

August 15, 2017

Mayor Jeff Lehman  
City of Barrie  
70 Collier Street  
Barrie, ON L4M 4T5

Dear Mayor Lehman and Members of Council:

**Re: Review of Official Plan**

I am writing to commend the Council for the City of Barrie's initiative to create a new Official Plan, and to offer the support of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU).

The primary goal of public health is to promote and protect the health of people, communities and the environment. Land use planning decisions and the design of communities play a critically important role in shaping the environment in which people live, work, learn and play. The physical environment, whether built or natural, has a direct impact on people's health.

SMDHU has identified health and the built environment as an issue of public health importance. For over ten years we have been building strong relationships with municipalities to review their Official Plans. We have offered education sessions for elected officials and municipal staff and supported the review or development of various master plans. We also produced a policy resource for municipal planners called *Healthy Community Design: Policy Statements for Official Plans*. This resource is available on our website at:

<http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/JFY/OurCommunity/healthyplaces/Healthydesign.aspx>.

There are many examples of good planning already occurring throughout the City of Barrie. They include the Multi-modal Active Transportation Master Plan, Hewitt and Salem Secondary Plans, Age Friendly Community Plan, Waterfront and Marina Strategic Plan, Transit Multi-year Plan, youth friendly community planning, urban design guidelines, intensification guidelines, as well as planning for a downtown daily market and additional community gardens. These initiatives are vitally important and support compact and complete communities with walking and cycling infrastructure, accessible housing near community amenities, neighbourhood access to green space, and good public transit. We commend the City of Barrie for the great work being done to build strong, healthy and vibrant communities.

SMDHU remains committed to continuing our partnership with area municipalities, including the City of Barrie in working to integrate healthy community concepts in local planning policy processes. As such, we are confirming that we plan to continue to review all Official Plans, and to review other plans such as master plans as capacity allows, and provide comments and feedback from a public health perspective to help build vibrant, safe and healthy communities.

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My staff and I have been working closely with your planning department to support the Official Plan review process currently underway. Sherry Diaz, Public Health Nurse ([Sherry.Diaz@smdhu.org](mailto:Sherry.Diaz@smdhu.org)) is your contact to our health unit and we are happy to liaise with you on this important initiative through her.

In the meantime, I invite you to contact SMDHU if you have any questions or to support other planning or initiatives related to the built environment. For additional discussion or enquiries please contact me by email at [Charles.Gardner@smdhu.org](mailto:Charles.Gardner@smdhu.org) or by phone at 705-721-7520, extension 7219.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

Charles Gardner, MD, CCFP, MHSc, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health

CG:CB:cm

cc. Sherry Diaz, Public Health Nurse