

GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE DRAFT CHANGES TO THE ZONING BY-LAW

for the Municipality of Grey Highlands
(Updated Version)

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1. Introduction

This document serves as a reference to help Council, property owners, businesses, and developers understand the changes introduced in the updated Zoning By-law. Each section is organized to explain key updates, how to navigate the new regulations, and what steps to take if your property is affected.

2. Understanding the Zoning By-law

a) What is a Zoning By-law?

A Zoning By-law is a regulatory tool used by municipalities to control land use and development. It defines how land and buildings can be used, setting out specific regulations for different zones such as residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial areas. The by-law includes provisions related to permitted land uses, lot sizes, building heights, setbacks, parking requirements, and other development standards. By implementing zoning regulations, municipalities ensure orderly growth, protect community character, minimize land use conflicts, and support broader planning objectives outlined in the Official Plan and higher-tier government policies.

b) Relationship Between the Official Plan and Zoning By-law

The Official Plan establishes the long-term vision and policy direction for land use and development within a municipality, guiding growth, infrastructure, and environmental protection. The Zoning By-law is the legal tool that implements these policies by providing specific regulations that control land use, lot sizes, building types, setbacks, and other development standards. While the Official Plan sets broad policies, the Zoning By-law translates them into enforceable rules that dictate how land can be used on a day-to-day basis. By ensuring consistency between the Official Plan and the Zoning By-law, municipalities can effectively manage development, prevent land use conflicts, and promote orderly growth in line with local and provincial planning objectives.

c) **Explanation of Zoning Schedules (Maps)**

Zoning maps, also known as zoning schedules, are an essential component of the Zoning By-law, visually depicting how land within the Municipality is designated for different uses. These maps outline zoning boundaries and indicate permitted land uses for each property. Each zone is assigned a specific designation (e.g., Residential, Commercial, Agricultural) that corresponds with regulations in the text of the Zoning By-law.

Although maps have not yet been updated to reflect the language in the Zoning By-law to date, the following is the method to interpret zoning maps, once they are established:

1. **Identify the Property Location:** Use the address or lot reference to find the property on the zoning map.
2. **Determine the Zoning Designation:** Each area is color-coded or labeled with a zone classification (e.g., R for Residential, C1 for Downtown Commercial, A1 for Agriculture).
3. **Check the Legend:** The map legend provides details on zoning classifications, special provisions, and overlays (such as environmental protection areas or hazard lands).
4. **Understand Applicable Regulations:** Once a zoning designation is identified, refer to the corresponding section of the Zoning By-law to review specific land use permissions, setbacks, height restrictions, and other regulations.

Zoning maps are significant because they provide clarity on where certain land uses are permitted, help guide development decisions and ensure consistency with the Official Plan. They also serve as a critical tool for property owners, developers, and municipal staff in assessing what can be built on a given property and whether zoning amendments or minor variances may be required.

3. **Background on the Zoning By-law Update**

a) **Why the By-law is Being Updated?**

The Zoning By-law update is necessary to align municipal zoning regulations with the Grey Highlands Official Plan, Grey County Official Plan, and the Provincial Planning Statement. Under the *Planning Act*, municipalities are required to update their Zoning By-laws within three years of an Official Plan update to ensure local regulations remain consistent with higher-level policy frameworks. Failure to update the Zoning By-law can result in inefficiencies in land use planning, misalignment with provincial and county policies, and increased administrative burdens on staff and applicants. Currently, Grey Highlands is experiencing a high volume of zoning amendment and minor variance applications, many of which are required simply to allow developments that are already in line with overarching plans, policies and strategies. By modernizing the Zoning By-law, the Municipality can significantly reduce unnecessary applications, streamline approvals, and decrease costs for both taxpayers and developers, while ensuring consistency with contemporary planning and policy requirements.

b) **How the Process Was Conducted**

The Zoning By-law Update was developed through a comprehensive review of plans, strategies and policies that have been adopted by both the Municipality of Grey Highlands and the County of Grey to ensure the Zoning By-law reflects the Vision of the local and regional governments.

A review of the two draft by-laws previously created by JL Richards and the past administration was also conducted to assess the direction taken in those documents and determine whether they aligned with Council's vision, goals, and objectives. Some of the wording was transferred over to the new document, while other policy directives were left out.

Additionally, the consultant spoke to staff at Grey Highlands regarding historical zoning amendment applications and minor variance requests to identify recurring themes, ensuring that the new by-law proactively addresses common issues.

Further, the updated by-law was compared against zoning frameworks from other rural municipalities to ensure it aligns with best practices while reflecting Grey Highlands' unique local context. The result is a modernized draft Zoning By-law designed to streamline approvals, reduce administrative burden, and minimize the need for zoning amendments that are already in alignment with overarching plans and policies.

