



2025 Ward Boundary Review

City of Barrie

Preliminary Options Report

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1. Background

The City of Barrie has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and Dr. Zachary Spicer, hereinafter referred to as the Consultant Team, to conduct a comprehensive and independent Ward Boundary Review (W.B.R.).

The primary purpose of the study is to prepare the City of Barrie Council to make decisions on whether to maintain the existing ward boundaries or to make changes. This report provides a set of alternative ward boundary designs that have been created based on preliminary research and the first round of public consultation with Council, staff and the residents of Barrie.

The review is premised on the democratic expectation that municipal representation in Barrie would be effective, equitable, and an accurate reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and residents across the City.

2. Study Objective

The project has several key objectives:

- Develop a clear understanding of the present electoral system, including its origins and operations as a system of representation;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the present electoral system based on guiding principles adopted for the study;
- Develop and conduct an appropriate consultation process in accordance with Barrie's public engagement practices to ensure community support for the review and its outcome;
- Prepare population projections for the development and evaluation of alternative electoral structures for the 2026 and 2030 municipal elections; and
- Deliver a report that will set out recommended alternative council ward boundaries to ensure effective and equitable electoral arrangements for Barrie, based on the principles identified.

In February 2025, the Consultant Team prepared a series of Discussion Papers that set out:

- The parameters and purpose for the review;
- The basic electoral arrangements in Barrie;



- Council's legislative authority to modify electoral arrangements in the City; and
- An initial assessment of the City's current ward boundary system.

Discussion Paper D also provided a set of guiding principles that will inform the study and the work of the Consultant Team, as follows:

- Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population and Electoral Trends;
- Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries; and
- Communities of Interest.

Taken together, these principles will contribute to achieving the over-arching principle of effective representation.

Each principle is described in detail in Discussion Paper D and can be found on the City's web page.^[1]

The purpose of this Preliminary Options Report is to provide:

- A summary of the work completed to date;
- A summary of the information received from the public engagement sessions and tools, such as the survey and website; and
- A series of preliminary ward boundary options for consideration.

3. Project Structure and Timeline

Council adopted the terms of reference for the W.B.R. and the work completed to date includes:

- Research and data compilation;
- Interviews with councillors, the mayor, and municipal staff; and
- Public consultation on the existing ward structure.

Interviews with staff and Council, and meetings with the clerk's office and other staff concerning this study were conducted both virtually and in person. The Consultant Team conducted an initial round of public consultation in March 2025 (three live sessions at City Hall) and released a public survey.

^[1] <https://www.buildingbarrie.ca/WardsReview>



4. Existing Electoral Structure

Barrie City Council comprises 11 members, including the mayor (elected at-large) and 10 councillors elected in 10 wards. This is a long-standing and familiar arrangement. Barrie has been governed by a 11-member council since 1982 when the number of councillors was reduced from 12 to 10. At the time, residents selected two councillors from five wards. In 1995, the City adopted a 10-ward system, with one councillor elected from each ward. This system has been in place, with slight variation to the ward boundaries, ever since.

The *Municipal Act, 2001*, establishes that the council of a “local municipality” must consist of “a minimum of five members, one of whom shall be the head of council” (subsection 217 (1) 1) and that the head of council (the mayor) “shall be elected by general vote (subsection 217 (1) 3). Furthermore, the “members, other than the head of council, shall be elected by general vote or wards or by any combination of general vote and wards” (subsection 217 (1) 4).

With 11 members, Barrie has six council members more than the legislatively allotted minimum of five. Based on its analysis and public feedback, the Consultant Team is working from the assumption that 11 members is the preferred size for Barrie’s Council. This number, as described further in Discussion Paper B, is also in line with municipalities of a comparable size.



5. Existing Population and Forecast Growth in the City of Barrie

As previously discussed, a basic premise of representative democracy in Canada is the notion that the geographic areas used to elect a representative should be reasonably balanced with one another in terms of population. Accordingly, a detailed population estimate for the City of Barrie, including its constituent wards and communities, was utilized to allow for evaluation of the existing ward structure and subsequent alternatives in terms of representation by population beginning with the 2025 population.

The 2021 Census reported the City of Barrie population estimate of 147,829, an increase of approximately 4.5% from 2016 to 2021. Since 2021 and through the emergence of COVID-19, the City has continued to see large increases in growth patterns develop. A population and housing forecast for the City for the 2025 to 2036 period, consistent with the City's Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024, was utilized at a sub-municipal level. This data was completed as an update to the City of Barrie Municipal Comprehensive Review (M.C.R.) in 2019 which formed a foundational technical analysis to the City's new Official Plan (O.P.) regarding long-term population, housing and employment trends, urban land needs and strategic planning policy recommendations. Since 2021, there has also been considerable federal immigration policy changes (2024) related to reductions in permanent and non-permanent (N.P.R.) national immigration targets in addition to significant updates to Provincial planning policy have now been finalized under the Provincial Planning Statement (P.P.S.), 2024.

