

Town of Wasaga Beach

DRAFT

**Residential Market Analysis and
Planning Review**

Wasaga Beach Downtown
Development Master Plan

February 2017



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Residential Market Analysis and Planning Overview

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Disclaimer:

The conclusions contained in this report have been prepared based on both primary and secondary data sources. NBLC makes every effort to ensure the data is correct but cannot guarantee its accuracy. It is also important to note that it is not possible to fully document all factors or account for all changes that may occur in the future and influence the viability of any development. NBLC, therefore, assumes no responsibility for losses sustained as a result of implementing any recommendation provided in this report.

This report has been prepared solely for the purposes outlined herein and is not to be relied upon, or used for any other purposes, or by any other party without the prior written authorization from N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited

1.0 Introduction

NBLC was retained as part of a broader team, led by Forrec, to devise a strategy to re-establish a Downtown Core in Wasaga Beach.

Wasaga Beach's historic Downtown Core has traditionally extended along Main Street from Beach One southward. This strip has offered a range of commercial services to both local residents and tourists over the years. However, the seasonality of the Wasaga Beach community never allowed a Downtown area to become firmly established, with many of the larger uses closing during the off-season periods. As the nature of tourism and retail have changed, the role of Downtown also diminished. The expansion of retail functions to the suburban area of the Town, the fire on Beach One, and business closure have all undermined the opportunity for a central core area.

The Town of Wasaga Beach has identified the importance of re-establishing a Downtown as the Town moves forward. While Wasaga Beach will always have a significant component of tourism, its growing attractiveness as a community for permanent residents has underpinned the need for a Downtown that builds on the growing sense of community. After years of neglect, the Town of Wasaga Beach has approved the boundaries for the new Downtown, recognizing an opportunity to develop a central urban area that will aid in growing the Town into the future.

NBLC's role in this initiative is to provide residential real estate market and land use planning guidance. This report summarizes the influences of population growth and market trends on Wasaga Beach and how those influences could be guided, through a renewed policy context, towards the objective of creating a vibrant Downtown. We provide a review of the planning policy context and identify key areas of policy development that should be considered as the Town moves towards an official review.

2.0 Why is a Downtown Important?

Downtowns are concentrated urban areas that allow for the efficient use of land and municipal resources for the social and economic benefit of the community. A vibrant mix of residential, commercial and public uses creates an energetic mass that can become a source of community pride and identity. Large or small, well-defined and healthy Downtowns create a sense of place that yields benefits in terms of improving the quality of life for residents, creating a strong investment environment, and supporting growth.

A concentration of development also yields benefits in terms of offering more sustainable forms of development. When community services and amenities become walkable, higher density housing options can become more feasible. Apartments and townhomes, which are less costly and require less maintenance than a single-detached home, become more viable. This in turn helps populate and animate streets, taking growth pressure off suburban areas, reducing traffic, and improving safety. Higher density housing forms also expand the choice of accommodations, increasing the attractiveness of the community to a broader range of prospective residents.

Downtowns offer a logical opportunity as a place for community events. This aids in building community pride and identity and allows for improved social cohesion with opportunities to meet and connect with neighbours and other community members.

Public spaces in the Downtown, both indoor and outdoor, are typically very important for programming to attract people to the area and provide a space for community events. Consistent programming is key, and ongoing events drive positive awareness of the area and the wider Town for both residents and tourists. Downtowns with a range of retail, commercial, and programming options that span all seasons and appeal to the widest mix of people, including families and children, ensures that the area remains animated and thrives throughout the year.

Figure 1: Examples of Small Town Downtowns



3.0 Wasaga Beach's Historical Pattern of Growth

The Town of Wasaga Beach has experienced very strong growth, doubling in size over the 1996-2011 census reporting periods from 8,698 persons in 1996 to 17,405 persons in 2011. By comparison, the Town of Collingwood grew by 19% over the 1996-2011 period. Wasaga Beach's growth however has evolved away from the Beach area and its seasonal tourist based roots, towards increasingly stable and permanent growth.

Over the last 25 years, housing growth has been largely focused on the periphery of the Town dominated by low-density housing types including detached homes and townhomes. In the Downtown area, only recently has new investment begun to emerge in the form of bungalow and traditional townhomes at Stonebridge. While these homes are modest in scale, they provide market evidence that there is demand to live in more compact housing forms providing they offer walkable access to commercial and public amenities. This form of development is responding directly to the demands of the marketplace and is instructive when considering how the factors discussed next in our report can leverage towards the development of an exciting new downtown.

Statistics Canada tells us much about the nature of the historical growth in Wasaga Beach. While the 2016 census was not published at the time of the preparation of this report we know several key characteristics of its population from previous census data and observational research:

- **Wasaga Beach has become a very appealing destination for retirees who are attracted to affordable housing options, a good range of amenities, and a safe community.** Between the 2006 and 2011 Censuses, the age groups which increased by the highest percentage and total number of residents were aged 55 to 64 (+510 people, +20%), 65 to 79 (+1,035 people, +32%), and 80 and up (+325 people, +61%). It is likely that these figures will increase in the 2016 Census.
- **Incomes have increased, but not fast enough.** Despite record low interest rates, incomes have not kept pace with home prices. The average household income in Wasaga Beach increased by 7.4% between 2006 (\$61,676) and 2011 (\$66,250), while the average value of a single-detached home increased by 23.7% over the same time period¹. Housing pricing has only continued to grow in the subsequent years since the 2011 Census, and though 2016 income data is not yet available, it is expected that income growth has been muted compared to housing price growth.
- **Working age people are leaving the community.** Young people within their first years of working are leaving the community to seek broader opportunities for jobs and socialization in larger centres. This is a natural phenomenon in towns the size of Wasaga Beach but is nevertheless a concern as a good mix of residents of all ages is a healthy measure of any community.

¹ Your Home, Your Future: Town of Wasaga Beach Housing Strategy, January 2013

- **The size of households are declining.** This is a phenomenon that has been happening in many communities, regardless of size or mix of residents, due to aging populations, later family formation, and lower birth rates. In the case of Wasaga beach household sizes are expected to continue to decline. The most recent Development Charges Background Study from Hemson Consulting anticipates that household sizes will decline to 2.2 persons per household by 2031.
- **Households with children are declining.** In the 2001 Census, approximately 45% of the Town’s families contained children. That value decreased to fewer than 43% in 2006 and then 41% in 2011. This is due, at least in part, to the lack of a high school in the community.
- **Much of the historical commercial tourism accommodation is now being used as affordable rental housing in the off-peak seasons.** While Wasaga Beach is affordable relative to many other nearby communities, there is a lack of affordable rental housing, as well as market-rate rental housing. As such, in the non-summer months, many rooms in the older accommodations located throughout Wasaga Beach are used as affordable rental units.
- **The stock of tourism accommodation is eroding quickly and not positioned to attract modern demand.** The quality of much of the accommodation options in Wasaga Beach has become poor as it has aged which has led to a segment of the tourist population that seeks higher-quality, modern accommodations to be unserved.
- **Demand in the resale market for beachfront homes from both seasonal and permanent residents is still strong.** This will spur some demand for new housing in the Main End.

Figure 2: Homes in Stonebridge, near Main Street and River Road West



Source: Stonebridge Building Group

4.0 Factors Shaping the Outlook for Wasaga Beach's Growth

According to the County of Simcoe Official Plan, the population of Wasaga Beach is projected to grow to 27,500 in 2031 (+9,963, +57% from 2011²). Household sizes are anticipated to continue to decline to 2.2 persons per household (“PPH”) in the same time period³. As households become smaller, so do housing needs. Demand should continue to grow for a broader range of housing forms such as townhouses and apartments.

Given the population forecast and projected household size, there is a forecasted housing need of approximately 12,500 housing units in 2031, representing a need for as many as 5,000 additional housing units from 2011 to meet the population growth.