4. Key Changes in the Updated Zoning By-law

- a) **Land Use Changes:** The updated Zoning By-law introduces new zoning categories and consolidates outdated ones to reflect current land use needs and policy direction. Notable changes include adjustments to permitted uses under residential zoning classifications, refinements to agricultural land-use policies, and updates to mixed-use and commercial zones. Additionally, special land-use designations have been reviewed to align with Grey Highlands' Official Plan and broader planning objectives. These modifications aim to provide clearer guidance on land use permissions, reduce the need for frequent zoning amendments, and support economic development while maintaining the community's rural character. The following represents the change in Zones:

Existing By-law	Draft By-law
Agriculture (A1)	Agriculture (A1)
Restricted Agriculture (A2)	Restricted Agriculture (A2)
Rural (RU)	Rural (RU)
Residential (R)	Rural Residential (RUR)
Residential Multiple (RM)	Residential (R)
Rural Residential (RUR)	Residential Multiple (RM)
Residential Shoreline (RS)	Residential Shoreline (RS)
Downtown Commercial (C1)	Downtown Commercial (C1)
Highway and Service Commercial (C2)	Highway and Service Commercial (C2)
Neighbourhood and Convenience (C3)	Mixed Use (C3)
Rural Commercial (C4)	Light Industrial (M1)
Light Industrial (M1)	Heavy Industrial (M2)
Heavy Industrial (M2)	Extractive Industrial (MEX)

Extractive Industrial (MEX)	Space Extensive Commercial and Industrial (MSX)
Institutional (I)	Institutional (I)
No Development (ND)	Hazard (H)
Hazard (H)	Wetland (W)
Wetland (W)	Open Space (OS)
Open Space (OS)	Recreational Resort (REC)
Recreational Resort (REC)	Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP)

Definitions: The definitions section was modified and expanded on, to ensure clarity for the reader. Some definitions were removed, if no longer needed, and no longer referenced throughout the By-law. For major changes, the following are recommended to be read in their entirety:

1. **Dwellings:** Council had directed staff in November to include a review of the definitions and land use regulations related to dwellings in the Zoning By-law Update. As a result, the dwelling definitions have been modified significantly. New rules and regulations have also been added, and for a better understanding, please see “Attachment 1”.
2. **Renewable Energy Systems:** Due to legislative changes, the renewable energy systems are only permitted as-of-right as an accessory use in the agricultural or rural zones.
3. **Agricultural-Related Uses and On-Farm Diversified Uses:** The changes proposed reflect better alignment with provincial policy and the County Official Plan. There are some inconsistencies between the proposed language in the Zoning By-law and the municipal Official Plan, due to it requiring an update to better align with County and provincial policy. It is anticipated that more changes under this policy framework are anticipated, to ensure no direct contradiction with the Official Plan.
4. **Short Term Accommodation, Backyard Hens:** These were added due to new By-laws coming into play since the Zoning By-laws inception. Definitions and rules associated with these two uses were previously not in the By-law.
5. **Refreshment Vehicles:** New language was added to regulate accessory and permanent refreshment vehicles in Grey Highlands as part of this update, as it is becoming an increasingly popular attraction in rural communities.

b) **General Provisions:** Several changes to the general provisions took place, including:

1. **Setbacks from wetlands, threatened and endangered species habitat, and abandoned landfill sites:** These areas are now intended to have a holding zone that will protect them from development. For a better understanding, please see “Attachment 4”.
2. **Storage of Unlicensed Vehicles, Trailers and Commercial Vehicles:** The draft suggests not permitting unlicensed vehicles anymore, and allowing the storage of licensed vehicles set on certain criteria.

3. **Renewable Energy Systems:** Reduced language as it only pertains to accessory uses now, instead of as-of-right uses due to legislative changes.

The following is a list of the new general provisions that were added to the Draft Zoning By-law:

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|--|--|
| - On-Farm Diversified Uses | - Fences |
| - Urban Agriculture | - Ponds |
| - Servicing | - Temporary Construction |
| - Habitable Space (ADUs, bunkies, cabins, dwellings, farm help accommodations) | - Refreshment Vehicles |
| - Uses Without Buildings | - Recreational Uses |
| - Demolition of Rental Units | - Shipping Containers |
| - Kennels | - Short Term Accommodations |
| - Permitted Yard Encroachments | - Bed and Breakfast |
| - Setbacks on Lakes and Waterbodies | - Campground |
| - Shoreline Buffer | - Personal Livestock for Non-Farm Use |
| - Land Use Compatibility | - Storage of Unlicensed or Inoperable Vehicles |
| | - |

- c) **Parking Requirements:** Parking requirements have been modified to reflect a certain number of spaces based on GFA instead of employee and/or customer base. They have been reviewed in greater context with other municipalities, with no transit systems and of similar sizes, to ensure they would be generally applicable in Grey Highlands.

New uses and parking requirements have been proposed for clarity purposes. Guidance on how to accurately establish the parking requirements when the use is not listed, has also been added. Requirements to ensure adequate space is available for snow storage, is also factored into the draft Zoning By-law.

