



## COMMUNITY AND PLANNING SERVICES COMMITTEE

Update to the Resort Policy Framework in the Muskoka Official Plan: PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED POLICIES  
OPEN HOUSES (April 16, 2025) and PUBLIC MEETING (April 24, 2025)

**MERIDIAN**  
PLANNING

# Background

The current Muskoka Official Plan policy framework on resort development is generally designed to accomplish four objectives:

1. To ensure that resorts are and remain commercial, so that tourists continue to visit the District and contribute to the local economy
2. To ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place such that the District does not become responsible for water and wastewater servicing at resorts that are not on urban services (residential uses are not permitted) and that environmental and human health are protected
3. To limit the conversion of existing resorts to residential uses in support of the first objective
4. To ensure that new resorts are appropriately located in a manner that minimizes impacts on the environment and water quality and are compatible with the character and nature of adjacent development (local OPA required)



# Background Cont'd

However, while these policies are clear on what the objectives of the District are, there was and is a lack of clarity on the tests for a resort to be considered a '**commercial enterprise**'

With this in mind and based on the available supporting documents at the time of the last Official Plan Review, a comprehensive set of draft policies were developed that:

1. Clarified the definition of a resort and the objectives of the policy set;
2. Recognized the diversity of resort sizes, types and functions across Muskoka; and
3. Provided flexibility to allow a mix of resort commercial and resort-related residential units in all designations



# So what happened...?

The proposed resort policy framework became the over-arching discussion item at all meetings:

- Considerable time and energy was spent debating the policies with the 50/50 concept being the major highlight of all discussions; and
- Some thought the policies were too flexible and other thought the policies did not go far enough to encourage resort development
- **In the end – ABSOLUTELY no one was happy**



In order for the Official Plan Review to move forward, a decision was made to exclude the updated resort policies from OPA 47