While much of the new housing in Wasaga Beach will continue to be in low-density formats, demand for smaller homes, including townhomes and apartments will increase over time. This demand will come from a variety of groups including seniors, single people, first-time buyers, and secondary home buyers. Demand for higher density accommodation is also present in the tourism market, especially for homes that could offer direct beach and water views. The following summarizes the key factors driving demand in Wasaga Beach.

4.1 Declining Affordability

Affordability is one of the strongest drivers of higher density residential demand and effects all market segments. As pricing for other housing forms increases, particularly single-family homes, buyers are more frequently drawn to the relative affordability of an apartment unit, as well as higher density ground-related units like traditional and stacked townhouses.

Despite the growing disparity between price and income growth, Wasaga Beach remains one of the more affordable options in the surrounding region, and as such, should remain a destination for buyers seeking affordable single-family homes. Remaining the value proposition in the regional housing market, particularly compared to Collingwood and The Blue Mountains, could provide an advantage for Wasaga Beach as it looks to develop the Downtown and continue growing. Providing housing options that are more affordable relative to similar units in Collingwood and Blue Mountains will allow Wasaga Beach to compete for some of the same buyers who are currently attracted to these communities.

It should be noted that demand for high-density housing from end-user families may remain limited in the near future so long as single-detached housing in Wasaga Beach remains affordable relative to Collingwood and other parts of Southern Ontario. However, there may be some interest from families for other forms of housing in the Downtown, such as townhouses. The current lack of a high school in

² Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

³ Hemson Consulting, Town of Wasaga Beach Development Charges Background Study, November 2, 2015

Wasaga Beach may also play a role in limiting the level of interest from families for new higher density housing forms in the Wasaga Beach Downtown.

4.2 Aging Population / Move-Down Buyers

Seniors today are healthier than ever and many continue to live active lifestyles as they age. By 60, many seniors are entrenched in their local community and as they look to downsize from single-family homes, often hope to remain in their current neighbourhoods. These seniors and downsizers are anticipated to be a key end-user target market for any new high-density residential units in the Downtown area.

As with most other potential buyer groups, seniors / move-down buyers are seeking affordability, in this case for retirement purposes. The demand for high-density housing units from this group has been brought on by changing lifestyle priorities. They are seeking convenient and low-maintenance living, with less responsibility than what is associated with ground-related housing. An apartment unit also provides an opportunity to re-deploy some of the equity from the sale of a single-family home into retirement savings.

Anecdotally, we know from our public consultation process for the Downtown Development Master Plan (“DDMP”), that there is some interest in high-density living from local seniors / downsizers in Wasaga Beach currently. Several people expressed an interest in moving to a smaller space that would be easier to maintain than their current single-family homes. Developing the Downtown with high-density housing units along Main Street could aid in filling the gap in the market for this type of housing.

An additional impact of the aging population is smaller household sizes. Households with only one or two people, with no plans for household size expansion, typically look towards higher-density housing forms, such as apartments, to reduce maintenance costs.

4.3 Demand for Second Home/Recreational Properties

The potential for new high-density residential units in Wasaga Beach is likely to drive some interest from buyers seeking a secondary home or recreational property. Generation X (approximately 1965 to 1980) have become more frequent purchasers of traditional cottages than Baby Boomers in recent years according to Royal LePage. However, Millennials, and the younger members of Generation X, may find it more difficult to purchase a secondary property due to increasing affordability issues in both the traditional housing market and the recreational property market.

A beachfront condominium apartment could be an affordable alternative to a traditional lakefront cottage for buyers who are priced out of the traditional cottage market. Some buyers may also prefer the low-maintenance, turn-key living that an apartment would provide over the upkeep of a traditional cottage. Others may be attracted to the revenue potential during the days or weeks that they are not using the unit.

Even in Collingwood, there is recent evidence of a gap in the secondary home market for relatively affordable housing options. Wyldewood Cove Condominiums, located off Highway 26, north of Cranberry Golf Course, tapped into this gap in the market, advertising itself as an affordable option. The seven building, 177-unit development sold out in June 2016, less than two and half years after launching in February 2014.

The primary purchasers at Wyldewood Cove ranged from 35 to 60 years of age, primarily couples and families with children from the GTA, some of which are thought to be leasing their units for extended periods of the year. The location a short drive from ski hills and golf courses was attractive for buyers, particularly given the low pricing, starting at approximately \$180,000, with no unit exceeding \$280,000, despite large unit sizes up to 1,400 square feet (“sf”)⁴. Meanwhile, other recent condominium apartment projects in Collingwood have struggled with slow sales in recent years while pricing much of their product above \$300,000.

Despite its distance further from ski clubs, Wasaga Beach should be able to compete with Collingwood and Blue Mountains for secondary home buyers. Some prospective Collingwood buyers will be seeking an affordable alternative and Wasaga Beach is close enough to still provide convenient access to the amenities offered in Collingwood and The Blue Mountains. Other buyers will be attracted to the added proximity to Wasaga’s beach area and trails in addition to the short drive to Collingwood.

4.4 Rental Demand

As per CMHC, there were no purpose-built rental apartment units in Wasaga Beach as of October 2016. As such, residents who would prefer to rent, or cannot afford to buy a home, are forced to find accommodations in another community or in the private rental market, which consists almost entirely of low-density housing types. Not all prospective renter households will be interested in renting a single-family home, particularly seniors who may be considering a move from single-family homeownership to rental tenure for lifestyle reasons.

Anecdotally, we are aware that there is some demand in the current marketplace for affordable rental accommodations, some of which has to be satisfied through rentals of motel rooms. While a new purpose-built rental apartment building in Wasaga Beach may not be feasible, investor-owned condominium apartment units could aid in beginning to address the demand for long-term rental accommodations in Wasaga Beach.

Furthermore, it is possible that additional demand for rental housing in Wasaga Beach would present itself if there were more high-quality options available. It is possible that there are households who are currently interested in renting in Wasaga Beach but end up seeking out rental housing in other nearby communities, such as Collingwood or Barrie, due to the lack of available product locally.

⁴ RealNet Canada Inc.

4.5 The Investor Market

As the high-density housing market in Downtown Wasaga Beach begins to establish itself, units in the initial phases, particularly in the beach area, are likely to attract investor interest. There are few high-quality overnight accommodation options in Wasaga Beach today. This has led to a segment of the tourist population who seeks higher-quality modern accommodations to be unserved. These tourists must choose between staying in one of the existing options, staying in a nearby municipality like Collingwood, or choosing to spend their time and money somewhere other than Wasaga Beach.

Despite the old and outdated overnight accommodations in Wasaga Beach, the rates that are achieved are typically fairly high. From stakeholder interviews throughout the Master Plan process, and past research conducted by CBRE, we know the following about pricing for some of the existing accommodations:

- Average daily rate (2015): \$147 (full year average);
- Hotels: \$250 per night in peak (\$210 - \$380 per night) and \$160 per night during winter months;
 - Includes hotels such as Wasaga Riverdocks, Luau Resort, Saga Resort, etc;
- Cottage Courts: \$1,100 - \$1,400 per week in July/August, \$600 - \$800 per month in offseason;
- Airbnb: A wide variance of pricing from less than \$100 per night for a small space to over \$500 per night for a full 3+ bedroom cottage. Several 2-bedroom cottage court style accommodations located northeast of the Downtown area are listed for as much as \$250 - \$350 per night (\$1,800 - \$2,800 per week with fees).

Based on the rates in the accommodation market, it is possible that purchasing a unit for the purposes of using it as a short-term rental will make sense for some investors. If a cottage court unit can command \$1,400 per week during the summertime, it is reasonable that a brand new condominium apartment unit with modern features and finishes could exceed these rates, particularly in a more central location in the main beach area. Additionally, it could provide buyers who are interested in a secondary property with the potential to earn some income from their property during the week or on weekends when they are not using the unit.

NBLC conducted a pro forma analysis to determine what a condominium apartment unit with beach / water exposure could be priced at in order for the investor to receive a reasonable capitalization rate of 6%. **Table 1**, below, illustrates the results of the analysis.