An opportunity to modify the parking requirements has also been established by permitting applicants to conduct a Parking Justification Study, without a need for a minor variance. The process is described under the Parking Requirements section of the Zoning By-law for further information.

- d) **Permitted Uses:** Additions and removals of permitted land uses have been suggested.

1. **Residential Changes:** The Residential Zone has changed quite significantly; however, this is related to provincial changes due to the current housing crisis being experienced in Ontario. Modifications are also proposed to housing policies, with additional flexibility in housing choices following Council discussions in November. These changes aim to provide more options for homeowners, including accessory dwelling units, secondary suites, and updates to modular and mobile home regulations. The goal is to align zoning regulations with evolving housing needs while maintaining compatibility with existing communities. Please see Attachment 1.

2. **On-Farm Diversified Uses:** The draft Zoning By-law introduces expanded permissions for on-farm diversified uses, allowing agricultural property owners to engage in secondary business activities that complement farming operations. These changes align with the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) but also offer several local benefits, including:
 - a. **Supporting Rural Economic Development:** Enables farmers to diversify income streams by allowing small-scale businesses such as agri-tourism, farm markets, craft production, and small-scale food processing.
 - b. **Enhancing Agricultural Viability:** Provides farmers with financial stability by allowing additional revenue-generating activities while ensuring the primary use of the land remains agriculture.
 - c. **Encouraging Innovation in Agriculture:** Supports creative land uses that add value to farming operations, such as farm-to-table experiences, wedding venues, and educational workshops (dependent on size and compatibility, a rezoning may still be required).
 - d. **Reducing the Need for Zoning Amendments:** Clarifies what on-farm diversified uses are permitted, streamlining approvals and reducing the burden on property owners and municipal staff.
 - e. **Preserving the Rural Character:** Regulations ensure that these uses remain small-scale and compatible with surrounding agricultural and rural areas, preventing conflicts with neighbouring properties.
- e) **New or Revised Setbacks, Height, and Lot Requirements:** Slight changes have been made to the development standards.

5. Comparing the 2004 By-law vs. 2025 Draft By-law

a) Major Differences at a Glance

The updated Zoning By-law introduces several key changes to align with provincial, county, and municipal planning objectives while addressing community needs. Key updates include:

1. **New and Revised Zoning Classifications:** Updates to better reflect existing land use patterns and future growth projections.
2. **Expanded Housing Flexibility:** Increased opportunities for accessory dwelling units, secondary suites, and modular housing in response to Council discussions.
3. **Refined Agricultural Policies:** Adjustments to on-farm diversified uses to balance agricultural preservation with economic opportunities.
4. **Modernized Parking Regulations:** Revisions to parking standards to improve land-use efficiency and reflect contemporary transportation needs.

5. **Streamlined Development Standards:** Updated setbacks, lot coverage, and height regulations to reduce unnecessary minor variances.
6. **Improved Clarity and Definitions:** Enhanced zoning terminology to provide clearer guidance for residents, developers, and municipal staff.
7. **Increased Height in Highway and Downtown Commercial Area:** During the Committee of the Whole meeting, Council requested that the maximum height be expanded to accommodate more intensive development in core commercial areas, potential mixed-use opportunities, and alignment with intensification goals.

These updates aim to streamline development, reduce the frequency of zoning amendment and minor variance applications, and provide a regulatory framework that better aligns with Grey Highlands' long-term planning vision.

b) **What's Stayed the Same?**

While several updates have been made to improve clarity, efficiency, and alignment with higher-level policies, many foundational elements of the existing Zoning By-law remain intact. These include:

1. **Core Zoning Categories:** The primary residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural zoning categories have been retained to ensure continuity with existing land uses.
2. **Development Standards:** While some adjustments have been made, key provisions such as maximum lot coverage and height restrictions in most zones remain similar to the previous by-law.
3. **Environmental Protection Policies:** Existing protections for wetlands, floodplains, and other environmentally sensitive areas continue to apply to ensure responsible land stewardship.
4. **General Compliance with Official Plan:** The overarching framework of the Zoning By-law remains aligned with the Official Plan's long-term vision for growth and development in Grey Highlands.

These retained elements help ensure a smooth transition from the old by-law to the updated one, minimizing disruption while incorporating necessary improvements.

6. How These Changes Impact Property Owners

- a) **Homeowners and Residential Property Owners:** The updated Zoning By-law introduces several changes that impact residential properties, offering greater flexibility while ensuring compatibility with surrounding uses. Key updates include:
 1. **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** Increased permissions for additional residential units, allowing homeowners to create more rental or multi-generational living spaces.

