are expected to be the focus of growth and accommodate most urban forms of development. Urban Settlement Areas are to be fully serviced by public water and wastewater facilities in the long-term.
- The Muskoka Official Plan (MOP) identifies two Urban Settlement Areas within the Town, the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area and the Hidden Valley Settlement Area.
- The Town of Huntsville's Urban Settlement Area, as delineated in the Town of Huntsville's Official Plan, has been the historic focus of permanent growth, urban land use and activity in the Town.
- The Hidden Valley Settlement Area has also been identified by the District as an Urban Settlement Area, since full municipal services are available. However, the focus of the Hidden Valley Settlement Area has historically been on resort commercial and recreational resort residential growth.
- The Draft MOP contemplates that Urban Settlement Areas will continue to be the primary focus of permanent growth and development. The draft policies indicate that the Built Up Area of each Urban Settlement Area is to be delineated by local municipalities and policies are to be established to encourage redevelopment and intensification, including growth targets, within those areas. Further, minimum density targets are established for designated growth areas (i.e. greenfield areas between the built up area and the Urban Settlement Area boundary).
- The Town of Huntsville Official Plan envisions the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area to be the major settlement area in Huntsville, with a full range of land uses, urban densities and community facilities generally on full municipal water and wastewater (Section 4). The Huntsville Urban Settlement Area consists of a number of different land uses as shown on Schedule A-1 to the official plan. Various policies guide land use change and development within each of the designations.
- The Town Official Plan also identifies Hidden Valley as a fully municipally serviced resort commercial and seasonal residential settlement area (Section 5). The policies generally intend for Hidden Valley to function as major tourist and mixed density recreational residential destination. The policies further recognize that there is a significant opportunity for expansion of the resort commercial and seasonal residential uses,

however there are physical constraints to development. Furthermore, industrial uses are not permitted in Hidden Valley.

**POLICY CONTEXT:**

**Provincial Policy Statement (2014)**

- 1.1.3.1 Settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development, and their vitality and regeneration shall be promoted.
- 1.1.3.2 Land use patterns within settlement areas shall be based on:
  - a. densities and a mix of land uses which:
    - 1. efficiently use land and resources;
    - 2. are appropriate for, and efficiently use, the infrastructure and public service facilities which are planned or available, and avoid the need for their unjustified and/or uneconomical expansion;
    - 3. minimize negative impacts to air quality and climate change, and promote energy efficiency;
    - 4. support active transportation;
    - 5. transit-supportive, where transit is planned, exists or may be developed; and
    - 6. are freight-supportive; and
  - b. a range of uses and opportunities for intensification and redevelopment in accordance with the criteria in policy 1.1.3.3, where this can be accommodated.
- 1.1.3.3 Planning authorities shall identify appropriate locations and promote opportunities for intensification and redevelopment.
- 1.1.3.4 Appropriate development standards should be promoted which facilitate intensification, redevelopment and compact form, while avoiding or mitigating risks to public health and safety.
- 1.1.3.5 Planning authorities shall establish and implement minimum targets for intensification and redevelopment within built-up areas, based on local conditions.
- 1.1.3.6 New development taking place in designated growth areas should occur adjacent to the existing built-up area and shall have a compact form, mix of uses and densities that allow for the efficient use of land, infrastructure and public service facilities.
- 1.1.3.7 Planning authorities shall establish and implement phasing policies to ensure:
  - a. that specified targets for intensification and redevelopment are achieved prior to, or concurrent with, new development within designated growth areas; and
  - b. the orderly progression of development within designated growth areas and the timely provision of the infrastructure and public service facilities required to meet current and projected needs.
- 1.1.3.8 A planning authority may identify a settlement area or allow the expansion of a settlement area boundary only at the time of a comprehensive review and only where it has been demonstrated

that:

- a. sufficient opportunities for growth are not available through intensification, redevelopment and designated growth areas to accommodate the projected needs over the identified planning horizon;
- b. the infrastructure and public service facilities which are planned or available are suitable for the development over the long term, are financially viable over their life cycle, and protect public health and safety and the natural environment;
- c. in prime agricultural areas:
  1. the lands do not comprise specialty crop areas;
  2. alternative locations have been evaluated, and
    - i. there are no reasonable alternatives which avoid prime agricultural areas; and
    - ii. there are no reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in prime agricultural areas;
- d. the new or expanding settlement area is in compliance with the minimum distance separation formulae; and
- e. impacts from new or expanding settlement areas on agricultural operations which are adjacent or close to the settlement area are mitigated to the extent feasible.