We assume higher occupancy rates and weekly rental rates during the 16-week peak period than in the off-season months, and include prices that are a premium above much of the existing accommodation options. Based on the pro forma analysis, an investor could receive a capitalization rate of 6% for an 850 sf two-bedroom unit priced at approximately \$460,000, assuming an all cash purchase. It should

be noted that the estimated rental rates would be lower on the mainland side of the Downtown, or for units that do not have beach / water views.

Table 1

Conceptual Development Pro Forma - Investor Analysis			
Rental Assumptions			
	Peak Season	Off Peak	Total
Potential Weeks Leased	16	36	52
Occupancy	80%	30%	45%
Weeks of Occupancy	12.8	10.8	23.6
Rental Rate (Per Week Leased)	\$1,800	\$1,200	\$1,525
Revenue	\$23,040	\$12,960	\$36,000
Capitalized Value			
Total Annual Revenue			\$36,000
Avg. Annual Expenses (Rental Cleaning Fees, Operating Expenses, Misc.)			\$8,540
Net Operating Income			\$27,460
Cap Rate			6.0%
Capitalized Value (6% cap rate)			\$457,667
<i>Source: N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd.</i>			

As has been outlined throughout this section, affordability will be key to the success of the re-development of Wasaga Beach’s Downtown, so not all units can be priced this high, particularly given the relatively low prices in the single-family home market (\$355,595 resale average in 2016⁵). The performance of Wyldewood Cove Condominiums in Collingwood indicates that the majority of the condominium apartment product, particularly on the mainland side of the Downtown, should likely be priced affordably relative to the rest of the housing market. That being said, the pro forma analysis indicates the strong potential for a return for an investor, even at higher prices, assuming the unit is located in a premium location such as the beachfront. If the units on the beach are priced more affordably, the capitalization rate would increase above 6%.

Despite the assumed interest from the investor community, residential development in the Downtown will need to rely heavily on end-user and secondary home buyers either from the local area or elsewhere, in order to achieve healthy sales absorption rates. Mainland developments are assumed to be particularly reliant on these purchasers as interest from investors may be more likely to be centred on any new residential development in the beach area. Investor interest may also decline in latter phases of the Downtown redevelopment as the investor market becomes saturated.

⁵ Marg Scheben-Edey, ReMax, “2016 Year-end Real Estate Market Report for Collingwood, Blue Mountain and Area”, January 4, 2017

5.0 Range of Downtown Housing Types

Successful Downtowns include a range of housing types and tenures in order to attract a wide mix of residents. In Wasaga Beach’s Downtown, the focus of new development should be on higher density housing types, specifically apartments and townhouses. The bulk of the apartment development is likely to occur along three main corridors (Main Street, Mosley Street, Beach Drive), with densities declining to townhouses and single-detached homes as they move away from these corridors.

While stacked townhouses are not typically popular in smaller communities like Wasaga Beach, they may also be worthy of consideration in the future given their ability to offer gentle density and that they provide purchasers the option of a relatively affordable ground-related unit. Stacked townhouses at the west end of the main beach area as an alternative to apartments or traditional townhouses could also be popular with investors and secondary home purchasers if they include beach / water exposure.

Bungalow townhouses are also an alternative to traditional townhouses and have proven to be successful elsewhere in Wasaga Beach, including at the south end of the Downtown area in Stonebridge. The lack of stairs and smaller square footage of these units are particularly attractive to older buyers who are still interested in living in a ground-related unit as opposed to downsizing all the way to an apartment unit.

Figure 3: Examples of Potential Building Scale



Within any new apartment buildings, ground floor commercial or community space should be encouraged, particularly along main corridors. This commercial or community space could aid in animating the Downtown’s streets and would create a true mixed-use community.

However, although these active ground floors are preferred, the demand for this type of space may not be sufficient to fill the ground floor of every new building. As such, the decision as to which buildings are required to include a commercial or community component in their base should be strategic as a building with residential units fronting on the street, possibly as townhouse units, is likely preferable to a significant number of empty or underutilized storefronts. In these cases, consideration should be

given to design methods which provide an interesting ground floor which interacts well with the Downtown streets despite not including commercial or community space.

The scale of the new Downtown developments are likely to be in the range of four-storeys, possibly up to six-storeys, for apartment buildings and two to three-storeys for townhouses, particularly in the early phases of re-development. Given that four to six-storey buildings are taller than the existing built context in Wasaga Beach's Downtown area, it is possible that height impacts could be mitigated through design measures such as stepping back upper floors, reducing the perception of height and improving the way the building interacts with the street and its surroundings.

6.0 The Downtown Plan and the Housing Market

The following section addresses some of the elements that should be included in a new Downtown, spurred by the recommendations of the DDMP, which could have an impact on the housing market. Some of these factors directly affect the housing market, while others aid in creating a sense of place that could inevitably increase the appeal of the Downtown area for new housing.

6.1 Creating a Destination and Identity

As discussed in Section 2.0, downtowns play a significant role in the success of communities. By creating an energetic centre they can invoke community pride through an enhanced sense of identity which spins off into commercial and economic benefits. Part of the formula of a successful downtown is a permanent population that occupies and animates the area year round. If the downtown can offer this type of environment, the market demand for the higher density housing requirements forecasted for the community will be positive.

People choose high-density living in order to be in an attractive, interesting and walkable neighbourhood. As such, improvements to the public realm will be key. The creation of new high-quality public spaces with programming to continually attract people to the Downtown area and provide places to gather will be needed, as will a design that improves walkability. Additional amenities including new retail within mixed-use developments and services that are currently lacking in the Downtown will also aid in creating a more attractive area.

6.2 Two Distinct Opportunities for New Investment

Currently in Wasaga Beach, the area that has been identified as the future Downtown is tourism-focused. Given tourism's importance to the Wasaga Beach economy, it should not be neglected. However, in order for a Downtown re-development to achieve success, the area will need to cater towards the needs of permanent residents as well.

As a means of balancing the potential for competing priorities between tourists and permanent residents, an approach that includes two centres could be effective. One centre in the Main End that is dominated by the presence of the beach and the massive tourism draw it creates, and the other along Main Street in Lower Main that is still within a short walk of the Main End, and would perform a more civic function designed primarily to accommodate the future needs of the permanent community as it grows.

6.2.1 Beach Area (Main End)

From a residential perspective, the beach area, or Main End, is expected to be the most marketable part of the new Downtown. The Main End has an inherent attraction value and is a premium location that is unique in Southern Ontario.

Units with exposure to the beach and Nottawasaga Bay are anticipated to attract the widest range of prospective buyers including secondary home buyers, investors and some end-users.

Investor interest is likely to be driven by the lack of high-quality overnight accommodations in Wasaga Beach. These investors may see an opportunity to fill the gap in the market by listing their new, modern apartment or townhouse unit on the market for nightly, weekly, or monthly rentals. To date, the only condominium apartment building of significance with beach / water views in proximity to the Downtown area is Aqua Luxury Beach Residences, located at River Road East and Mary Street.

End-users and secondary home buyers are also likely to be attracted to a beachfront location, though possibly less so than investors in areas that are closest to the busiest tourist attractions. Higher prices for premium units in the Main End may also lead to end-users considering other locations in the Downtown.

Residential buildings at the east end of beach area, framing a new public square, would allow for business and other economic activity as well as enhanced, more upscale services at the ground floor levels.

6.2.2 Lower Main

Early in the DDMP process, it was established that Lower Main Street should be the heart of the Wasaga Beach. Residential uses in Lower Main are likely to be positioned towards end-users who will place a higher value on close proximity to commercial and community services, and separation from the intense beach activity during the peak tourist periods. As such, absorptions may be slower as end-users typically take their time when shopping for a new home (compared to investors) and may be less likely to purchase a pre-construction unit.

Affordability will be key in Lower Main given the location away from the beach. Units are also likely to be larger given that many buyers are anticipated to be downsizers who are used to residing in a single-family home. Main Street provides a central location within Wasaga Beach but is far enough removed from the Main End and beachfront that any new developments are likely to be less impacted by the peak tourist season.