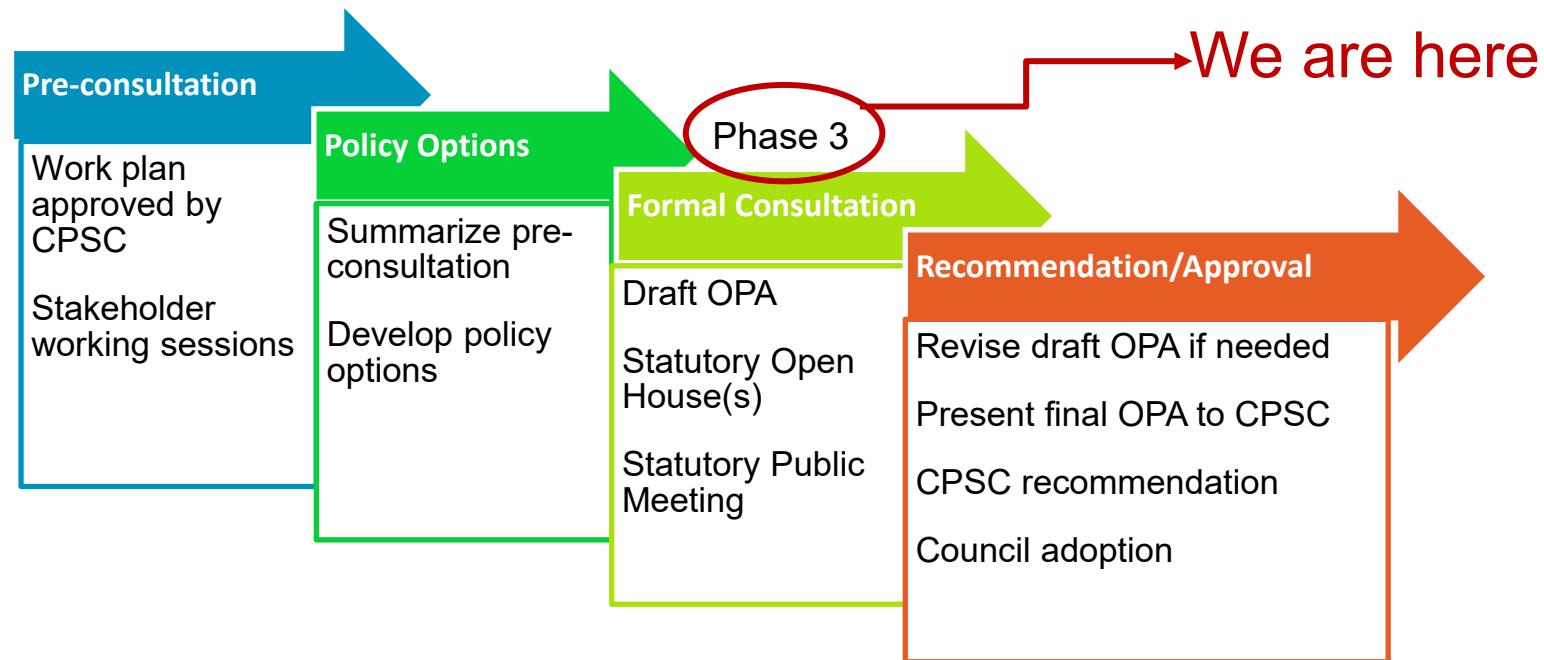
# Moving Forward – 2021 to now

In 2021 – the District engaged Meridian Planning to consult on a prepare an updated and modern resort policy framework. **The work was planned to:**

1. Build upon those elements of the previous draft resort policy framework that can support the objectives and guiding principles of the Muskoka Official Plan and represent good planning;
2. Consult with all stakeholders to obtain their views;
3. Consider options and alternatives to the draft report policy framework; and
4. Develop forward-looking policies that ensure resorts continue to be commercial enterprises while encouraging the development of new resorts and the redevelopment of others – innovation and balance will be key



# Moving Forward – 2021 to now (cont'd)



# Draft Policy Framework – Section 7 of Report and Appendix C

## Proposed Objectives:

- a) Recognize commercial resorts as **an important component of the tourism industry** that provides a historic link to the origins of tourism in Muskoka;
- b) Support commercial resort development and redevelopment in **all designations through flexible policies** that accommodate changing market demands, **provided commercial resorts remain commercial in form and function**;
- c) Ensure that **existing and new commercial resorts are commercial in nature**, so that travellers and vacationers continue to visit the District and contribute to the broader economy;
- d) Ensure that **appropriate guarantees are in place to ensure that the District does not become responsible for water and wastewater servicing** at commercial resorts that are not on municipal sewage services and municipal water services;
- e) **Retain existing commercial resort properties where possible** to support the continued economic vitality of Muskoka; and
- f) Ensure that new commercial resorts are appropriately located and developed in a manner that **minimizes impacts on the environment and water quality** and are designed to be sympathetic with the character of the surrounding area.

# Draft Policy Framework – Section 7 of Report and Appendix C (cont'd)

## Proposed Policies:

1. Continue to **prohibit year round or seasonal residential use** of units outside of Urban Centres and Minett;
2. Require that all units in a condominium outside of Urban Centres be part of a **single resort entity**;
3. Require that **tangible resort-related amenities, services and recreational facilities** be available on-site – with some required in the first phase;
4. Require **in-person on site management** with details left to the Area Municipalities;
5. Prohibit use of units for more than **26 weeks in calendar year** and for more than 4 weeks in July and August – outside of Urban Centres;

# Draft Policy Framework – Section 7 of Report and Appendix C (cont'd)

## Proposed Policies:

6. Continue to require an Area Municipal OPA for new commercial resorts that are proposed to be on **private communal services** – no OPA required for single ownership resorts;
7. Require **form of tenure to be identified up front** and how occupancy is proposed to be controlled – if required;
8. Require the submission of **revenue generation model** that demonstrates how the commercial resort will generate a revenue stream from unit rentals and the commercial uses on site that sustain the commercial component of the commercial resort such that it is and will be viable;
9. Identify the matters that need to be addressed **in support of applications** (impacts on environment, character etc.);
10. Identify the **criteria that need to be satisfied** (no adverse impacts on lake system health, high quality built form etc.);

# Draft Policy Framework – Section 7 of Report and Appendix C (cont'd)

## Proposed Policies:

11. Require that resorts in Urban Centres and Minett be on **full municipal services**;
12. Permit consideration of **private communal services** outside Urban Centres and Minett provided appropriate securities equal to 100% of the value of the private communal sewage services and private communal water services are deposited with the District at the time of the registration of the Plan of Condominium until the reserve fund is topped up;
13. Permit the **conversion of any resort property** to another use only if it is demonstrated that:
  - The resort is no longer commercially viable, with detailed reasons provided;
  - The other permitted uses are also not viable;
  - The enhancements required to make the resort commercially viable and/or which are required to ensure that the resort complies with all current regulations are not practical and/or are not feasible; and
  - The loss of the commercial land base will not negatively impact the critical mass of tourism infrastructure in the District.

# Next Steps

Include:

1. Review of comments made;
2. Preparation of 'what we heard report'; and
3. Preparation of final OPA for CPSC consideration