Available Statistics Canada data for the Simcoe County Census Division (C.D.), which includes the City of Barrie and City of Orillia, identifies approximately two-fifths of the population growth between 2021 and 2024 was attributed to an increase in net international migration associated with permanent and Non-Permanent Residents. In the City of Barrie, immigration associated with N.P.R. largely represents international students at Georgian College and foreign workers. It is important to note that N.P.R. and their associated housing needs are captured as part of the Statistics Canada Census permanent population and are included as part of the City of Barrie O.P. forecast and are represented within the scope of this review.

The City of Barrie is forecast to experience significant population growth over the next decade and beyond. For this reason, it is important that this study assess



representation by population for both existing and future year populations. In accordance with the study terms of reference, the analysis considered representation by population over the next three municipal elections through to 2034. The results of this analysis are discussed below.

5.1 Existing Population and Structure

As mentioned, this study needs to look at both the existing and future population distribution. Total population figures were derived for 2025 and 2036 utilizing the 2022 Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit reference forecast (including a 3% Census undercount). The City's 2025 total population estimate of 167,040 is presented by existing ward structure in Table 5-1 with an optimal population of 16,704 across each of the ten wards. As shown below, Ward 10, which covers the southeast portion of Barrie, currently (2025) has the highest population of all the wards at 20,400, while Ward 3, which is the most northern ward in Barrie, has the smallest population at 13,000, for a difference of over 7,400 between the smallest and largest wards.



Table 5-1
City of Barrie
2025 Population by Ward

Ward	Area (sq.km)	Total Population ^[1]	Population Variance
Ward 1	5.7	16,379	0.98
Ward 2	7.4	18,450	1.10
Ward 3	5.0	12,996	0.78
Ward 4	5.1	13,915	0.83
Ward 5	7.2	13,501	0.81
Ward 6	11.1	18,682	1.12
Ward 7	19.8	19,009	1.14
Ward 8	20.1	16,995	1.02
Ward 9	8.1	16,700	1.00
Ward 10	11.2	20,412	1.22
Total	100.7	167,040	-
Average	-	16,704	-

^[1] Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

5.2 Forecast Population Growth, 2025 to 2036

In accordance with the City's Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, Barrie's population is expected to increase to 193,700 by 2031 and 223,600 by 2036, including both the net Census undercount and the post-secondary student population. The anticipated population growth to 2036 was identified on an S.G.U. level and presented by the existing ward structure in Table 5-2.

It should be noted that in 2024, the federal government announced it will reduce the percentage of N.P.R.s from 7.3% of the national population to 5.0% by the end of



2026.^{[2],[3]} International student visas were decreased 35%, resulting in a reduction of 364,000 international students to Canada. The number of new permanent residents Canada will accept was lowered from 500,000 in 2025 and 2026, to 395,000 in 2025, 380,000 in 2026, and 365,000 in 2027.

These federal immigration policy changes are already impacting Georgian College which has its main campus in Barrie. For the 2023-24 fiscal year, there were approximately 11,500 students registered at the Georgian College Barrie Campus. In that year, 47% of the student population were international students. Since 2023-24 the percentage of the student population has shifted dramatically, domestic student enrollment has been increasing but is not sufficient to offset the decline in international students. As a result, Georgian College (not limited to the Barrie Campus) is expecting a decline of approximately 1,800 students overall as a result in 2025-2026 relative to 2023-2024.

^[2] N.P.R. share as of Q3 2024 derived from Statistics Canada Tables 17-10-0009-01 and 17-10-0121-01. There are 3,002,090 N.P.R. out of 41,288,599 residents in Canada.

^[3] N.P.R. national population target of 5% from the Government of Canada 2025-2027 Immigration Levels Plan.



Table 5-2
City of Barrie
2036 Population by Ward

Ward	Area (sq.km)	Total Population ^[1]	Population Variance
Ward 1	5.7	17,597	0.79
Ward 2	7.4	26,507	1.19
Ward 3	5.0	14,308	0.64
Ward 4	5.1	15,110	0.68
Ward 5	7.2	14,780	0.66
Ward 6	11.1	22,044	0.99
Ward 7	19.8	32,224	1.44
Ward 8	20.1	23,887	1.07
Ward 9	8.1	25,464	1.14
Ward 10	11.2	31,638	1.42
Total	100.7	223,559	-
Average	-	22,356	-

^[1] Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.



6. Public Consultation

The first phase of the W.B.R. incorporated a public engagement component that was delivered virtually and designed to:

- Inform residents of Barrie about the reasons for the W.B.R. and the key factors that were considered in the review; and
- Engage the residents in a manner that provides valuable input to the evaluation of the existing ward structure and the development of alternative ward boundaries.