Other uses in Lower Main, such as the retail and restaurants, may also be positioned to service permanent residents more so than tourists, particularly in the early stages of development given that many visitors are likely to remain solely attracted to the Main End and its beachfront. Over time, as the Downtown and Lower Main neighbourhood establishes itself, there will likely be more synergy between the Main End and Lower Main.

6.3 The Role of Public Squares

The DDMP will include public squares both in the Main End and Lower Main at Main Street. These public squares are critical elements in the strategy to create a new downtown in Wasaga Beach. These two squares would be used to visually establish the location of the Downtown and will be an important component of its future identity. The design of these spaces will therefore be very important as the project moves forward.

However, programming of the space will be equally important. The space at Lower Main should be used for important civic functions and be available for other events and festivals throughout the year. New public squares should be designed to maximize their flexibility so they can be used in all seasons and for the widest variety of uses. A high-quality public square that may be used for a farmer’s market or an outdoor concert in the summer time, should be flexible to be used as a skating rink or a holiday market in the winter time.

Figure 4: Examples of Public Squares



There are countless examples of successful public squares that are heavily used in cities and towns of all sizes. The best ones are those that attract people to gather and activate the space as frequently as

possible, bringing life to the surrounding area and having a positive trickledown effect on neighbouring businesses and property values⁶.

Town squares and other open and shared spaces drive traffic and are beneficial to local business owners and the local economy, driving up sales, tax revenue, and potentially increasing jobs. They are also attractive places to orient new residential buildings. Some of the highest demand for new residential units may be on the blocks that are facing, or in closest proximity, to the public squares, especially in Lower Main which lacks a significant existing attraction like the beach.

Programming of the public squares will be very important to ensure that there is constant activity in the Downtown, and to provide those who don't live in the Downtown with a reason to visit, whether they be from Wasaga Beach or elsewhere.

6.4 Civic Uses

Civic buildings and institutions (ie. town hall, libraries, courthouses, cultural facilities, parks, public squares, etc) have traditionally been some of the most important places in towns and cities. They were where the community would come together to conduct business, make important decisions, and socialize.

They create a sense of pride, contribute to a community's identity, offer a place for regular and meaningful interaction between citizens, provide comfort and safety due to their public nature, and encourage a diverse mix of people to use them.

Civic spaces contribute to local economic activity and could be a key factor in the success of the Downtown redevelopment. When located in a Downtown, these civic uses bring with them employees and users of public services who are then more likely to spend money in the Downtown, increasing economic activity. As an example, a study by Place Economics, a Washington, D.C. based consulting firm, indicated that employees who work in a Downtown civic building will spend between \$2,500 and \$3,500 annually in the Downtown⁷. If these civic buildings and uses are located away from the Downtown, people will invest their money and energy outside the Downtown.

Civic spaces also play host to events such as farmers markets, festivals, and other locally-sponsored activities, that draw residents and tourists to the area who are in turn more likely to spend while there.

These civic institutions should be constructed in locations that are accessible for drivers, transit, and pedestrians, such as the Downtown. They should be designed in a manner that is welcoming for the public. As new civic uses are added to the community over time, their location in the Downtown could

⁶ The Value of Public Space: How High Quality Parks and Public Spaces Create Economic, Social and Environmental Value, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, London, 2012

⁷ UW-Extension, The Importance of Government Facilities in Downtown, 2005

be highly beneficial to strengthening the appeal of the area and driving demand for new residential units.

Several civic uses are currently missing in Wasaga Beach or are in need of an upgrade. Wasaga Beach currently lacks a high school, has an aging arena, and is outgrowing the existing town hall and library.

While the Downtown may not be the chosen place for some of these uses, particularly larger ones like a new high school or multi-pad arena, their presence in Wasaga Beach could increase demand in the residential market. A new high school in particular could aid in attracting more families who may otherwise look to other communities like Collingwood in order to ensure their children do not have to commute a long distance each day.

7.0 Policy Review

Within the broad policy context of the Provincial Policy Statement, Places to Grow, and the County of Simcoe Official Plan, land use policy for the Town of Wasaga Beach is guided by the Council approved Official Plan. The existing Official Plan policies do not recognize a Downtown district as envisioned in the DDMP.

The approved Official Plan has a focus on tourism in the areas of the Downtown that are recommended for significant redevelopment in the DDMP. As it stands today, accommodation uses like cabins, motels, and other low-density, tourism oriented uses are encouraged. Development that is supportive of permanent residential development is discouraged or prohibited. Council's intention at the time of adoption in 2003 was clear to support the tourism function by reserving the Downtown area for this purpose.

The work of the DDMP has clearly illustrated that the Town has evolved and that there is a need to reconsider this approach. The need and opportunity to better leverage the natural asset of the beach and dune areas to invigorate the tourism market while at the same time meeting the long term social, cultural, and economic needs of the community has been identified.

This section provides an overview of the relevant planning legislation that helped guide the DDMP process and offers policy considerations for the Town of Wasaga Beach as they reconsider their Official Plan.

7.1 Provincial and Regional Planning Policy

7.1.1 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement ("PPS") provides direction on land use planning and development matters. It is authorized under Section 3 of the Planning Act and focuses on economic, environmental, and social planning principles. All provincial and municipal planning directions are required to be consistent with PPS policies.

The PPS sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land in Ontario, with key objectives including:

- Building strong communities;
- The wise use and management of resources by focusing growth within urban and rural settlement areas; and,
- Protecting public health and safety by avoiding significant and sensitive resources.

Although it should be read in its entirety, relevant policies of the PPS promote efficient development patterns which sustain the financial well-being of the Province and municipalities over the long-term, and cost-effective development patterns to minimize land consumption and infrastructure costs. The DDMP adheres to the direction provided in the PPS, and in particular, the following policies relating to residential intensification and the efficient use of land and resources.

- Beginning with Policy 1.1.1, the PPS calls for the creation of healthy, liveable, and safe communities through the accommodation of an appropriate range and mix of residential (including affordable housing), employment, institutional, recreation, park and open space, and other uses that meet long-term needs.
- Policy 1.1.2 directs that municipalities make available sufficient land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses to meet projected needs to their planning time horizon (30 years). Such lands can be made available through intensification and redevelopment, and if necessary, designated growth areas.
- In particular, the PPS requires that land use patterns be based on densities and a mix of land uses which efficiently use land and resources, infrastructure, and public service facilities but which avoid the need for unjustified and/or uneconomical expansion, and support active transportation, among other requirements (Policy 1.1.3.2).
- Policy 1.1.3.3 continues these themes, requiring that planning authorities shall identify appropriate locations and promote opportunities for redevelopment and intensification where this can be accommodated, taking into account existing building stock or areas, and the availability of existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities. The PPS goes on, in Policy 1.1.3.5, to indicate that minimum targets for intensification and redevelopment within built-up areas shall be established and implemented by planning authorities. New development taking place in designated growth areas should be planned adjacent to the existing built-up area, have a compact form, and a mix of uses and densities that allow for the efficient use of the land, infrastructure, and public service facilities (Policy 1.1.3.6).
- In regards to employment, Policy 1.3.1 states that planning authorities shall promote economic development and competitiveness by way of providing an appropriate mix and range of employment and institutional uses to meet long-term needs; provide opportunities for a diversified economic base; encourage compact, mixed-use development that incorporates employment uses to support liveable and resilient communities; and ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place to support current and future needs.
- With respect to housing, Policy 1.4.3 directs that planning authorities shall provide an appropriate range and mix of housing types and densities to meet projected requirements of current and future residents by, among other matters, facilitating all forms of residential intensification and redevelopment, 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 future needs, and promoting densities for new housing which efficiently use land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities. It also aims to minimize the cost of housing through the provision of affordable options for low to moderate income households.