1.4.3 Planning authorities shall provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing types and densities to meet projected requirements of current and future residents of the regional market area by:

- a. establishing and implementing minimum targets for the provision of housing which is affordable to low and moderate income households. However, where planning is conducted by an upper-tier municipality, the upper-tier municipality in consultation with the lower-tier municipalities may identify a higher target(s) which shall represent the minimum target(s) for these lower-tier municipalities;
- b. permitting and facilitating:
  1. all forms of housing required to meet the social, health and well-being requirements of current and future residents, including special needs requirements; and
  2. all forms of residential intensification, including second units, and redevelopment in accordance with policy 1.1.3.3;
- c. directing the development of new housing towards locations where appropriate levels of infrastructure and public service facilities are or will be available to support current and projected needs;
- d. promoting densities for new housing which efficiently use land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities, and support the use of active transportation and transit in areas where it exists or is to be developed; and
- e. establishing development standards for residential intensification, redevelopment and new residential development which minimize the cost of housing and facilitate compact form, while maintaining appropriate levels of public health and safety.

1.6.6.1 Planning for sewage and water services shall:

- a. direct and accommodate expected growth or development in a manner that promotes the efficient use and optimization of existing:
  1. municipal sewage services and municipal water services; and

2. private communal sewage services and private communal water services, where municipal sewage services and municipal water services are not available.

- 1.6.6.2 Municipal sewage services and municipal water services are the preferred form of servicing for settlement areas. Intensification and redevelopment within settlement areas on existing municipal sewage services and municipal water services should be promoted, wherever feasible.
- 1.6.7.4 A land use pattern, density and mix of uses should be promoted that minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support current and future use of transit and active transportation.

### **Current District of 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 Settlement Areas and supporting appropriate development in Community, Rural and Waterfront designations, which maintains the character and integrity of each of these areas.
- C.18 Major employers, other than tourism and resource related industries, should locate in Urban Settlement Areas consistent with the capability of the community to accommodate the use. Locations outside Urban Settlement Areas may be considered for uses where the location relates to the character or special needs of the business.
- 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 Settlement Areas 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.
- C.50 Housing intensification in the Urban Centre designation, which may involve the development of "Brownfields", shall include, but not be limited to the following:
- a) The conversion of single detached dwellings, in appropriate locations, into multiple residential units;
  - b) The creation of new residential units on vacant or underdeveloped lands through infilling in the Urban Centre designation; and
  - c) The creation of residential units above commercial uses.
- D (Pre- Urban Settlement Areas are rural, urban and waterfront service centres. Each Urban Centre is

amble) different in terms of scale and function which will be detailed through local policy. Urban Settlement Areas are expected to grow in population and physical size as the works necessary to support such growth are made available. Local policy should support identified Urban Settlement Areas and encourage most urban forms of development to locate appropriately. All Urban Settlement Areas are serviced with both public sewer and water facilities and expansions to those systems will be undertaken based on need and subject to the necessary environmental approvals.

The influence of Urban Settlement Areas extends beyond the identified limits of the community. Areas outside Urban Settlement Areas should relate to and depend upon these communities for the provision of a broad range of goods, services and employment opportunities.

The size and density of Urban Settlement Areas are of District interest related to the maintenance of the surrounding rural community; the management of significant natural areas; the provision of required municipal services; and the provision of residential and employment opportunities to meet the projected population and employment forecasts for Muskoka.

