Fall 2020 Consultation: What we heard

During the 90 days of public consultation for the draft Official Plan that began in fall 2020, we received valuable feedback from a variety of stakeholders including: Barrie residents and business owners, developers, land owner groups, and community organizations.

The following major themes emerged:



Housing & Development

- Support and facilitate mixed-use developments
- Permit more innovative forms of housing, and more affordable and attainable housing
- More consultation if large-scale institutional or commercial buildings are being added to residential neighbourhoods



Economic Development

- Consider changing land use policies to make Barrie more attractive to manufacturers
- Protect small commercial plazas from displacement by residential redevelopment
- Address implementation challenges related to Strategic Economic & Employment District along Bell Farm Rd.

The Waterfront

- Permit expansion along the waterfront, and only permit low to medium-rise buildings
- Invest in active transportation at and near the waterfront

Parking & Transit

- Protect existing downtown parking supply
- Support and facilitate redevelopment of underutilized parking lots and commercial areas
- Plan for Bus Rapid Transit

Heritage

- Limit dwellings to three storeys in historic neighbourhoods
- Protect and celebrate railway heritage and downtown heritage buildings

Public Art

- Increase public art and strengthen the role of public art in community building



Natural Spaces & the Environment

- Add more walking trails, forest preservation and tree canopy coverage
- Implement green development standards, and increase the number of trees planted in new developments
- Protect existing creeks, established woodlots and mature trees
- Explore ways to encourage development that reduces impact on air quality
- Keep Environmentally Protected lands and Natural Heritage System lands

Feedback also reflected the need to:

- Plan for all ages, including older adults, and design with community safety and accessibly for all in mind;
- Invest in cultivating a sense of place, place-making, and identity building; and,
- Use consistent terminology in further consultation and drafts.

The City recognizes that some feedback received cannot be addressed by the Official Plan process. For example:

- The Official Plan can't direct Council to use certain funds for certain projects.
- The City is directed by the Province to grow. We can't grow 'out' because we don't have any more land, so we must grow 'up'. In this way Barrie will grow into complete and urbanized mid-sized city.
- Future assessment of the City's parks and natural heritage systems will be needed to address comments related to natural features.

Some comments received during the consultation were out of scope and cannot be addressed by the City's Official Plan. If able to be addressed by another initiative or City department, the comments were shared with the appropriate department for consideration, further consultation or action.