- Policy 1.5.1 promotes healthy, active communities by planning public streets, spaces, and facilities to be safe, meet the needs of pedestrians, foster social interaction, and facilitate active transportation and community connectivity. This policy also aims to provide a full range of publically-accessible recreation facilities including, among other things, parks, open space areas, trails and linkages.
- Policy 1.6.5 directs that public service facilities should be co-located in community hubs, where appropriate, to promote cost-effectiveness and facilitate service integration, access to transit, and active transportation.
- Transportation is an essential element for the efficient use of infrastructure (Section 1.6.7). With respect to transportation systems, Policy 1.6.7.4 promotes a land use pattern, density, and mix of uses that minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and supports current and future use of transit and active transportation. Transportation and land use considerations shall be integrated at all stages of the planning process (Policy 1.6.7.5).
- Policy 1.7.1 requires that long-term prosperity be supported by, among other measures, promoting opportunities for economic development and community investment-readiness; optimizing the long-term availability and use of land, resources, infrastructure and public service facilities; maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns and main streets; providing opportunities for sustainable tourism development; and encouraging a sense of place by promoting well-designed built form and cultural planning.
- Finally, the PPS directs that planning authorities support measures to improve energy conservation and efficiency, air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, through the promotion of compact built form and a structure of nodes and corridors; promotion of the use of active transportation; and improve the mix of employment and housing uses to shorten commute journeys and decrease transportation congestion, among others (Policy 1.8.1).

7.1.2 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (“Growth Plan”) was prepared and approved under the Places to Grow Act (2005) on June 16th, 2006, and has subsequently been amended twice, including most recently on June 17, 2013, by Amendment No. 2 which provided updated population and employment forecasts by region. The Growth Plan provides the planning framework for the implementation of the Province’s vision for the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region through to the year 2041, and is to be read in conjunction with the PPS. The Growth Plan prevails where the two policies are in conflict.

Similar to the PPS, the Growth Plan supports mixed-use intensification within built-up areas, of which the Town of Wasaga Beach is designated as one. Section 1.2.2 describes the guiding principles of the Growth Plan, which include, amongst others, the building of compact, vibrant and complete communities; protecting, conserving, enhancing, and wise use of valuable natural resources of land, air, and water for current and future generations; and the optimization of existing infrastructure to support growth in a compact and efficient form.

Section 2.1 continues these policy themes, indicating that the Growth Plan encourages the better use of land and infrastructure by directing growth to existing urban areas.

The DDMP has been designed to implement the policies of Section 2.2.2.1 (Managing Growth), which mandates that population growth be accommodated by, among other means:

- Directing a significant portion of new growth to built-up areas through intensification;
- Focusing intensification in intensification areas;
- Reducing the dependence on the automobile through the development of mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly urban environments; and,
- Contributing to the development of a complete community with a diverse mix of land uses and housing types, high quality public open space, and providing easy access to local stores and services.

Upper or single-tier municipalities, the County of Simcoe in this case, are tasked with allocating population and employment projections to their lower-tier municipalities. A minimum of 40% of all residential development occurring annually within upper and single-tier municipalities will be within built-up areas (Section 2.2.3.1). The current version of the Growth Plan projects 497,000 people and 152,000 jobs in the County of Simcoe by 2041 (Schedule 3). Schedule 7 breaks down the growth forecasts for lower-tier municipalities to 2031, allocating 27,500 people and 3,500 jobs to Wasaga Beach.

All municipalities will develop and implement through their official plans and other supporting documents, a strategy and policies to phase in and achieve intensification. This strategy and policies will be based on the growth forecasts in the Growth Plan, encourage intensification throughout the built-up area, identify intensification areas, and plan for a range and mix of housing (Section 2.2.3.6).

All intensification areas will be planned and designed to attract a significant portion of population and employment growth; provide a diverse and compatible mix of land uses, including residential and employment uses, to support vibrant neighbourhoods; provide high-quality public open spaces; and achieve higher densities than the surrounding areas. The Town and the DDMP process has identified the downtown in Wasaga Beach as a significant opportunity to become an intensification area.

Amendment 1 to the Growth Plan (Section 6) provides a more detailed direction on how the plan's vision will be achieved in the County of Simcoe and the cities of Barrie and Orillia, known together as the Simcoe Sub-Area. The policies in Section 6 direct a significant portion of growth within the Simcoe Sub-area to communities where development can be most effectively serviced and where growth improves the range of opportunities for people to live, work, and play in their communities, with a particular emphasis on primary settlement areas. Within the Simcoe Sub-Area, Wasaga Beach is not considered a primary settlement area and as such is not a significant focus of growth relative to some other communities.

7.1.3 *Simcoe County Official Plan*

The Official Plan for the County of Simcoe was adopted on November 25, 2008 and approved most recently by the OMB on December 29, 2016. The County Official Plan provides a policy basis for exercising the approval authorities for local municipal official plans and amendments, and applications for the subdivision of land.

It represents the primary policy tool guiding growth, land use, development and reurbanization in the County to the year 2031. It is designed to assist in growth management to 2031 in accordance with the Growth Plan. It attempts to achieve a balance between the demands for economic development, community building, and environmental conservation and provide a framework for coordinated planning with adjacent municipalities, agencies, and other levels of government.

The goals of the County of Simcoe Official Plan are:

- To protect, conserve, and enhance the County's natural and cultural heritage;
- To achieve wise management and use of the County's resources;
- To implement growth management to achieve lifestyle quality and efficient and cost effective municipal servicing, development and land use;
- To achieve coordinated land use planning among the County's local municipalities and with neighbouring counties, districts, regions, and separated cities, and First Nations lands;
- To further community economic development which promotes economic sustainability in Simcoe County communities, providing employment and business opportunities; and
- To promote, protect and enhance public health and safety.

The County Official Plan's planning strategy directs the majority of growth to settlements where it can be effectively serviced and support diversified economic functions and opportunities including a range of housing options. These settlements include the Town of Wasaga Beach.

As previously mentioned, the County of Simcoe allocates population and employment growth to lower-tier municipalities. Wasaga Beach has been allocated 27,500 people and 3,500 jobs in 2031, as per the previous Provincial growth forecasts. An updated projection for lower-tier municipalities has not been completed by the County for the recent 2041 forecasts contained in Amendment 2 of the Growth Plan.

The County Official Plan also sets intensification targets for the lower-tier municipalities. The Town of Wasaga Beach has a minimum intensification target of 20% of all new residential units to be constructed within its built boundaries. This target recognizes the character of development in Wasaga Beach and is therefore below the County-wide intensification target of 32% (Section 3.5.24).

As per the County Official Plan, each local municipality shall develop an intensification strategy and implement the strategy through its official plan in order to phase in and achieve the intensification targets. Through the strategy, local municipalities shall promote and facilitate intensification and efficient use of land in built-up areas; identify intensification areas to support achievement of the intensification target; promote the development of mixed-use areas; identify areas appropriate for revitalization and redevelopment; identify the type and scale of development appropriate for the intensification areas; identify means to mitigate the effects of intensification in intensification areas on stable residential areas including consideration of transitional densities, built form and land uses; identify means to protect stable residential areas outside of intensification areas; and develop cost-effective and land efficient development standards (Section 3.5.25).

Section 3.5.26 directs that settlements shall be promoted as focal points for residential, commercial, and institutional uses, through the establishment of safe and pleasant pedestrian environments which encourage movement by foot, bicycle, and transit, development of attractive streetscapes, encouragement of downtown economic development initiatives, and the development of a range of housing types and costs.

It is a policy of the County Official Plan that in the development of settlements, a range of types of housing, including single-detached, semi-detached, townhouse, and apartment units, be provided, along with a mix of affordable housing, to meet a variety of housing needs (Section 3.5.30).

7.2 The Town of Wasaga Beach Official Plan

The need for an amended land use policy framework was identified by the Town through Official Plan Amendment (“OPA”) 42. OPA 42 was developed based on direction from Council in February 2015 to:

“explore the development of a “Main Street” into a downtown core encompassing tourism, commercial, office, retail and residential facilities, in an architecturally designed and pleasant environment”

This direction was followed by detailed analysis and public consultation by Town staff that lead to the development of policies that established a geographic boundary for more detailed study. Importantly OPA 42 identifies this area as the primary intensification area for the Town. The work of staff also envisioned the Downtown could be a “collection of distinct districts with their own character and policies”.