- D.1 Growth that requires a range of urban services will be directed to Urban Settlement Areas as identified on Schedule A.
- D.3 The following communities are designated as Urban Settlement Areas:  
Huntsville (urban area)  
Hidden Valley (Huntsville)
- D.4 Local Official Plans will address specific development issues in Urban Settlement Areas and in particular they will determine the scale and function of development and ensure that:
- a) The land needs of the municipality to meet urban population and employment targets are met;
  - b) Adequate sewer and water services are available to accommodate proposed development;
  - c) An adequate transportation system including arterial and collector roads as well as pedestrian and cycling facilities is developed and maintained;
  - d) A broad range of housing is provided;
  - e) An evaluation to ensure the qualities of the natural and cultural heritage of the community are maintained;
  - f) Hazard lands are identified and protected;
  - g) The character of the surrounding rural area is recognized and maintained; and
  - h) Development is located and designed in a safe manner to facilitate an appropriate level of police and emergency services.
- D.5 Substantial development will proceed on the basis of municipal sewer and water facilities. Where municipal sewer and water services are not yet available within the Urban Centre, only infilling of a minor nature will be permitted except where more detailed policy provides

otherwise and under such servicing conditions as deemed necessary, and subject to criteria.

- D.6 An expansion to the boundaries of an Urban Centre will proceed by Local Official Plan amendment and will be considered based on a growth management study that assesses the need of the community.
- D.7 It is anticipated that most major employment generators, health and social service facilities and educational institutions will locate in Urban Settlement Areas.
- D.35 Industrial, commercial and institutional uses that require urban services will be directed to Urban Settlement Areas.
- E.8 Pits and quarries are permitted uses throughout the Rural designation, but generally will not be permitted in the Waterfront, Urban Centre or Community designations. Where such uses now exist in these designations, they will cease to exist in the long run, and in the interim will be regulated to minimize any impact.
- H.6 Within Urban Settlement Areas, connection to municipal water supply and sanitary sewage disposal service will be compulsory and prerequisite for all development except in the following limited instances. Development may be exempt from connection to such works where, among other matters:
- a) The development represents limited infilling in an established built area or is an existing lot of record where such service is not currently available and where no present or immediately foreseeable water or sanitary problem would be further compounded; or
  - b) A specific capital funding reserve has been approved to provide public service on the subject land or area, but the works are not scheduled for construction; or
  - c) The development is a singular low intensity permitted use on a large lot in an undeveloped area and services are not immediately available; or
  - d) Approved servicing schedules provide for an exemption.
- I.19 The District shall encourage major health care and social service facilities to locate in Urban Settlement Areas.
- I.27 Institutions will be encouraged to locate in Urban Settlement Areas and Communities.

**Muskoka Official Plan Policy Directions Report:**

- #2 The MOP should include policies that require the local municipalities to identify the extent of the built up area in each of the Urban Settlement Areas in consultation with the District where intensification and redevelopment will be directed.
- #3 The MOP should identify the extent of the urban service area in each of the Urban Settlement Areas and include policies that require the optimization of existing services before considering the extension of services as a first principle.

- #6 The MOP should include a policy that indicates that firstly, Urban Settlement Areas 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 Settlement Areas and Communities) on the schedules to the Official Plan.
- #8 The MOP should include policies that require that 70% of new permanent housing growth in the District be directed to the Urban Settlement Areas and that the Urban Centre target for Huntsville be 60%.
- #11 The MOP should establish a minimum intensification target of 25% District wide, with each Area Municipality developing specific criteria for Urban Settlement Areas through the preparation of intensification strategies in consultation with the District.
- #12 The MOP should include policies that require each local municipality develop an intensification strategy that sets out how the intensification target is to be implemented.
- #29 The MOP should establish a minimum density target for new development in the designated growth area of each of the Urban Settlement Areas in consultation with the Area Municipalities.
- #30 The MOP should establish housing mix targets for new development in the designated growth area of each of the Urban Settlement Areas as outlined below and in accordance with the District of Muskoka Growth Strategy:  
Huntsville: Low - 60%, Medium - 25%, High - 15%

**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 Settlement Areas 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 Settlement Areas 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 Urban Settlement Areas.]
- B6 It is a policy of this Plan that a target of 70% of new dwellings occupied on a permanent basis be directed to the Urban Settlement Areas:  
Huntsville – 60%  
District Total – 70%