2. **Modular Regulations:** Clarified standards for modular and mobile homes to provide more affordable housing options while maintaining community character.
3. **Expanded Home-Based Business Opportunities:** Updated regulations to support small-scale home businesses while ensuring minimal impact on neighbouring properties.
4. **Streamlined Setbacks & Lot Coverage Rules:** Adjustments to setbacks, lot coverage, and height restrictions to provide more flexibility in residential development.
5. **Short-Term Accommodations:** Defined rules for short-term rentals to balance housing availability and community concerns, that is consistent with the Short-Term Accommodations By-law.

These changes aim to modernize residential zoning policies, reduce the need for minor variances, and align with Council's vision of providing more housing options for residents.

b) **Business Owners and Commercial Property Owners**

The updated Zoning By-law introduces several key changes to support economic growth while maintaining compatibility with surrounding land uses. Key updates include:

1. **Expanded Permitted Uses:** Additional commercial and mixed-use zones allow for a broader range of business activities, particularly in key growth areas. A new zone for space extensive commercial and industrial uses is also being proposed, to align with the County of Grey Highlands Official Plan.
2. **Built in Flexibility to Development Standards:** Adjusted setback and lot coverage requirements provide greater flexibility for commercial expansions and new developments.
3. **Modernized Parking Regulations:** Updates to parking requirements aim to provide flexibility in parking minimums, supporting more efficient land use.
4. **Defined Regulations for Home-Based Businesses:** Expanded opportunities for small-scale home businesses and industries while ensuring they do not negatively impact residential neighbourhoods.

These changes aim to foster a more business-friendly environment while maintaining the integrity of commercial districts and protecting community interests.

c) **Farmers and Rural Landowners:**

The updated Zoning By-law introduces key modifications to agricultural land uses to better balance economic opportunities with farmland preservation. Key changes include:

1. **Expanded On-Farm Diversified Uses:** Adjustments to allow more flexibility for secondary businesses on agricultural properties, such as agri-tourism, small-scale food processing, and on-site sales.

2. **New Policies for Agricultural Structures:** Clarifications on setback requirements, height allowances, and permitted accessory structures to support modern farming operations.
3. **Updated Rural Residential Development Guidelines:** Improved policies to manage lot creation in rural zones, maintaining consistency with provincial planning directives while allowing for limited residential growth.
4. **Strengthened Environmental and Natural Heritage Protections:** Zoning updates to better interpret conservation policies, including setbacks from wetlands, woodlands, and other sensitive features, when professional environmental studies have been completed and identify that the feature is of a different size or in located in a different area. For a better understanding, please see “Reader’s Guide to Changes Related to Environmental Holding Provisions”.

These modifications aim to reduce the need for frequent zoning amendments while ensuring that agricultural lands remain productive and sustainable for future generations.

d) **Developers and Investors:**

The updated Zoning By-law introduces several changes that streamline the development process and provide greater predictability for investors. Key impacts include:

1. **Simplified Zoning Framework:** Consolidation of outdated zones and clearer regulations reduce uncertainty in land-use planning.
2. **Increased Flexibility for Mixed-Use Development:** Expanded opportunities for mixed-use developments in key growth areas, supporting a blend of residential and commercial uses.
3. **Reduced Need for Zoning Amendments:** By aligning zoning regulations more closely with the Official Plan, the frequency of required amendments is expected to decrease, saving time and costs.
4. **Updated Site Plan and Parking Standards:** Modernized parking requirements and clearer site plan guidelines improve efficiency in the approval process.
5. **Support for Intensification and Affordable Housing:** Zoning changes allow for greater housing density where appropriate, in line with provincial housing objectives, including increasing the maximum height requirement for fully serviced apartment complexes.
6. **Environmental and Natural Heritage Considerations:** Updated environmental protection policies ensure responsible development while maintaining compliance with provincial and county requirements.

These updates aim to facilitate development that aligns with Grey Highlands’ planning vision while reducing administrative burdens for developers and municipal staff.

7. **Recommendations to Improve Staff Efficiencies and Reduce Red Tape**

To further strengthen staff efficiencies, reduce administrative burdens, and improve consistency with Council's vision, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a) **Delegate Authority to Staff to Remove Holding Provisions:** Allowing planning staff to remove holding provisions without requiring Council approval can expedite development approvals and reduce unnecessary procedural delays.
- b) **Update Cash-in-Lieu of Parking Fee:** Increase the fee from \$625 to better reflect market conditions and support municipal infrastructure needs.
- c) **Dedicate Staff Resources for Alternative Parking Solutions:** Prioritize efforts to identify and secure alternative parking arrangements in key growth areas such as Flesherton and Markdale.
- d) **Update the Site Plan Control By-law:** Modernizing the Site Plan Control By-law will ensure consistency with current planning policies, improve development oversight, and streamline approvals.
- e) **Ensure Official Plan Consistency with County and Provincial Policies:** Conduct a review and update of the Official Plan to ensure full alignment with the Grey County Official Plan and the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), reducing the risk of policy conflicts and unnecessary amendments.
- f) **Develop Secondary Plans for Markdale and Flesherton:** Creating detailed secondary plans for these growth areas will provide clear development guidelines, promote strategic investment, and enhance land use planning certainty.

