



Design Guidelines Task Force Meeting Notes

March 3, 2021

Executive Director Sharon McCormick called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m. and welcomed attendees, being: Garth Armour, Lyn Logan, Jim Torrance, Steve Diamond, Melri Wright, Stacy Manning, Steve Simon, Olwen Bennett, Shawn Everitt, and Barry Tatchell. Regrets were sent by Anne-Marie Shaw, Kim Harris, and Tovah Socha.

Reviewed previous design advice including: design guidelines, building scale which should reinforce small-town urban form, including: three storey with step-up to fourth storey, two separate buildings preferred, additional set back from 3m, and residential included on ground floor. Sharon provided an overview of Option 4 (2 buildings with 4th storey step-up, additional set back) which accounts for 84 units and 12,000 square feet of commercial space.

The Board did accept the recommendation coming out of this Task Force, and Executive Director went to Council requesting the Town to initiate the Zoning By-law and Official Plan amendments required for the Gateway Site, based on this design criteria. Council accepted this recommendation and requested Planning staff to work with The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation to initiate the application and the public process (includes public meeting and additional engagement).

Lyn requested clarity regarding the rationale for 2 versus 1 building. Sharon noted this is because of the scale and keeping a small-town character to the site.

Olwen Bennett, New Commons Development, provided an overview of Building Version Examples, including:

- 2 buildings where 50% of the ground floor is non-residential (84 residential units)
- 2 buildings where 25% of the ground floor is non-residential (94 residential units)
- 1 building where 50% of the ground floor is non-residential (84 residential units)
- 1 building where 25% of the ground floor is non-residential (94 residential units)
 - Assume 63 attainable rental units, 31 market rental units, 94 total units, 6,253 sf
 - Increased estimated costs (mechanical, electrical, exterior enclosure costs), increase in operating expenses, decrease in efficiency due to additional space needed for stairs, elevators, etc.

Olwen emphasized that the square footage, unit counts, parking, and design of the building are still relatively preliminary and could change during the process.

Olwen noted that if there is one building and less ground floor, non-residential space, we can achieve the highest number of attainable rental units. There is an assumption of a break-even model, with access to grants and other funding sources.

Garth enquired whether there is a reserve fund needed for long-term maintenance and repairs. Olwen noted there would be a requirement over time to manage these costs.

Steve Diamond noted a proposal for discussion that provides for positive urban design, but gains units and reduces costs, being: addition of a wing on one building to increase number of units, a 3m setback from 3 to 4 floors with architectural definition between the 3rd and the 4th, offset buildings 3m with additional setback for landscaping, additional return volume at the corner, 4 storey component should have a pitched roof, and a 12m minimum separation between buildings. Steve noted the intention is to recoup the number of units, as if it was one building (63 units as opposed to 46 units). Steve noted that the parking requirements may need to be revisited, as there may not be a need for the number of parking spots identified in the Town regulations given that this is attainable housing.

Shawn Everitt noted there are opportunities with respect to parking, and as Stacy Manning noted, there could be control measures in place to control the number of parking spots required per unit. Lyn questioned if the Corporation is considering underground parking, and Sharon confirmed that underground parking is approximately 3x the cost of ground-level parking. Further, by reducing the commercial space, the number of parking spots required is decreased as well. Garth noted there are lots of opportunities to incorporate green features into parking and make them more attractive than traditional lots.

Sharon noted the aim is to achieve consensus amongst the group. Is Steve's proposal, as outlined above, supported? There was general consensus and it was agreed that there would be minimal visual impact, and the proposal maintains consistency with the previously-suggested 2 building approach. Lyn noted that there needs to be additional consideration given to the area affected by the building. Lyn questioned the manner of engagement for the community. Sharon noted the Task Force will provide its advice to the Board for consideration. These recommendations, if approved by the Board, would be taken into account during the conceptual site plan. Sharon requested recommendations on how best to communicate this matter to the community, but noted there will be engagement opportunities through the planning process. Lyn noted this needs to be communicated to people, with an opportunity for two-way feedback. Steve Simon noted it's challenging to evaluate this model without seeing financials, particularly since it is related to attainable housing. Olwen noted by increasing the GFA, it requires more market rental units to make it work. Jim Torrance noted the rationale for this approach needs to be explained as part of the consultation to the community. One of these elements is to understand that if there is a model that sticks with a 3-storey limit, what trade-offs exist. This illustration would assist in illustrating for members of the public why there is a need to go beyond a 3-storey building.