- B8 The population, employment and housing projections set out in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 5 of this Plan do not have an impact on the ability of the District and the Area Municipalities to consider applications to develop lands that are within an Urban Centre or Community Area that existed on the date this Plan came into effect.
- B9 Although no settlement area boundary expansions are anticipated during the life cycle of this Plan, should an expansion to an Urban Centre or Community Area be proposed, it can only occur as part of a comprehensive review as set out in the Provincial Policy Statement in effect. An Amendment to this Plan will be required for an expansion to an Urban Centre or a Community Area
- B10a) The minimum District-wide intensification target is 25% within the built-up area of Urban Settlement Areas.
- B10b) The built-up area will be defined by the Area Municipalities in consultation with the District and will be included on Schedules to the Area Municipal Official Plans.
- B10c) Each Area Municipality shall prepare an intensification plan to identify appropriate locations within each Urban Centre and promote opportunities for intensification and redevelopment.
- B11 New Development in Designated Growth Areas
- a) The new development area will generally serve as a logical extension to the existing built up area, is compact and makes efficient use of land;
  - b) The scale and location of the proposed development will be in conformity with Section B13 of this Plan, as applicable;
  - c) A range of housing choices will be provided, subject to servicing constraints;
  - d) The amount of growth in new development areas is in accordance with an overall growth management strategy that promotes opportunities for intensification and redevelopment in accordance with Section B9 of this Plan; and,
  - e) All of the other infrastructure and public service facilities required to service the new development area is available or to be provided, with such infrastructure and public service facilities being used as efficiently as possible.
- B12.1 Where major development is proposed in a designated growth area, development and redevelopment may only be permitted subject to the preparation of a Comprehensive Development Plan
- B13.1 b) Municipal sewage services and municipal water services are the preferred form of servicing for Urban Settlement Areas. Intensification and redevelopment within Urban Settlement Areas on existing municipal sewage services and municipal water services should be promoted, wherever feasible.
- 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.

- B13.2 b) For each Urban Centre, the boundaries of municipal sewage service areas and municipal water service areas, along with Single Service and Future Service Areas are shown on Schedules \_\_\_\_\_. An Amendment to this Plan shall be required if an expansion to one or more of the service areas is proposed.
- B13.3 b) The approval authority may allow lot creation in Urban Settlement Areas only if there is confirmation of sufficient reserve sewage system capacity and reserve water system capacity within municipal sewage services and municipal water services
- 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 (subject to detailed criteria as outlined).
- B13.3 e) Partial services shall only be permitted in an Urban Centre where they are necessary to address failed individual on-site sewage services and individual on-site water services in existing development or to support development of an existing lot of record where the extension of municipal sewer services or municipal water services is not required.
- B15 a) It is the intent of this Plan to encourage the timely provision of infrastructure as urban development occurs. On this basis, the identification of infrastructure upgrades and service delivery requirements should be carried out early in the planning process in new development areas.
- B15 b) This long range planning should take the full build out of the Urban Settlement Areas or Community Areas into account and attempt to rationalize how long it will take for the area to be developed.
- B15 c) External factors should also be considered, most notably the capacity of water and sewer infrastructure and of transportation systems located within, adjacent to and in the vicinity of the development area as well as the proximity to the built-up area. In addition, population and employment forecasts should also be considered.
- C3 a) In order to encourage the efficient use of land and infrastructure and to support environmentally and fiscally sustainable communities that are economically vibrant, liveable, healthy and safe, the minimum average density for new development outside of the built up area in the Urban Settlement Areas shall be 17 units per net hectare. This policy only applies to lands that are not

within an existing draft approved or registered Plan of Subdivision/Condominium.