Three in-person consultation sessions were conducted on March 18, 2025, and one more session was held on March 20, 2025. The Consultant Team's information boards can be found in Appendix B and other information about the review is available on the City's website: www.buildingbarrie.ca/WardsReview.

Through the public consultation sessions, a survey, and the project website's online comment/feedback form, participants were invited to provide their input/opinions with respect to the following:

- Existing ward structure – What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current ward structure?
- Guiding principles – Which guiding principles should be given the greatest priority in the development of ward boundaries?

The feedback and comments collected through the public consultation process are reflected in the analysis presented below and have helped inform the preliminary set of ward options. While public input from consultation provides valuable insight into the review, it is not relied on exclusively. The Consultant Team utilized the public input in conjunction with its professional expertise and experience in W.B.R.s, along with best practices, to develop the preliminary options presented herein.



7. What We Heard

To promote public engagement in the W.B.R., the City of Barrie created a project web page for all documents necessary to give residents an informed voice. All subsequent communications could then direct people to that page, through social media and other forms of outreach. Members of the public were able to visit the site, read up on context, download a background report and, most importantly, they were urged to complete a survey. The Consultant Team also prepared a whiteboard-style explainer video describing the overall process of the W.B.R.

The public survey was a key tool for collecting input from as many residents as possible and gave some of the best high-level insight into the views and perspectives of Barrie's residents. The level of participation in the survey was relatively good, with 254 people responding to some or all questions; the detailed summary of these results can be found in Appendix A. The survey results tended to confirm what earlier research had begun to indicate:

- Approximately 79.1% of respondents believed that they could easily access their councillor, while 20.9% disagreed.
- The majority of respondents (69.2%) found that the boundaries of their ward captured their community, while 19.7% believed that their community was divided across more than one ward.
- Most importantly for the next phase of the project, people prioritized representation by population and future trends (40.6%). A significant percentage of respondents, however, thought that consideration of natural and physical boundaries should be the top priority (32.1%), and 27.4% believed that communities of interest were most important.

The survey also included several questions that were not multiple choice and, instead, were open-ended, giving respondents the opportunity to submit longer written responses about issues they considered important. In total, 234 respondents gave their views on what they regard as the strengths and weaknesses of the existing ward system. Some recurrent themes from those responses were the importance of balancing the future population, highlighting the expected growth in the southern wards and the recognition of communities of interest.



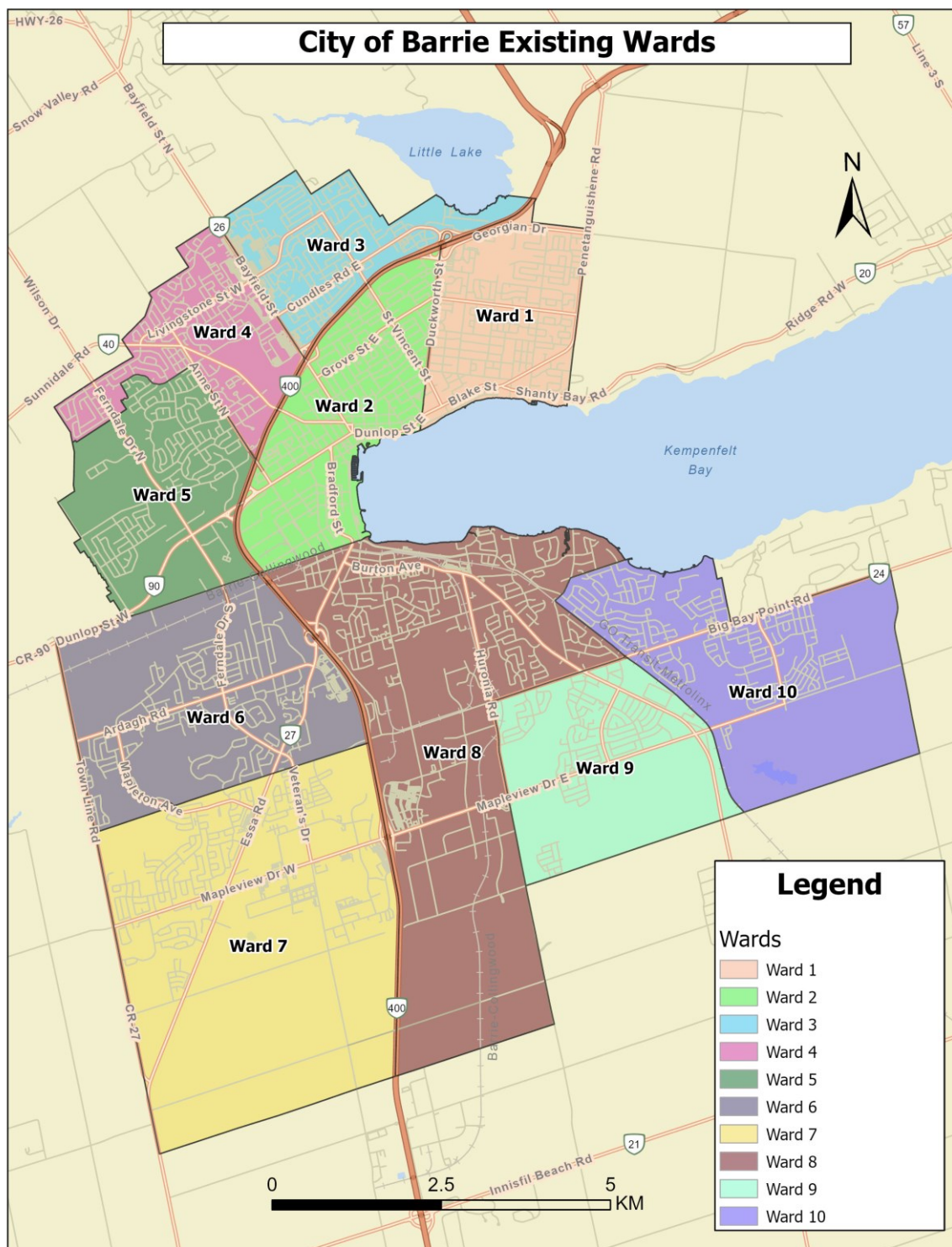
8. Evaluation of the Existing Ward Structure