Steve Diamond noted a basic principle that economic considerations should not trump good planning (as supported by the 3 storey max OP). We're talking about trying to gain a consensus to allow for an amendment of the OP to go to 4-storeys. The public will want to know a bit about why the BMAHC is taking the 4-storey approach and what, if any financing the Town or the County are providing. Steve noted his experience shows that 2 versus 1 building should only be a nominal cost increase. It is important to be able to explain to the public the ways in which 2, 4-storey buildings make sense as a positive planning rationale.

It was noted that any units put on the market, be they attainable or market-rate, will help relieve the pressure on the real-estate market.

Barry Tatchell noted there are endless configurations for the buildings and he is representing the Climate Action Now Network, where the primary goal is to ensure the building is built in a "green" manner.

Shawn Everitt noted there is merit to telling the story of attainable housing, and this is the role of The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation. The public also needs to understand that once the Corporation and Council get to the point of entertaining whether the building is 3 or 4 storeys, the Official Plan Amendment requires a formal planning process, with a well-defined public engagement process. If this is the route taken, it needs to get underway so that members of the community can provide their comments. Steve Diamond noted he is looking for communication back to The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation that the Corporation could keep the 2-building scenario in play, subject to further economic considerations and review. This will help move the project along more quickly once consensus is achieved.

The Task Force is supporting the proposal concept in principle, pending further review by the Board and the Town of The Blue Mountains, and also subject to further financial considerations and maintenance of the mix of units that would be achieved within one building.

Jim Torrance enquired whether the Task Force should develop the **criteria** with which to measure this project: **aesthetic, optimum number of attainable housing units, complement the existing character of the Town of Thornbury, and provide a self-sustaining financial model that does not expose the Town to risk, etc.**

Sharon enquired whether there are any additional design criteria that need to be included as the Town develops the Design Builder Request for Proposal (overall principles to assist the building to fit within the character of the Town). Sharon provided examples of various buildings using a façade and building material mix, and a variety of building styles to generate discussion, including the idea to mimic design style of the Thornbury Cidery to create a level of design integration. Stacy noted that the agricultural history of the area needs to be carried through the building. Steve Diamond noted he hopes to encourage the use of brick and architectural design

to break up the scale may be enough to add to the Design Builder RFP. Garth noted that a landscape architect should be included on the Design Build team.

Sharon provided an overview of the recent Business Roundtable meeting, which was an opportunity to discuss housing and staffing needs across multiple sectors in The Blue Mountains.

Sharon noted Steve Diamond and Jim Torrance will be presenting an overview of this meeting to the Board on March 4, 2021. Jim noted it would be helpful to outline the process and communication going forward, and how the Task Force members can support communications efforts moving forward. Lyn noted the Community Communications Advisory Committee is at the Corporation's disposal to seek input as needed.

Sharon thanked the Task Force members for their participation and noted she will follow-up with members following the Board meeting.

Key Action Items

- develop rationale for 4 versus 3 storeys to provide public education regarding attainable housing and the ZBA/OPA application
- map out the existing public engagement opportunities available to the public and stakeholders
- once Communications Plan is developed, provide to public and to the Task Force
- review Task Force's supported proposal concept in principle with the Board
- explain the criteria used by the Task Force to justify the proposal they support in principle
- Set up a Design Guidelines Task Force meeting the week of March 8 to discuss a public statement on behalf of the Task Force