- C3 b) In order to achieve the above, the planned housing mix as per Section C4 of the Plan shall support the development of a range of housing types and tenures.
- C3 c) It is recognized that achieving this density on a site-specific basis may potentially be difficult given terrain or environmental constraints, and as a consequence, this policy is intended to be a target to be achieved wherever possible. This average density would provide for the development of lots that have an average frontage of approximately 15 metres.
- C4 The housing mix targets for new development in the designated growth area of Huntsville is: Low - 60%, Medium - 25%, High - 10%
- D3 a) Objective:  
Maintain and promote the Urban Settlement Areas and Community Areas, particularly downtown areas and main streets as the focal points for commerce activity in the District;
- I1.1 Objectives for Urban Settlement Areas:
- a) Strengthen the settlement structure of Muskoka as a composite of urban, rural and waterfront areas by focusing growth to Urban Settlement Areas and supporting appropriate development in the Community Area, Rural Area and Waterfront Area designations, which maintains the character and integrity of each of these areas;
  - b) Focus the majority of expected permanent population growth in the Urban Settlement Areas where full services are available;
  - c) Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure in Urban Settlement Areas to meet the needs of present and future residents and businesses;
  - d) Ensure that an adequate supply of land and housing choices are available in the Urban Settlement Areas for present and future residents of all ages, abilities, incomes and household sizes;
  - e) Promote the efficient use of existing and planned infrastructure and public service facilities by supporting opportunities for various forms of commercial and residential intensification, where appropriate; and,
  - f) Encourage increases in density in new development areas to maximize the use of infrastructure and minimize the amount of land required for new development;
  - g) Promote a variety of complementary and compatible land uses in residential areas including special needs housing, community facilities, schools, small scale commercial uses and recreational open space areas;
  - h) Encourage Area Municipalities to establish comprehensive design guidelines and policies to foster the establishment of communities that are safe, functional and attractive; and,
  - i) Encourage the establishment and maintenance of a system of public open spaces, parkland and recreational facilities that meets the needs of present and future residents.

I1.2 Permitted Uses in Urban Settlement Areas:

A full range of permitted uses is permitted within the Urban Settlement Areas in accordance with the requirements of this Plan and the Area Municipal Official Plans, except where municipal water and sewage services are not available. In general, the majority of permanent residential uses, major employment generators and uses requiring municipal services will be directed to Urban Settlement Areas.

- I1.3 The boundaries of the Urban Settlement Areas as shown on Schedule \_\_\_\_ to this Plan shall be shown on Area Municipal Official Plans.
- L12.2 The boundaries of the Urban Settlement Areas and Community Areas identified on Schedule A of this Plan are considered to be firm boundaries. An Amendment to this Plan will be required for an expansion to an Urban Area or a Community Area.

### **Town Strategic Documents:**

- Strategic Plan 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**

#### **Guiding Principles (Section 2)**

- 2.5.4 Characteristics of the Town’s Growth Strategy
- 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;
  - d) Hidden Valley will continue to develop as a resort commercial and recreational residential destination

## **Policies for the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area (Section 4)**

- 4.1.1 The Huntsville Urban Settlement Area is the major settlement area in Huntsville, providing a nucleus for a full range of land uses and community facilities at urban densities and generally on full municipal sewer and water services.
- 4.1.2 The Huntsville Urban Settlement Area contains sufficient lands within its boundaries to accommodate projected population and household growth beyond the next 20 years, over and above what would be considered on the basis of current trends analysis, in order to anticipate changing demographic and lifestyle characteristics of the population.
- 4.1.3 Schedule A-1 identifies the boundaries of the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area. The Schedule indicates the existing developed area and the area proposed for expansion over the planning period.
- 4.1.5 The Huntsville Urban Settlement Area will be developed in as compact a manner as is possible in order to increase the overall economic benefits of urban development.
- 4.1.6 The need to provide residential densities which are more cost and energy efficient will be balanced by a strong consumer desire for single detached dwellings on relatively larger lots. The Huntsville Urban Settlement Area will continue to develop a strong single detached dwelling base, while providing opportunities for multiple unit dwellings at medium and higher densities, in order to assist in the provision of housing for an ageing population, entry-level housing and affordable housing.
- 4.1.8 To ensure that there is corresponding industrial/commercial development to the anticipated residential growth, all opportunities to facilitate such development will be considered.
- 4.5.1.2 Residential Land Use Policies
- The Residential designation will allow a mix of residential densities and dwelling types, from single detached dwellings to higher density apartments.
- 4.5.1.9 In the Residential designation, development shall not exceed the following gross densities:
- a) twenty units per gross hectare (8/acre) for low density development (primarily single detached);
  - b) forty units per gross hectare (16/acre) for medium density multiple unit development (semi detached, row or town housing);
  - c) sixty units per gross hectare (24/acre) for high density multiple unit development (apartments, stacked housing).
- 4.5.1.10 The density provisions may be exceeded for multiple unit residential development where bonuses are provided by the developer and are legally secured by appropriate agreements with the Town.