These recommendations aim to improve operational efficiency, reduce unnecessary approvals, and create a more predictable development environment for property owners, businesses, and investors in Grey Highlands.

8. Next Steps and Implementation

- a) **Timeline for Finalization and Council Adoption:** The next steps in the process include hosting an Open House and a Public Meeting, as required under the *Planning Act*. During these events, feedback and information from the public, stakeholders, and Council will be gathered and reviewed. Modifications will be considered and incorporated where appropriate before being presented back to Council for further input. Once Council is confident in the final product, the draft Zoning By-law will be brought forward by By-law for consideration of adoption.
- b) **Where to Find More Information:** Additional resources will be available on the Municipality's website, and staff will be available to assist with any inquiries.

9. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- a) **We Heard Strong Towns' Delegations – How Have Their Recommendations Been Considered?**

Strong Towns has presented delegations advocating for more walkable, economically productive urban areas with reduced regulatory barriers. Key recommendations

included reducing setbacks from front lot lines in downtown areas and relaxing parking requirements where feasible. The updated Zoning By-law reflects these principles by:

1. **Reduced Front Lot Line Setbacks:** Allowing buildings to be closer to the street in downtown areas to enhance pedestrian accessibility and encourage vibrant, mixed-use spaces.

It is worth noting that although the 75.0 metre setback was argued specifically for maintaining visibility for drivers and minimizing safety hazards in agricultural areas, a secondary benefit was to provide space for future road widenings or upgrades. An alternative to the removal of the setback could be:

- a. Expropriation and maximizing public space,
- b. Seek out opportunities to expand public use of the land, without permanent construction.

It is also worth noting that, in the settlement areas, development is exempt from the 75.0 metre setback requirement. Clarification from the County is necessary as to whether the current By-law is consistent with the County's By-law governing the required 75.0 metres.

A new provision was added indicating that all new surface parking is not to be located between the front lot line and the principal building, to ensure pedestrian-oriented design and streetscape continuity.

2. **Updated Parking Requirements:** Providing opportunities for taxpayers and developers to conduct a professional Parking Justification Study (accepted and agreed to by municipal staff, and peer reviewed if warranted), which would establish the actual needs versus the minimums provided.

b) **How Does This Affect My Property?**

The impact of the updated Zoning By-law on your property will depend on its existing zoning designation and any changes introduced in the new by-law. In most cases, properties will retain their current zoning category, and their existing use, so long that it was legally established, can continue to exist. However, certain properties may be subject to:

1. **New or Updated Land Use Permissions:** Some zones may now allow additional uses, providing more flexibility for property owners.
2. **Changes to Development Standards:** Adjustments to lot coverage, setbacks, and building height regulations could impact future development or expansions.
3. **Refinements to Home-Based Business Regulations:** Expanded opportunities for home occupations may allow for greater flexibility in residential areas.
4. **Updated Agricultural and Rural Provisions:** New policies supporting on-farm diversified uses and agri-tourism could create additional opportunities for rural landowners.

While most properties will not see significant changes, property owners are encouraged to review the updated by-law and zoning maps (once available) to understand how their property may be affected. If you have specific concerns or require clarification, municipal staff are available to assist with questions related to zoning designations and development permissions.

c) **What Happens if My Use is No Longer Permitted?**

Very few uses were removed from the lists of permitted uses. However, if your current use is no longer permitted under the updated Zoning By-law but was legally established before the changes, it may qualify as a **legal non-conforming use** (also known as "grandfathering"). This means:

- You can continue using the property as it was before the by-law update.
- You cannot expand or alter the use in a way that increases its non-conformity without municipal approval.
- If the use is discontinued for a certain period (as defined in the by-law), the legal non-conforming status may be lost.
- Routine repairs and maintenance are generally permitted, but significant renovations or expansions may require a zoning amendment or minor variance.

Municipal staff can provide guidance on whether your use qualifies as legal non-conforming and what options may be available.

d) **How Will This Impact Future Development?**

The updated Zoning By-law is designed to streamline development approvals and align zoning regulations with long-term planning objectives. Key impacts on future development include:

1. **Greater Certainty in Land Use Planning:** Clearer zoning regulations reduce ambiguity, making it easier for developers and investors to plan projects with confidence.
2. **Reduced Need for Amendments and Variances:** By aligning zoning permissions more closely with the Official Plan and higher-level policies, the frequency of rezoning applications and minor variance requests is expected to decrease.
3. **Support for Intensification and Mixed-Use Development:** The updated by-law encourages more efficient land use, particularly in designated growth areas, by permitting higher-density residential and mixed-use developments where appropriate.
4. **Modernized Parking Standards:** Adjustments to parking requirements provide better clarity to the developer and to staff administering the By-law.

