



## DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** MAYOR A. NUTTALL AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

**FROM:** J. ROBERTS, MANAGER OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, POLICY AND ANALYSIS

**WARD:** ALL

**NOTED:** M. BANFIELD, RPP, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
B. ARANIYASUNDARAN, P. ENG., PMP, GENERAL MANAGER OF  
INFRASTRUCTURE, AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

**RE:** APPROVED OFFICIAL PLAN 2023

**DATE:** MAY 10, 2023

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Memorandum is to advise members of Council of the status of the Official Plan. On April 11, 2023, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) approved the Council Adopted Official Plan with 73 modifications. The Ministry's decision repeals and replaces the in-effect Official Plan. The approval of the Official Plan is an important step in guiding Barrie to become a vibrant medium size city and encompasses population and employment growth to 2051.

### **Background**

Development of a new Official Plan began in 2018 defining a new vision for the City of Barrie. Through much public consultation, the plan was created, defining a new community structure and extending the planning horizon to 2051 with a growth target of 298,000 people and 150,000 jobs.

In February 2022, Council adopted the Official Plan. The Adopted Official Plan was then sent to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) for approval. The adopted Official Plan was posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO 019-5530) for the statutory 30-day commenting period on September 9, 2022. The Adopted Official Plan was posted onto the ERO once again in December 2022 for an additional 30 days, allowing the public to submit comments for the Province to take under advisement.

### **Modifications**

The Official Plan was adopted by Council on February 14, 2022. At the time of adoption, the Official Plan was consistent with the then in-effect Provincial policy framework. During the 15 months between adoption and approval by MMAH, significant changes have occurred to the Provincial policy framework. Specifically, during the 15 month period that the Adopted Official Plan was under approval, the Province passed Bill 108, *More Homes, More Choice Act*, 2019, Bill 109, *More Homes for Everyone Act*, 2022 and Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022.

Some of the modifications in the approved Official Plan were made to address Provincial policy direction related to land use compatibility, source water protection, and government priorities related to housing and streamlining the development process, amongst other matters. Furthermore, many of the site specific property land use modifications are reflective of comment letters received by the Province through the ERO posting.

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**General Modification Themes****The Province Supports Barrie in Becoming a Fast-Growing Medium Size City**

The Province supports the newly defined community structure which allows Barrie to grow to a medium size city, while striking a balance between managing growth, protecting the environment, supporting economic prosperity and encouraging thriving communities. The modifications added in language to reinforce where the Province wants to see density and intensification happen; Intensification Corridors, Strategic Growth Areas, Major Transit Station Areas and the Urban Growth Centre. These areas will experience built form changes to achieve the heights and densities needed to achieve the City's goal of evolving into a medium size city.

The boundary of the Urban Growth Centre (UGC) was expanded from its original delineation by the Province in 2008; the Province was supportive of the expansion of the UGC and accepted the changes as proposed by the City. This allows more growth and intensification to a larger area in the downtown core as well as clarifies the location/extent of the UGC by allowing its boundaries to follow the established street network.

**Revised Policy Language**

There were approximately 110 modifications to 38 policies changing language from "should" to "shall" and "will" to "may". These language changes are intended to provide flexibility in the interpretation of these policies. In many cases where the Official Plan required a policy action, it simply now encourages one. The Official Plan was written with language that provided very clear direction on how the City will implement the vision of the Plan. The modifications that soften language, increased flexibility and reduced clarity may result in more applications going to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) as a result of disagreement on policy intent and overall interpretation.

**Revised Urban Design Policies**

The Official Plan is intended to implement the City's objectives to become an attractive city, ensure proper transitions between different types of development, and achieve design excellence through its urban design policies. The urban design section of the Official Plan (3.1) Leadership in Design Excellence, detailed several policies to achieving the design vision of the Plan. These policies have been modified to become "guidelines". Of the total 73 modifications made to the Adopted Official Plan, 29 related to urban design, softening language or removing policies all together, making the implementation of these policies – read as guidelines – more challenging. Given recent policy direction under Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act*, 2022, removing the ability for municipalities to comment on exterior design as a matter of Site Plan explains, at least in part, the urban design oriented modifications.

**Density Reductions**

Two of the modifications relate to lowering of density targets for Designated Greenfield Area (DGA) lands in the former Salem and Hewitt's Secondary Plan Areas. The adopted Official Plan proposed DGA-wide density target of 79 persons and jobs per hectare. This target was always intended to be the minimum required to reach the 2051 Growth Projection of 298,000 people and 150,000 jobs. The Province modified the adopted Official Plan to reduce the density target for all DGA lands in the former Salem Secondary Plan area to 52 persons and jobs per hectare and 55 persons and jobs per hectare for a portion of DGA lands in the former Hewitt's Secondary Plan Area. While it was always expected that development on some DGA lands would either exceed or fall below the original target of 79 persons and jobs per hectare, these reduced density targets will impact the City's ability to reach the overall 2051 targets, resulting in additional densities being required in other areas of the City if the overall growth targets are to be achieved.