#### 4.5.2 Residential – Multiple Designation

Notwithstanding the density provisions of Section 4.5.1.9, the minimum density of development in the Residential – Multiple Designation shall be 30 units per gross hectare (12 units per acre).

#### **Policies for the Hidden Valley Settlement Area (Section 5)**

- 5.1.1 Hidden Valley has historically developed as a recreational and residential settlement drawing from its location on varied topography adjacent to a major inland lake and Provincial Highway Number 60.
- 5.1.2 Hidden Valley exhibits a defined character comprising extensive commercial, recreational commercial areas and residential development generally on full municipal water and sewer services
- 5.1.3 Development in the settlement is largely concentrated along a continuous road loop which surrounds a rock promontory and on lands along the westerly boundary. Clusters of development are grouped along the loop and interspersed between vast areas of passive or active open spaces so as to create an open air, unconfined, recreational community.
- 5.1.4 Significant development opportunities exist with respect to expansion of existing commercial facilities and the establishment of new such facilities and residential units.
- 5.1.5 Hidden Valley is located on lands which exhibit physical constraints to development, primarily:
  - a) the central promontory generally consists of a major bedrock outcropping, and
  - b) major deposits of organic or muck soils are located in pockets surrounding the loop area
- 5.1.6 Policies in this section are intended to reinforce the vitality of Hidden Valley as a major tourist recreational destination.
- 5.2.2 Industrial uses shall not be permitted to locate within the limits of Hidden Valley.
- 5.2.8 A Secondary Plan may be prepared to consider expansion of the Tourist Commercial uses in Hidden Valley.
- 5.4.1 New residential development shall proceed by infilling or by controlled expansion, and shall be at a low density of development
- 5.5.2 Golf Course uses may be permitted in any land use designation except Residential.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS:**

- The Muskoka Growth Strategy (2013, Phase II) indicates a number of trends regarding development within Urban Settlement Areas:

- While growth has historically been largely focused in rural areas, over the past five years, many Urban Settlement Areas have experienced a shift from rural towards urban development. It is anticipated that this trend will continue over the next 30 years, driven by the 55-74 age cohort and the 75+ age cohort, which are both more interested in urban housing forms with close proximity to amenities and/or medium/high density housing forms.
- The District Growth Strategy (2013 Phase 2 Update) indicates that forty five percent (45%) of all new permanent growth (2705 units) is forecast to develop on full municipal services in Huntsville. This represents an increase from the current trend, in which about 35% of new permanent housing has been constructed in the Huntsville Urban Centre on municipal services.
- In accordance with Provincial requirements, the District's policy directions and the Draft Muskoka Official Plan identify new policies regarding the management of growth, including intensification and requirements for density, as follows:
  - Urban Settlement Areas are intended as the primary focus of growth and development, represented by a target of 60% that requires new permanent housing growth to be directed to the Urban Settlement Areas. Historically, only 35% of permanent housing growth has occurred in serviced areas, so this target represents a significant change. Further analysis will be necessary to determine how the Town could move towards achieving that target.
  - It is intended that the built-up area of Urban Settlement Areas be delineated, and an intensification target of 25% be established, meaning that 25% of new development will take the form of infill and redevelopment within the built-up area. What is important to this exercise will be to understand where and to what extent boundaries are delineated to ensure that sufficient lands are included. Typically, service limits will govern where and how boundaries are delineated but in areas that may be constrained by topography or access, a detailed analysis is required to ensure the right location and amount of lands are included.
  - The District's policy directions and the Draft Muskoka Official Plan identify the requirement to include a housing density mix target (60% low, 25% medium and 10% high density) within the designated growth area of Huntsville. This also represents a significant shift from current trends and, as such, as policy strategy will need to be proposed that identifies how this mix could be achieved and monitored. Historically, according to the Phase II Growth Strategy (2013), building permit activity for high-density forms has softened between 2008-2012, with low-density dwellings accounting for 89% of building permits. As part of this overall density assignment strategy, provisions will need to be included that propose minimum and maximum densities, which generally intend to maintain character but also achieve the District's targets.
  - A minimum average density of 17 units per net hectare for new development outside of the built up area in the Urban Settlement Areas will need to be identified in the Town's Official Plan. An examination, however, would be appropriate of a current density average to determine if this new density is achievable.