5. **Enhanced Flexibility for Housing Development:** Zoning changes provide increased opportunities for additional residential units, including modular housing options, to support diverse housing needs.
6. **Stronger Environmental and Natural Heritage Protections:** Updated regulations ensure that future development is balanced with environmental sustainability and conservation policies.

Overall, these changes aim to support responsible growth, reduce administrative delays, and create a more predictable regulatory environment for future development in Grey Highlands.

e) **Who Do I Contact with Questions?**

For inquiries about how the Zoning By-law update affects your property or business, please contact the Municipality of Grey Highlands Planning Department. Staff are available to assist with zoning clarifications, property-specific questions, and guidance on next steps.

f) **Why Aren't the Maps Being Provided at this Stage?**

The updated zoning framework aims to maintain consistency with existing land uses, meaning that if a property is currently zoned residential, it will remain residential under the new by-law. However, at this stage, updated zoning maps will not be available for public review at the Open House. The Municipality is taking a strategic approach by waiting until there is general agreement from Council and the public on the new zoning designations before proceeding with mapping updates. This ensures that resources are efficiently allocated and that the final mapping reflects community input and policy alignment. While the updated maps are not yet available, residents can still review proposed zoning categories and general land use changes to understand how they may be affected.

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Attachment 1: Major Differences in Residential Policies

1. Clearer Recognition of Additional Residential Units (ARUs)

- **2004-50 By-law:** Accessory apartments permitted but not consistently defined; unclear pathways for second units in detached structures.
- **Draft By-law:** Clearly permits **Additional Residential Dwelling Units (ARDUs)** in urban, rural, and agricultural areas — both within the primary dwelling and in detached buildings — in line with Provincial and County policy requirements.

2. Modernization of Residential Definitions

- **2004-50 By-law:** Uses older terminology (e.g., “Accessory Apartments”) and general classifications.
- **Draft By-law:** Introduces a refreshed, comprehensive definition structure, with terms like Bunkies, Cabins, Modular Homes, and Farm Help Accommodation explicitly defined and regulated.

3. Increased Housing Flexibility

- Draft By-law introduces greater flexibility for housing forms, allowing for a wider range of housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, modular homes, and small-scale apartments.
- This supports affordable housing and gentle density objectives that were not explicitly integrated in the previous by-law.

4. Improved Clarity on Temporary/Accessory Uses

- Draft By-law provides clear distinction and regulation for accessory structures such as cabins and bunkies, which were either not defined or ambiguously addressed in the 2004-50 version. This reduces interpretation issues and potential enforcement confusion.

5. Alignment with Housing Affordability Goals

- The Draft By-law reflects current housing priorities, including housing choice, affordability, and aging in place, which are largely absent in the 2004 framework.

6. Simplification of Setbacks, Coverage, and Lot Standards

- The Draft By-law standardizes and simplifies residential development standards, making it easier for homeowners and builders to understand what's allowed — and reducing the number of variance applications needed.

The updated Zoning By-law introduces a more modern, flexible, and comprehensive residential framework that aligns with current Provincial and County housing policies. It supports additional residential units, diverse housing types, and simplified development standards — creating more

opportunities for affordable and accessible housing while reducing administrative burdens on both residents and staff.

Anticipated Questions Related to Residential Policies

1) Can I build a modular home on a residentially zoned property?

Yes — modular homes are permitted on residentially zoned properties as a principle or additional residential dwelling unit (ARDU) under the Draft Zoning By-law. A modular home is defined as:

"A dwelling unit that is manufactured in whole or in part in a factory setting, transported to the site, and permanently affixed to a foundation. It meets the requirements of the Ontario Building Code and functions as a permanent residence."



Modular homes are considered a permitted dwelling type in most residential zones, provided they meet all applicable zoning regulations, including:

- Minimum lot area and frontage
- Required front, side, and rear yard setbacks
- Maximum lot coverage and building height
- Adequate servicing (water and septic or municipal connections)

Modular homes must be permanently installed on a foundation and are treated the same as conventional houses. If you plan to build a modular home as a second dwelling on the same lot, it must meet the requirements for an **Additional Residential Dwelling Unit (ARDU)**. Property owners are encouraged to verify their zoning designation and contact the Municipality's Planning Department for additional guidance and permit requirements.

2) Can I build a tiny home on a residentially zoned property?

Yes — tiny homes are permitted as a principle or additional residential dwelling unit (ARDU), but they must meet the requirements of the Zoning By-law and the Ontario Building Code. A tiny home is defined by the Province as a small, self-contained dwelling unit, typically under 400 square feet (37 square metres), designed for permanent, year-round occupancy.

In most cases, a tiny home would be treated like any other permanent dwelling unit, which means it must:

- Be placed on a permanent foundation (not on wheels or skids).
- Be connected to appropriate water and sewage services.
- Meet all zoning requirements such as:
 - Minimum lot area and frontage
 - Setbacks from property lines
 - Maximum lot coverage and height



If you are proposing a tiny home as a second unit on your property, it may be classified as an Additional Residential Dwelling Unit (ARDU) and would need to meet those specific standards.