As predicted by Staff, the DDMP has revealed the need for two distinct districts within the Downtown. Overall, the new Official Plan will need to offer policies that will guide development that will shape the unique character of each district. The following are an initial list of considerations, issues and suggested policy directions that could feed into the Official Plan review.

- **Main End Land Use Policies:** The Main End has an inherent value as a tourist destination. As such, it will have different land use policies and permitted uses than in Lower Main. However, permanent residential uses should be encouraged in the Main End in order to offset the seasonality of the area and improve the amount of foot traffic for businesses that are interested in staying open year-round.
- **Lower Main Land Use Policies:** Establishing a permanent population that will serve the forecasted housing needs of the community and aid in meeting the County intensification targets should be the main goal of the policies for Lower Main. The goal of Lower Main is to eventually become active and animated all year round, and to be a place where people gather for event and civic engagement.
- **Other Districts:** Additional sub-areas within the Downtown could be created to allow for different policies to affect different properties. Certain areas are likely to be focal points of the Downtown, and as such may need additional or different policies that may not be relevant to others. For example, the permitted uses and policies in regards to building heights or requirements for ground floor commercial space for the properties surrounding Main Street and Beck Street, proposed as the new heart of Lower Main, may be different from other properties in Lower Main located to the north towards Nottawasaga River, or south towards Stonebridge.
- **Residential Densities:** As the primary area to achieve intensification targets, the Official Plan should provide for a range of higher density uses in the Downtown. The key issue will be to establish a minimum density that recognizes the near-term market limitations for forms such as apartments. In any case to achieve the County intensification targets for Wasaga Beach, some areas, such as Main Street, may need to only allow development such as apartments. Consideration may be given to allow, in certain areas, street townhomes, and potentially stacked townhomes. These forms can also generate higher densities and add other market choices.
- **Retail and Commercial Uses:** The retail study conducted by J. C. Williams Group as part of the DDMP study indicated there is a slight oversupply of retail space in the Town of Wasaga Beach. Therefore, in the near term any new space would have to address specialized or niche markets

such as boutiques, craft and antique shops, restaurants, and specialized commercial services. Fortunately, these are the types of commercial uses best suited for the Downtown. However, the space required for these uses is likely modest and care will be required to develop policies that provide for the correct amount of space in targeted locations.

Related to this, a strategy for ground floor commercial space along main roads and in buildings around the public squares will need to be developed. An at grade retail strategy will be required that identifies how much and where retail is required in base buildings.

Additionally, consideration will need to be given to what types of uses should be allowed in the Downtown commercial spaces and how large the commercial spaces should be. A large-scale retailer, who may only be interested in constructing a single-storey building, may not fit the small-town Downtown image that Wasaga Beach is seeking. In that case, policies to discourage certain types of retailers may be needed in order to direct them to a shopping plaza in Stonebridge or other suburban locations.

Figure 5: Ground Floor Retail Examples



- **Existing Uses:** Consideration will need to be given to how the existing uses in the Downtown should be treated moving forward. Some of these uses would include the existing motels, Skull Island mini-golf, and the trailer park at Stonebridge Boulevard and Main Street.

Will the existing uses be given site specific policies that allow that specific use on that property, or should they be allowed to become legal non-conforming uses? Should the existing non-conforming uses be allowed to expand? Should policies be put in place that prevent the use from continuing if the property is sold to another owner?

It should be noted that designating and zoning many of these existing uses for high-density mixed-use development should increase the property values, which could in turn encourage the existing owners to sell to a private developer. As an example, the Gateway Camping and Holiday Trailer Park being a large contiguous site, could be attractive to a private developer seeking to build medium or higher density uses.

- **Building Heights:** The town should review the minimum and maximum allowable heights in two Downtown areas. NBLC believes four-storeys are appropriate for the Downtown as a base height.

However, we would suggest that consideration be given to a minimum height requirement for blocks that face on to the proposed new public spaces and potentially along Main Street in some areas. An exception to this may be civic buildings.

- **Section 37:** Section 37 of the Planning Act and Section 7.4.5.9.5 of the Official Plan allow for increased height and density, up to 6 or 8-storeys depending on the use, in exchange for community benefits in the beach area. This height maximum is likely appropriate. However, consideration should be given to applying Section 37 benefits to the Lower Main portion of the Downtown.

The Section 37 policies currently contained in the approved Official Plan should be revised to ensure that the identified benefits are aligned with the language and objectives contained in the final DDMP.

- **Parking:** Currently, there is a significant amount of surface parking space in the Downtown, specifically in the beach area, the provincial park, and the property that has been recommended in the DDMP as a town square at Main Street and Beck Street. These surface parking lots, with the exception of the provincial park, represent significant development opportunities and are likely to be redeveloped over time as the DDMP recommendations are instituted.

However, Wasaga Beach is going to remain an auto-centric community for the foreseeable future, and the tourism industry is reliant on day and overnight visitors who drive. As such, a parking strategy will need to be developed that ensures that there is an abundance of parking to meet the daily needs of residents and tourists, particularly during the peak summer seasons, while also ensuring that urban-style development can occur. Situating surface parking lots behind new buildings, out of view from the street could be one way to satisfy some of the parking demand, while shuttles to the Main End from a parking lot further from the beach may be a means to satisfy some of the additional demand in the summertime.

- **Heritage:** The Town of Wasaga Beach will need to determine if any of the existing structures in the Downtown are of historical or natural significance, and if so, how they should be retained.
- **Drive-thrus, Gas Stations, and Other non-traditional Downtown uses:** There are several uses that are common in Wasaga Beach that may not be consistent with the vision of the DDMP or that that the Town has for its Downtown. These could include drive-thrus and gas stations, among other uses. Given their suburban feel and lack of compatibility with a pedestrian environment, consideration should be given to limiting their development in specific parts of the Downtown, particularly around Main Street and Beck Street or in the Main End.
- **Entertainment Uses:** Consideration will need to be given to whether or not entertainment uses in the Downtown should only be allowed in the Beach area, or if there are areas within Lower Main, along Main Street, where they may be appropriate. These uses may conflict with the goals of the Lower Main area of Downtown so limiting them may be beneficial particularly as new

development becomes more widespread. This will have an impact on existing businesses like Skull Island mini-golf, located at Main Street and Glenwood Drive.

Consideration could also be given to allowing entertainment uses in specific parts of the Lower Main area in the short-term given the fragmented development pattern that consists today and since full build-out of the Downtown is likely to take several decades.

- **Civic Uses:** Policies should be put in place that ensure that the Downtown receive first priority for any new civic use or replacement of an existing civic use. These civic uses are important public amenities and will increase the appeal of the Downtown and its viability as a place for intensification. A community hub that consolidates several civic uses is recommended in the DDMP, but consideration should also be given to adding additional civic uses on other properties that may be deemed appropriate.
- **The Role of Public Art:** Consideration will be needed with respect to the provision of public art and whether it is a priority for the Town to receive as part of new development. Public art can play a significant role in reinforcing the character and enjoyment of a Downtown area and can become a destination or attraction in itself. The Official Plan may offer policies that direct fees to be charged in support of new installations as part of the development approvals process.