## **Affordable Housing**

The modifications removed some of the policy mechanisms to require affordable housing. The Province removed all affordable housing policies from requiring all developments with more than 40 units to be required to provide affordable housing and all medium and high density land use designations shall provide 15% of their housing units and changing all requirements to targets. The affordable housing targets are 15% city wide, 20% in the Urban Growth Centre, and 20% in Major Transit Station Areas. While there is still strong language throughout the Official Plan to support the creation of affordable housing, the implementation of these policies will be more difficult to achieve.

## **Mapping / Site Specific Modifications**

<b>Modification</b>	<b>Staff Comments</b>
Changes to Appendix 2 - Phasing Plan – bringing more land into the phase 1 area. Specifically lands west of 20th Sideroad between Lockhart Road and Maplevue Drive East	The Adopted Official Plan introduced language that requires 60% of draft approved plans of subdivision to be registered before development can occur on subsequent phases. The requirement for registration was introduced to ensure that approved subdivisions start building out before additional development applications are received and so that the City can collect development charges for some of the development in order to balance the costs for the installation of infrastructure. While this policy is still in effect, the expansion of phase 1 means that lands in former phase 2 areas, which would have had to wait for 60% phase 1 lands to register, can now be subject to a development application.
Removal of the implementation policies for permitting up to eight storeys along the intensification corridors. (If it is no more than 60% higher or not more dense than the higher/densest building within 450m)	Policy now reads that additional height is permitted so long as it is compatible with height of surrounding buildings within 450m. The subjectivity and inability to measure makes it challenging to interpret and gives opportunity for OLT hearings. In addition, the term “compatible” is always a subjective reference.
Two new special policy areas (defining densities) 1. 2.8.8 Site-Specific Policy Area 1 - Lands located north west of Lockhart Road and Sideroad 20 (Reducing the density from 79 to 55 persons and jobs per hectare) Permitting the area to develop single and semi-detached dwellings, and all forms of townhouse dwellings and uses permitted in neighbourhood area and community hub designations. 2. 2.8.9 Site-Specific Policy Area 2 - 664, 674 and 692 Essa Road and 320 Maplevue Drive West (Increasing the density to 156 persons and jobs per hectare)	1. Decreased density for a portion of the former Hewitt's Secondary Plan. These reduced densities will have an impact on our ability to meet our overall targets. 2. Increased density for this site will help to make up for some of the loss of density in the former Salem and Hewitt's Secondary Plan areas.

<p><b>Site Specific Land Designation Changes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redesignating 75 Mapleview Drive West from "Employment Area - Non Industrial" to "Commercial District"</li> <li>2. Redesignating lands south of Harvie Road and generally between Highway 400 and Thrushwood Drive from "Employment Area - Non Industrial" to "Neighbourhood Area"</li> <li>3. Redesignating 95 Cook Street from "Community Hub" to "Neighbourhood Area"</li> <li>4. Redesignating 30 Sophia Street West from "Neighbourhood Area" to "Medium Density"</li> <li>5. Removing label "see policy 2.8.4"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff were aware of this request this change allows this site to develop with a residential component.</li> <li>2. This is a loss of a 7.6 ha parcel of serviced vacant employment lands. Staff have had conversations with the property owner during the OP process and were aware of this request.</li> <li>3. This modification is reflective of the former church on the property being non-operational. There is a development application on the property for a townhouse development.</li> <li>4. There is an application on this property for a mixed-use development, a ERO comment letter was received from the owner requesting a change to allow for additional height.</li> <li>5. Removal of previous Special Policy Area from a previous OMB decision.</li> </ol>
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### **Next Steps**

Staff are eager to implement this new Official Plan to begin achieving the overall community vision established in the Official Plan. All new development applications that have not yet been deemed complete will be subject to the new Official Plan and will be evaluated under the new policy framework. Many of the new policies now in place will help us achieve our housing targets as outlined in Bill 23 and work with the Province to get more homes built faster.

Staff will continue working on updating the Consolidated Zoning By-law, Urban Design Guidelines and the Affordable Housing Strategy. These three initiatives will help to implement the vision of the Official Plan. Staff intend to bring these documents to Council for consideration in Fall 2023.

The modifications made by the Province to the Official Plan document and mapping have been consolidated. The updated document and maps can now be found on <https://www.barrie.ca/government-news/adopted-strategies-plans/official-plan-amendments>

Any questions or comments can be directed to Michelle Banfield, Director of Development Services at 705-739-4220 ext. 5466 or by email at [michelle.banfield@barrie.ca](mailto:michelle.banfield@barrie.ca)