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November 26, 2020

The Mayor & Council, Town of The Blue Mountains (TBM)
Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation (BMAHC)

To borrow an often-used phrase, LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: These 'three L's' underscore what I submit is a poor choice of site location by the BMAHC and Council on which to build the TBM's 'Attainable Housing.'

1. LOCATION: Neighbourhood

With the old Foodland/Gateway site adjoining the Thornbury Wastewater Treatment Plant, who on Council or the BMAHC Board would want to buy or rent a home overlooking this facility? If any of you answer, "no," then it behooves the BMAHC and Council to include in the information package that the rental units will have a view of and neighbour a sewage plant. By its very nature, the plant gives rise to odour, noise and the potential for contaminated soil in a parkette that *may* be part of the plan. This too should be included in the rental and/or home ownership information package. Over time there will be other rental choices in the Town of The Blue Mountains, and the potential for empty rental units at the Gateway site would be high given the unpleasant/undesirable location. The BMAHC could become the unintentional architect of 'Thornbury's White Elephant'. TBM runs the additional risk of becoming the laughingstock of the 'Attainable Housing' community, expecting individuals to live beside a sewage plant. This would reflect poorly on the BMAHC, Council and our entire community.

2. LOCATION: Transportation

Simply put, there is no public transportation of any consequence serving Thornbury now or in the foreseeable future. Any resident of the proposed Gateway site without a car would be limited to working and shopping in Thornbury. Access to public transportation is vital. The only location within TBM with public transportation is the Village.

3. LOCATION: Jobs

Jobs are limited in Thornbury, with many being seasonal and paying minimum wage. The proposed site would pigeonhole those without cars to job prospects within walking distance of the Gateway site.

In closing, providing housing to those that are in need of a 'hand-up' is honourable. Perhaps it is time to look at a location that offers all of the 'three L's.' Perhaps it's time to cut our collective losses and apply what has been learned to a more suitable site.

The old Foodland site could be turned into a real “gateway” to Thornbury. Around a large parking lot could be maps and suggested walking tours, directing tourists to shops, galleries, restaurants, the fish ladder, marina, waterfront parks, etc.

This would also enable the Town to better use the land it has purchased on Arthur Street West. Instead of a parking lot that would benefit largely the stores on a single block of Bruce Street, this valuable land could be used as a Town Square/park for all to enjoy. This would further help in beautifying our downtown, that prides itself on that ‘olde town feeling!’

Let’s harness more green space, not less.

It is not too late for BMAHC to make a change in direction and consider another site. Nor is it too late for Council to encourage BMAHC to do so. There has been a lot of consultant work and money spent that could be put to good use finding a more suitable and healthier location.

I respectfully request that serious consideration be given to these points and look forward to hearing back from Council and the BMAHC.

Respectfully,
Hazel Milne
Thornbury, ON