Figure 6: Examples of Public Art



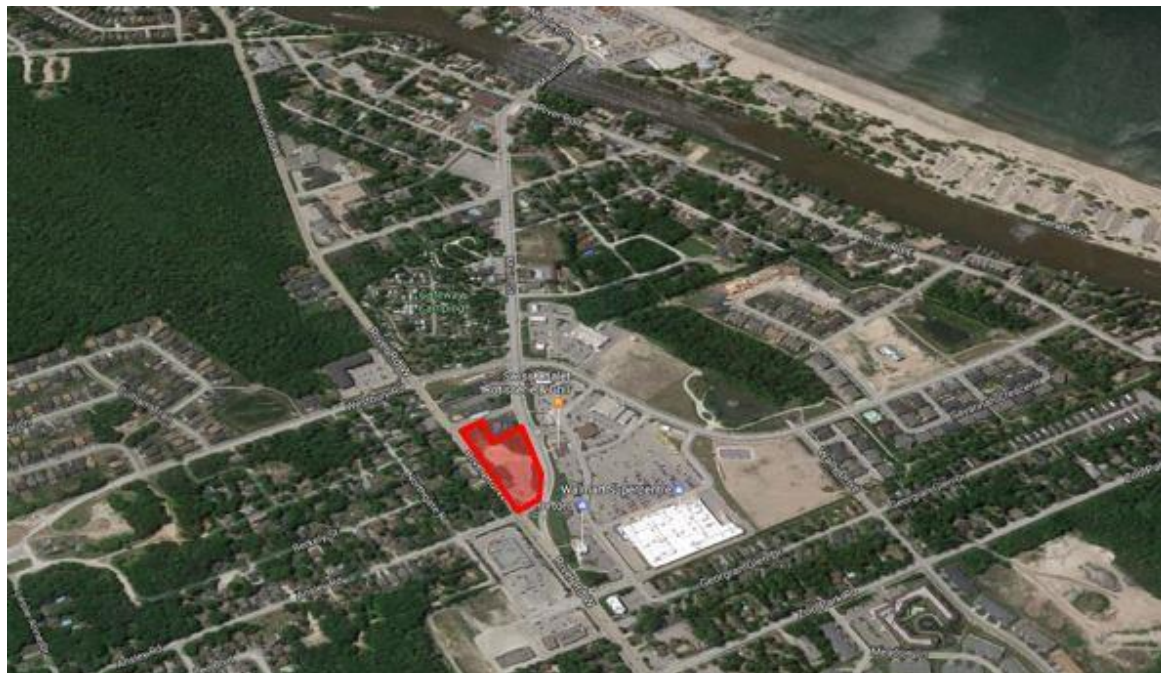
- **Parkland Dedication:** The Town should also consider the role of parkland dedication fees for new development within the context of funding public spaces envisioned in the DDMP, specifically the two public squares.
- **Community Improvement Planning:** The Town of Wasaga Beach had previously written, but not enacted, a Community Improvement Plan (“CIP”) for Beach Areas One and Two in 2013. Consideration should be given to implementing a CIP for the entire Downtown, using the Beach Area One and Two CIP as a basis, and bringing it in line with the DDMP recommendations.

As was the case with the Beach One and Two CIP in 2013, a Downtown CIP would give the Town the ability to provide development incentives in the Downtown. It is possible that these incentives will be particularly important along Main Street in the Lower Main area of the Downtown. These incentives could be time timed to stimulate early investment within Lower Main. Once the market in the Lower Main area has established itself, the incentives could be removed. Waiving development charges is typically the most effective option for private developers, but other potential incentives also include façade improvement programs, parkland dedication exemptions, building permit rebates, and property tax exemptions.

7.3 Interim Control By-law Property

On July 26, 2016, Council enacted an interim control by-law to allow time for the reconsideration of Council’s approach to an application for a new gas station at the junction of Main Street and River Road West (304 Main Street) as illustrated in the **Figure 7**.

Figure 7: Location of Interim Control By-law Property



This is an important site for the Town that is a highly visible property for people entering and exiting the community. For visitors coming to Wasaga Beach for the first time it helps shape initial perceptions of the community. In this way, it forms an important gateway to the Town.

Given the limited number of gateway locations in Wasaga Beach, it is important that they are designed well. Ideally, this site would be developed in a manner that is visually interesting, attractive, and memorable, and that has some function for the Town. Communities such as Gravenhurst, Sudbury, Wawa, and Kenora have all made use of similar sites by employing significant art installations that have become synonymous with their town and are now attractions in themselves (**Figure 8**). While they may be tacky to some, their value as an attraction and as a landmark is undeniable. The Town of Wasaga Beach could even use the opportunity to create a contest whereby residents submit ideas for what they think is representative of Wasaga Beach for the installation at this gateway location.

Figure 8: Examples of installations in Sudbury (top left) and Gravenhurst (top right), and gateway-style park (bottom)



Recognizing that an application for a gas station has been made, finding a site solution that allows the future economic use of the property, while at the same performing an important civic function is the basis of an ideal solution. An approach would be to challenge the proponent to invest in high-quality architectural and landscape design that both promotes the business as well as the site's location as a gateway to the Town of Wasaga Beach and the Downtown (see **Figure 9**) for interesting examples of gas station architecture). This approach could still utilize a large installation as mentioned above, but may require some investment on the Town's part in order to aid in ensuring that the design is of higher quality than the typical gas station.

Figure 9: Modern Gas Station Designs



Beyond architectural the Town might also explore opportunities to work with the developer to allow some type of community –tourism space that provide tourists with wayfinding services. This use may also enhance the business profile of the gas station.

7.4 Summary

A new Downtown is critical for Wasaga Beach to achieve the goals of the overriding provincial planning legislation. Both the Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe focus on intensification and efficient use of land and resources. Their policies encourage the revitalization of downtowns to become vibrant and convenient centres, the creation of complete

communities, the development of a wide range of housing options to meet the needs of the local population, and a reduction in the reliance on personal automobiles.

Currently, the planning policy in the Downtown area is tourism focused and limits the development of uses that serve the permanent population. In order to create a more compact, liveable Downtown area, changes will be needed. The Downtown has the opportunity to become a significant intensification area for the Town of Wasaga Beach, and the recommendations in the DDMP provide a starting point for creating an intensification strategy as required by the Growth Plan and the County of Simcoe Official Plan.

8.0 Implementation Process

The DDMP is the first step in creating a new Downtown for Wasaga Beach. However, the Town will need to take several steps in the coming years in order to ensure that the vision of the DDMP can be executed. This section provides a brief overview of the steps that the Town will need to take over a period of at least 24 to 36 months prior to any significant construction beginning.

The goal of much of the early implementation work is to determine the best approach to capture financial and public benefits. Understanding the costs and benefits of all options is imperative for success and will put the Town of Wasaga Beach in a better negotiating position when they start engaging the private and public sectors when seeking investment. This understanding also reduces uncertainties regarding costs and approvals, and makes the most efficient use of limited public dollars.

This implementation work should begin immediately, and much of this work can occur concurrently. The time frame can be highly variable subject to Council's direction, the availability of funds, and broader economic factors such as the strength of the real estate market.

While this process is for the implementation of some of the larger components of the redevelopment, the Town should also consider other “small-win” changes that can be made in the short-term. Improvements like the food stalls in the Main End are already being pursued, and building on this type of initiative could aid in ensuring that residents see progress and that enthusiasm for the redevelopment remains.

Figure 10, on the following page, is a Gantt chart that maps out, at a high level, the steps the Town will need to take in the coming years and that are included in this section.

8.1 Servicing and Public Realm Design

The Town should immediately begin work to properly detail and plan the infrastructure proposed in the DDMP. This will be one of the more work intensive stages and could consume anywhere from 12 to 18 months, depending on the complexity of servicing and engineering issues that arise. This work would have the following objectives:

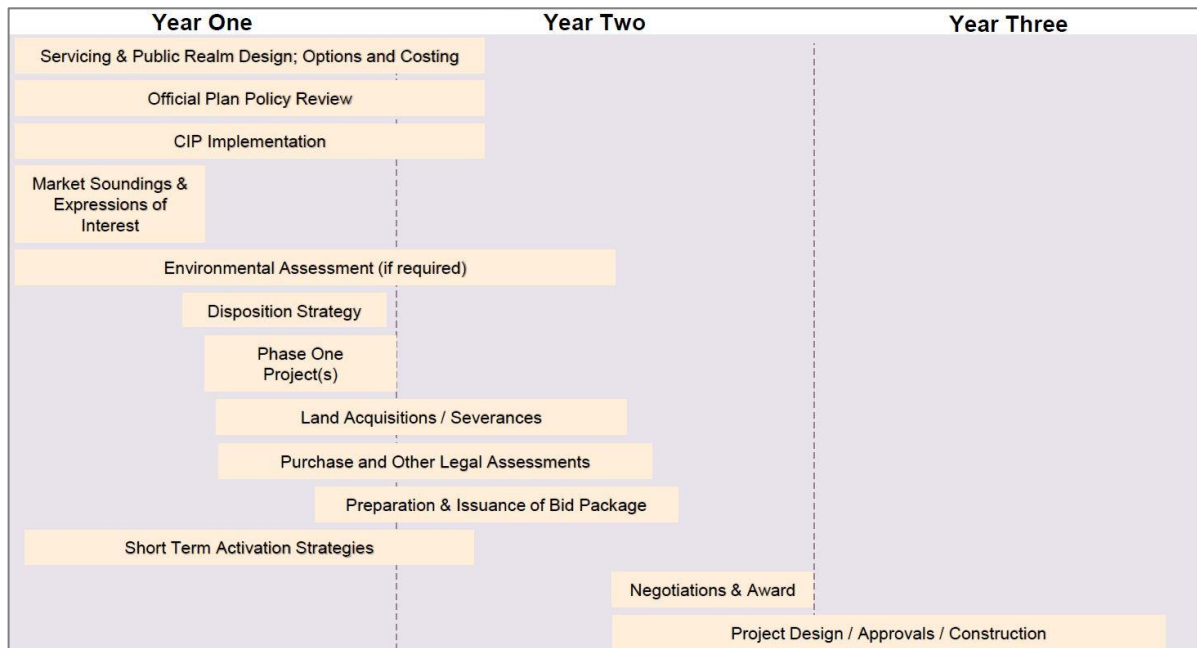
- Map out the space requirements of new streets and open spaces, and confirm which lands are required to execute the plan;
- Provide initial design standards and alternatives for servicing, streetscapes, and urban spaces;
- Provide initial costing and options for cost savings and phasing of costs;
- Determine funding and financing approaches – what will be paid for by the private sector, by the tax base, and by alternative funding sources; Provide construction schedule and timing, and phasing alternatives – begin to consider how infrastructure improvements can be installed without

interfering with summer tourism traffic. A determination of the precise timing of installation of infrastructure will also allow for proper timing for release of developer calls for proposals;

- Identify key issues such as soil and tree removals, among others;
- Identify approvals – including environmental assessment process timing and costs; and,
- Development of specifications and standards for the development of public spaces. For example, if a developer will be required to build the plaza in the Main End, it will be necessary to include in any bid package the exact area and specifications of the plaza including servicing, surfacing, street lighting and furniture to allow bids to be developed accurately.

It should be noted that the need for an environmental assessment, or multiple environmental assessments, could add a significant amount of time to the implementation timeline.

Figure 10: Implementation Plan



8.2 Policy Review

The Town is in the process of reviewing its Official Plan. This process should consider the outcomes of the DDMP and this report as well as how, or if, to incorporate Community Improvement Plan policies. This work can proceed immediately and in parallel to all other activities in the work plan.

8.3 Market Soundings and Expression of Interest

Beginning immediately, the Town of Wasaga Beach should reach out to experienced and interested parties in order to test design concepts with the market and begin to feel out what the private sector may be looking for in a redevelopment plan.

This stage could include the launch of a request for expressions of interest (“REOI”) which will confirm that there is market interest in new development in Wasaga Beach, identify potential development partners, and solicit input in the process.

Interviews with potential development interests should help to determine:

- Depth of market interests;
- The most desirable parcels;
- How much land should be included in the call for development proposals (e.g. large land offering vs. multiple small offerings, and the pros and cons of each option); and,
- What format of proposal call is most appealing and generates the greatest amount of bids.

The findings of the market soundings and a REOI could aid in adjusting the approach of the Town’s disposition strategy.

8.4 Disposition Strategy

The goal of the disposition strategy is to determine what the best approach would be to extracting value from the Town-owned lands. Two common approaches are to sell off the individual parcels (or a group of parcels) to a private developer, or to enter in to a joint venture with a developer partner that may provide some additional control over the decision making of the use of that parcel.

Another approach could be for the Town of Wasaga Beach to establish a Municipal Development Corporation (“MDC”). This MDC could be as large or as small as the Town deems appropriate, and could even be staffed part-time.

Wholly owned by the Town of Wasaga Beach, the MDC would be charged – under direction from Council – to negotiate financial deals with private developers. The benefit of an MDC is that it takes sensitive negotiations out of the public forum of Council and allows for quicker, more efficient negotiations. Many developers are resistant to negotiating in public with municipal staff and council. Developers are also deterred by the time it can take a deal to be reached with Council. This can limit the marketability of municipal initiatives and value capture.

In other municipalities such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Guelph, Councils authorize an MDC to negotiate within certain parameters – which are exposed to public scrutiny – but the details are left to the MDC. Properly staffed, an MDC improves the potential for a better financial performance of the deal and more rapid results.

The creation of an MDC is provided for under the Municipal Act but must be supported by a business case and a public meeting.

8.5 Phase One Plan

Based on the information gathered in the previous steps, the Town of Wasaga Beach can then begin to create a plan for the first phase of redevelopment. This will entail:

- Identifying which lands will be prioritized as part of the first phase;
- Creating development objectives;
- Determining which development parcels require assemblies, severances, etc;
- Identifying servicing and infrastructure costs for the first phase of development; and,
- Determining a preferred deal structure and financial strategy.

While there is not yet a developer partner at this stage of the implementation process, this stage aids in setting the town up for the preparation and issuance of a bid package in the near future. The phase one plan will set out everything that the developer will be responsible for, the costs, and the expectations for each element of the development.

8.6 Land Acquisitions, Severances, and Consolidations

With a clear understanding of the land needs required from the above noted studies, and confidence from the market soundings that sufficient development interest is present, the land necessary for implementation of public infrastructure should be acquired concurrent with the creation of the phase one plan. This stage will identify which lands are needed to facilitate new roads, to create new development parcels, etc.

Once the lands to be sold are clearly delineated they will need to be legally described and potentially severed for adjoining lands. This could happen after the developer is selected providing there is certainty of the exact area of land that will be transferred. Potential Planning Act appeals could slow down the process and should be considered early on.

It is anticipated that this work could be ongoing throughout the timeline of the implementation plan.

8.7 Purchase and Other Legal Agreements (Phase One)

Concurrent with the land acquisitions, severances, and consolidations, the Town of Wasaga Beach should develop its own form of purchase agreement for the future request for proposals (“RFP”). Council should consider the long term responsibilities of the developer and those of the Town – if any – in the management of public and private open spaces. Who owns, operates, and maintains these spaces must be determined and ensure there is clarity on these issues for both the Town and its future development partner – at least in draft – prior to the launch of a procurement process.

The legal agreements are likely to be an ongoing part of the implementation plan as decisions on blocks throughout the Downtown are made.

8.8 Preparation and Issuance of Bid Package

With the above work complete or well underway, the approach to procurement should be developed. Collection of the necessary bid information, submission requirements, communication and question protocol, evaluation and scoring criteria, and other key issues will need to be determined.

This could be a two-stage process with an initial request for expressions of interests or qualifications to bid – possibly even from international applicants – followed by a request for offers from short listed bid teams. The Town may also decide to simplify the process by asking for bids directly – at the risk of being flooded with unqualified bidders.

This stage of the work requires careful planning. A clear picture of what is being offered, and an equally clear picture of what will be required of the developer, is necessary. Work from the servicing and public realm design stage will be critical in the development of the bid materials to offer certainty of the bid components to the developer.

The creation of a project website will aid in easing the bid process. Interested firms can access all the information they may need on the website, including application materials, and submit their bids via the internet.

Once a developer partner has been chosen following the launch and evaluation of bids, the project design and approvals stage will officially begin. This stage will include detailed architectural and urban design work, in addition to planning approvals. Some of the design work is likely to occur earlier as part of the developer's bid package which could aid in shortening the length of this stage. If residential units are included, sales for the initial phase may begin prior to project approval in order to ensure that construction on the first phase can begin as soon as possible.

Upon project approval, construction on the first phase of development can occur. As construction is underway, design of subsequent development blocks and phases can begin to allow for a seamless transition to latter phases, as the market dictates.