Note: A tiny home is not the same as a trailer, mobile home, or bunkie. It must function as a full-time, code-compliant dwelling, not just a temporary or seasonal structure.

For more details, check your property's zoning or contact the Planning Department to confirm whether your lot meets the requirements for a tiny home.

3) Can I build a Mobile Home on my Residential Property?

Generally, no — a mobile home is not permitted as a primary dwelling, or as an additional residential dwelling unit (ARDU) in most residential zones under the Draft Zoning By-law.

“Mobile homes are typically defined as factory-built dwellings designed to be transportable, often on a chassis or frame, and not necessarily intended to be placed on a permanent foundation.”

Because of this, they do not meet the same construction standards as conventional or modular homes, and may not comply with the Ontario Building Code for permanent residential use.

There are a few exceptions:

- Some rural or agricultural zones may allow mobile homes under specific circumstances (e.g., as temporary dwellings during construction, or in special temporary use permissions).
- Mobile homes may be permitted in Mobile Home Parks or other specifically zoned areas — but not as-of-right in standard residential neighbourhoods.

If you're looking for an affordable alternative, consider a modular home or a tiny home, which are both permitted forms of housing that meet Ontario Building Code and zoning requirements.



Attachment 2: Introduction of Policies Governing Storage Containers

Key Highlights of the Policy:

- **Defined Use:**
Storage containers are now clearly defined and regulated as accessory structures.
- **Permitted Locations:**
 - Allowed in most rural, agricultural, commercial, and industrial zones.
 - Typically, not permitted in urban residential zones, unless during active construction or temporarily under special permission.
- **Number and Size Limits:**
 - The by-law sets limits on the number of containers permitted per lot, depending on the zone and size of the property.
 - May also include maximum size or cumulative gross floor area provisions for all accessory structures, including containers.
- **Placement Requirements:**
 - Must meet minimum setback requirements (e.g., from lot lines, dwellings, and roads).
 - Cannot be located in front yards in many zones to protect visual character.
 - May be required to be screened or buffered from view in some zones.
- **Aesthetic & Design Provisions (if applicable):**
Some zones include design or screening requirements to ensure the containers do not negatively impact surrounding properties or neighbourhood character.
- **Temporary Use During Construction:**
Storage containers are typically permitted temporarily on residential lots during active construction projects, subject to conditions and timelines.



Attachment 3: Notable Differences – On-Farm Diversified Uses

Here's a clear comparison of the notable differences in how On-Farm Diversified Uses (OFDUs) are handled between the existing Zoning By-law (2004-50) and the Draft Zoning By-law (2025):

Notable Differences – On-Farm Diversified Uses (OFDUs)

Topic	2004-50 Zoning By-law (Old)	Draft Zoning By-law (2025)
Recognition of OFDUs	Not explicitly defined or structured as a category. Most non-agricultural uses on farms required site-specific zoning or variances.	Clearly recognized and permitted as-of-right in agricultural zones (on lots $\geq$ 20 ha), aligned with PPS and County policies.
Definition & Scope	General accessory or home business provisions applied; no clear standards or reference to provincial policy framework.	OFDUs are clearly defined and include small-scale businesses, agri-tourism, on-site processing, and value-added uses tied to the farm operation.
Permitted as-of-right	Most secondary uses required rezoning or minor variances.	Permitted as-of-right in certain zones, eliminating the need for many zoning amendments.
Size & Scale Limitations	Not clearly defined or quantified; often left to interpretation or site-by-site review.	Total size of OFDUs is clearly outlined — includes all buildings, outdoor storage, parking, laneways, etc. to control scale and ensure compatibility.
Specific Use Types (e.g., breweries, cideries)	No mention or pathway for these uses in the zoning framework.	Allowed as OFDUs, but require a Zoning By-law Amendment, with criteria referenced in the Official Plan.
Policy Alignment	No direct reference to PPS or County OP for diversified uses.	Strong alignment with PPS, County OP, and modern agricultural policy frameworks.
Consistency & Predictability	Case-by-case approvals led to inconsistencies and uncertainty for applicants and staff.	Provides greater predictability, streamlines approvals, and supports rural economic diversification while maintaining agricultural integrity.

Summary of Key Improvements in the Draft By-law:

- OFDUs are better defined, more predictable, and easier to implement.
- Reduced reliance on site-specific amendments or variances.

- Supports farm-based business opportunities while maintaining land use compatibility.
- Provides a modern, policy-aligned framework that reflects current provincial and county direction.

Attachment 4: Introduction of Environmental Holding Provisions

As part of the Zoning By-law Update, the Municipality of Grey Highlands is modernizing how we protect sensitive environmental features. One of the key tools we are using is the Holding ("H") Provision.

What is a Holding ("H") Provision?

