

Density and Bonusing

Blue Mountain Ratepayers'
Association

February 29, 2016

Planning:

What does our community want?

- Protection of all the things we love about our area... the nature, the views, the ‘small-town feel’, the recreation, the livability, etc...
- Compatible growth and development that respects and enhances these important community assets
- An Official Plan that is a reflection of our community

Development approvals:

What does our community want?

- An open, transparent, predictable development approval process that we can all understand
- Clear rules applied consistently and fairly for everyone; no backroom negotiations; no planning by exception; exceptions permitted only in very special cases
- Early involvement by public and Council
- Fewer development ‘battles’; fewer OMB hearings; less time and money spent by all parties

Density:

What does our community want?

- We all want protection against any big increases in density in our neighbourhoods.
- Any increased density must be modest and compatible with the character of the surrounding area.
- Good OP, zoning and design controls must be in place if higher densities are to be contemplated.

Bonusing:

What does our community want?

- Most people have no idea what bonusing is.
- The explanations so far are complicated and convoluted. The potential impact of bonusing in the real world - what can be built in your neighbourhood - has not been communicated to residents.
- There is risk that bonusing will lead to a serious loss of trust in our local government...
Why have rules if you are just going to build-in the loopholes and negotiate side deals?

Bonusing:

To even begin to think about it, we would need....

- A strong case that there is a need for bonusing:
 - Nobody is disagreeing with the Provincial Policy Statement - this is reflected in our revised OP. But the PPS says nothing about bonusing and we are not in one of the province's designated growth areas.
 - We already have very high density limits in some parts of Town-60 UPH in Thornbury-Clarksburg. That's three times the density of Applejack.
 - The revised OP calls for a Town-wide increase in density of 40% from 2007 levels.
 - Is there no other way to finance some of the benefits we are looking for?

Bonusing:

To even begin to think about it, we would need....

- Very clear OP policies that define exactly how and where bonusing might apply, exactly what the public would get from bonusing and assurances that we would actually get it - NOT just guidelines that are starting point for negotiation.
- Experts warn that communities must have very specific policies, or risk losing the ability to control bonusing or ensure that any possible community benefits are realized.

Bonusing:

To even begin to think about it, we would need....

- Very strict limits so that only minimal increases beyond the density and height limits of the OP are permitted, and the basic integrity of the OP is not jeopardized
- A process that allows thorough review and consultation by Council and the public
- A general understanding that we are not in the business of “selling units”

We aren't even close to meeting these conditions

- The information provided to the public so far - including the Draft Bonusing Guidelines, the wording the revised OP, and Report PDS.16.14 - doesn't begin to satisfy these very basic requirements.

Our recommendations...

- For now:
 - Do not include bonusing in the new Official Plan at this time. Adopt option 2 of the discussion report PDS.16.14 on bonusing. The bonusing policies are a deeply flawed carry-over from the old OP. The risks are too high to simply allow them to migrate into the revised OP without very careful study and review.
 - Adjust the maximum density permitted in any areas where the current limit is unrealistically low to more accurately reflect existing development.

Our recommendations...

- In the future..
 - If any staff, Councillors, developers or ratepayers believe they have a good case for bonusing they can have their proposals introduced through a rigorous public process and, if successful, adopted by Official Plan Amendment.

Our recommendations...

- Anything we do on bonusing should respect the same basic principles community members have spelled out repeatedly over many years:
 - Protect our neighbourhoods and community assets
 - Ensure compatibility of new development; no big density increases
 - Follow an open, transparent, and predictable development process ; no surprises
 - Establish clear rules, and apply them consistently and fairly for all

Our recommendations...

- Greater clarity, transparency and fairness in our OP will help us manage other important issues impacting our Community such as Attainable Housing and Short-Term Accommodation. These issues are beyond the scope of this meeting. However, an approach based on consistent application of clear policies and minimal need for exceptions and one-off negotiations will benefit all stakeholders.