- While the Town does have sufficient land supply to accommodate growth to 2031, there are parcels of land that have remained vacant notwithstanding the development approvals received.
- Historically, residential development in the Urban Settlement Area has largely been low-density in nature. In addition, the Town Official Plan Urban Settlement Area policies do not promote intensification and infill, they only provide criteria to be considered when evaluating applications for such development. In contrast, the District's policy directions and the Draft Muskoka Official Plan establish minimum density targets to be achieved in designated growth areas. Recent shifts in market trends towards medium density forms of housing have been observed broadly across the District, which support this direction.
- Currently, the Town Official Plan identifies the servicing area boundary as synonymous with the Urban Settlement Area boundary. This approach does not prioritize intensification or infill, nor does it guide the phasing of designated growth as intended by the PPS or the draft MOP. Within the Urban Settlement Area, the Town's Official Plan should include policies that guide intensification and infill, specifically where and how it should occur, as well as how lands should be phased, including ensuring that development is contiguous to existing developed lands, logical expansion of servicing, and it can be appropriately accessed.
- Opportunities for intensification may include provisions for an increase in height; however, given the varied topography within the urban settlement area, policies should be developed to ensure that development with increased height occurs in appropriate locations and natural vistas/panoramas are not compromised.
- At present, a large quantity of land within the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area is identified within a "Future Urban" designation. This designation is intended to act as a holding category, which requires more detailed planning studies to be completed to identify uses and the layout of development through a secondary plan. An examination is required to determine if this approach to identifying a "Future Urban" designation is appropriate in the Town's Official Plan or if another provision should be implemented.
- The Huntsville Urban Settlement Area provides opportunities for residents to be within close proximity to a full range of amenities. Supporting and promoting permanent growth in the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area is supportive of Provincial policy, which intends for municipalities to promote the development of complete communities where residents can live, shop and work, and where there are opportunities for active transportation. Further, intensification and developing more compact communities improves access to these amenities and enables residents and visitors to walk rather than having to use their vehicle.
- At present, the Town Official Plan encourages resort commercial and recreational resort residential growth in Hidden Valley. There are several different policy areas within this designation, however, in contrast to the special policy (tourist commercial) areas, the residential policies don't contain specific density provisions/requirements. Specific density targets will need to be examined to determine if these are appropriate given the unique circumstances of Hidden Valley and if so, what they may need to be.
- The Highway 60 Corridor policies were developed to ensure this corridor continues to act as a transitional area between the Urban Settlement Area and the Hidden Valley Settlement Area which have different functions. In this regard, the Urban Settlement Area permits a wide range of land uses and the Hidden Valley Settlement Area has a resort commercial and recreational resort residential use focus. Due in part to

the existence of the highway, the location of the water and sewage treatment plants, and the smaller size and narrowness of the shoreline lots, extensive development has not occurred. At present, these policies do not have any applicable shoreline development requirements.