A Holding Provision is a tool in the Zoning By-law that allows development to be paused until specific conditions are met. It is represented by the letter "H" following a zone category (e.g., A1-H).

The "H" does not prevent the land from being used, but it does prevent development approvals (like building permits) until the Municipality is satisfied that the required conditions have been addressed — such as through a study, report, or agreement.

What's Staying the Same

- The Wetland Zone (W) remains unchanged and continues to protect Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) and ecologically sensitive wetland areas.
- The 500 metre Holding Provision around landfills (active or closed) remains in place, consistent with Ministry of Environment guidelines.

What's Changing

Wetland Buffer Holding Provision

- The previous 120 metre buffer around wetlands is being reduced to 30 metres.
- This change aligns with the 2024 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), which no longer references the Natural Heritage Reference Manual that recommended a 120 m adjacent lands policy.
- While the buffer is smaller, any development or site alteration within 30 metres will still require confirmation that it does not negatively impact ecological function — often through an Environmental Impact Study (EIS).

New Holding Provisions

The updated Zoning By-law introduces new Holding Provisions for:

- Karst Topography
- Significant Woodlands
- Natural Heritage Core Areas

These areas are already identified in the Grey Highlands Official Plan (Schedule A), but until now, it has been difficult to require environmental review if an application did not trigger a formal planning process.

By applying a Holding Provision to these features, the Municipality can:

- Request studies or expert review before building permits are issued.
- Ensure development is compatible with the environmental conditions of the site.
- Better align with County and Provincial policy, including the *Planning Act*.

Why This Matters

- Strengthens local environmental protection without creating unnecessary red tape.
- Allows the Municipality to be proactive — not just reactive — in protecting sensitive features.
- Improves clarity and consistency in how policies are applied across the Municipality.

What It Means for You

- If your property is near or within a wetland, woodland, karst area, or natural heritage core area, the Holding ("H") Provision may apply.
- To proceed with development, you may need to submit a study (e.g., EIS) showing the proposal won't harm the feature.
- If no such features exist on your property, or if a study has already been accepted through prior approvals, you will not be affected.

Attachment 5: Proposed Modifications to Shoreline Provisions

Continued Setback Requirements from Waterbodies

- The minimum required setback from the high-water mark (e.g., lakes, rivers, streams) remains consistent with the existing 2004-50 By-law.
- While the actual distance hasn't changed, the Draft Zoning By-law improves the clarity and consistency of how this setback is applied and interpreted, reducing ambiguity and ensuring better implementation across different property types.

Introduction of Shoreline Buffer Concept

- A notable enhancement is the formal emphasis on maintaining natural shoreline buffers adjacent to waterbodies.
- These provisions are intended to:
 - Preserve natural vegetation along the shoreline.
 - Help protect water quality, reduce erosion, and support habitat preservation.
 - Provide clear guidance on limited development activity within the buffer zone.

Reinforcement of Environmental Best Practices

- Although the setback distance remains the same, the Draft By-law introduces stronger language around what activities are discouraged or limited within that area — such as grading, removal of vegetation, or construction of accessory structures.
- This reflects a stronger alignment with conservation authority guidelines and watershed protection strategies.

Key Takeaway

The Draft Zoning By-law maintains the existing waterbody setback distances but provides clearer direction and stronger environmental guidance through the use of shoreline buffer principles and more detailed implementation language. The result is better protection for shorelines and fewer interpretation issues, even though the core distance requirement has not changed.

Attachment 6: New Language on Refreshment Vehicles

Given recent interest in food trucks and refreshment vehicles, additional language is proposed in the draft Zoning By-law to regulate this popular use. If attempting to install a refreshment vehicle on your property, using the provisions of this draft By-law, the following is a breakdown of applicable provisions:

What is a Refreshment Vehicle?

A Refreshment Vehicle is a mobile unit designed to prepare or sell food and beverages to the public. This includes:

- Food trucks
- Trailers
- Carts or stands

These units must be mobile and cannot be permanently affixed to the ground.

Where Are Refreshment Vehicles Permitted?

- Permitted in Commercial, Industrial, and Institutional zones, as well as in some public spaces and event areas, subject to approval.
- NOT permitted in residential zones as a standalone business.
- May be permitted temporarily in special event zones or through site-specific approval.

What Rules Apply?

- Refreshment vehicles must comply with:
 - Municipal business licensing and health regulations
 - Site access and parking requirements
 - Setbacks from property lines or adjacent uses
 - Noise, waste disposal, and operational hour regulations
- In some areas, refreshment vehicles may require site plan approval or may be restricted based on lot configuration or adjacent land uses.

Temporary or Seasonal Operations

- Refreshment vehicles may be permitted on a seasonal or event-based basis but still need to comply with municipal rules.
- In some cases, a Temporary Use Permit or special event approval may be required.

Why These Rules Matter

The goal is to support local business opportunities, while maintaining compatibility with surrounding uses, safety, and community character.