## **SUMMARY:**

### **General:**

- Generally, the focus of permanent growth is intended to be within an Urban Settlement Area. The function of the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area and the Hidden Valley Settlement Area will need to be considered. The Town's current Official Plan considers the Huntsville Urban Settlement Area to be the focus of growth and development, while Hidden Valley Settlement Area has been focused on recreational residential development and tourist commercial development. This general approach is appropriate. As the current or draft MOP do not provide specific guidance or respecting a typical Urban Settlement Areas versus those with a resort commercial and recreational resort residential focus, the Muskoka and Town Official Plans should provide clarity in this regard.
- At present, lands containing space extensive open space (golf courses) and industrial uses (pits and quarries) are included in the Urban Settlement Area boundaries. As residential intensification may be incompatible on golf course lands and pit and quarry uses, an examination of their location and future inclusion within the Urban Settlement Area boundary should be undertaken.

### **Huntsville Urban Settlement Area**

- The Huntsville Urban Settlement Area designation should continue to permit a broad range of land uses, and, provide opportunities to accommodate a range of uses, housing types and densities, as discussed in the Healthy Community background policy papers, which can better support active transportation and function as a more complete community with opportunities for residents to live, work, learn and play, as intended by the PPS.
- As the MOP will identify the extent of the Urban Service Area in the Urban Settlement Area and include policies that require the optimization of existing services before considering the extension of services as a first principle, the Town Official Plan will need to include policies that conform with this intent.
- Policies will be required to support the District's policies and directions regarding the promotion of intensification within the Built Up Area. Specifically, this area will need to be delineated and supportive policies established. Intensification is envisioned to take the form of secondary suites, infill lot creation, and redevelopment of existing and underutilized lots. An Intensification Strategy will need to be prepared to guide how and where intensification should occur, which includes identifying opportunities within the built up area of the Urban Settlement Area as well as to refine the application of the target, as it may apply.
- Policies which recognize and continue to facilitate the growth of mixed use and residential areas within the Built Up Area (southeast end) and the redevelopment of others (Brendale Square) should be included in the official plan.

- Growth in designated growth areas of Urban Settlement Area is envisioned to represent logical extensions of the built up area, be compact and serviceable, make efficient use of land, and provide a range of housing choices. The ability to permit growth and intensification in these areas may be limited by servicing and topographical constraints. The District of Muskoka is creating a servicing model to better identify areas of opportunity and constraint for growth. This will be reflected in the servicing boundary mapping that will be included in the MOP. This information should be reviewed with a view to properly evaluating the current location of urban settlement area boundaries together with existing developments.
- Serviceable designated growth areas currently located within a Future Use subdesignation should be redesignated to specific designations to provide certainty for future growth and development.

For those lands designated for growth, and considered as available supply, but may not be serviceable at this time and have been given development approvals and development has not proceeded, a policy should be included in the Town's Official Plan that identifies a strategy for managing these parcels of land, which may include, but not be limited to: the addition of development expiration dates (also known as sunset clauses), performance based criteria, and/or provide the option that Council may remove approvals or recommend that the District withdraw approval if an existing development does not proceed in a timely manner. Some of the lands that currently include extensive open space (golf courses) and industrial (pits and quarries) uses may warrant exclusion.

- As part of the intensification of the built up area and permitting compact and mixed density growth in designated growth areas, the policies should introduce appropriate tests for height that are based upon the topographical attributes of the Urban Settlement Area.

#### **Hidden Valley:**

- The policies should recognize the appeal of this area due to the location's varied topography adjacent to a major inland lake and Provincial Highway Number 60, its proximity to Algonquin Park, as well as its major ski operations.
- The policies should also be redrafted to identify the importance of this area to the local and District economy.
- The policies should continue to promote and permit resort commercial and recreational resort residential uses, their intensification as well as their continued use.
- The policies should address density and intensification requirements for all uses.
- Appropriate tests for height that are based upon the topographical attributes of this area should be introduced.

### **Highway 60 Corridor:**

- A review of these policies should be undertaken to ensure that the permitted uses, servicing, density and shoreline requirements are addressed as well as the appropriateness of a continued Special Policy Area approach.
- Incorporate Hwy 60 Design guidelines.

### **Additional Considerations:**

Upon review by the Official Plan Working Group and Planning Committee, the following items were identified as requiring further consideration:

- Should Hidden Valley be identified as an urban centre with a full range of permitted uses/designations?
- Include policies which emphasize the need to establish and implement design guidelines.