A preliminary evaluation of the existing ward structure included in Discussion Paper D addressed the wards in terms of the guiding principles. For reference, a map of the current wards is presented in Figure 8-1. The survey conducted as part of the initial phase of public consultation asked respondents to assess the current wards in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. These responses add depth to that initial assessment.

This section revisits that evaluation, integrating information received during consultation and addressing certain challenges identified in parts of the existing ward system.



Figure 8-1
City of Barrie
Existing Ward Structure





In Discussion Paper D, the Consultant Team provided an evaluation of the ward boundary system, referencing the three guiding principles for the review:

- Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population and Electoral Trends;
- Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries; and
- Communities of Interest.

In Discussion Paper D, the Consultant Team argued that the current ward system has many strengths and meets most of the principles reasonably well. The boundary lines in the current system largely conform to natural and recognizable markers. The current wards also contain most of the communities of interest. Even though population disparities exist in the current system, none of the wards exceed the 25% acceptable range of variation. As demonstrated above, though, Barrie is expecting a substantial amount of population growth over the next decade, meaning that these population disparities are expected to grow. Several wards would fall out of the acceptable range of variation by the 2036 municipal election, leading the Consultant Team to conclude that a ward boundary review is necessary. We expand on this evaluation below, by exploring each of the guiding principles in depth.

8.1 Representation by Population and Consideration of Future Population Trends

One of the basic premises of representative democracy in Canada is the belief that the geographic areas used to elect a representative should be reasonably balanced with one another in terms of population. This is the concept of representation by population (“rep by pop”) or “one person, one vote” – where the vote of any one person carries roughly the same weight as that of any other person. In some places (such as parts of the United States) this principle of population parity is enforced rigorously – almost to the exclusion of any other factor – so that there is no noticeable variation in the population of electoral units within a particular jurisdiction.

In the Carter decision,^[4] however, the majority of the Supreme Court understood that Canadian electoral law has never been driven by the need to achieve “full parity” in the population of electoral divisions. The Court concluded that some degree of variation

^[4] Reference re: Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Saskatchewan) [1991] 2 S.C.R.



from parity (“relative parity”) may be justified and, at times, even necessary “on the grounds of practical impossibility or the provision of more effective representation.”

Since there are variations in the densities and character of communities and neighbourhoods across Barrie, the guiding principles make clear that some flexibility in applying the principle of representation by population is acceptable. That is, the concept of “equitable” (that is, fair) representation – not necessarily “equal” representation – is legitimate, although the closer the population of the wards is to parity, the more the entire design can be assessed as successful.

As a working premise, a range of variation of 25% above or below the optimal ward population will be considered acceptable in this review. This is a generous range of tolerance from parity, and more restrictive than long-standing parameters for the federal redistribution process, but in the absence of any guidance in the *Municipal Act, 2001* or provincial regulations, it is a reasonable range of variation for a largely urban municipality like Barrie.

The goal in any case will be to reduce the range of variation among the wards as much as possible. In the Consultant Team’s experience, however, developing wards within a narrower range of population variation can make the successful achievement of the other recognized guiding principles more difficult.

The degree of parity in each ward will be determined through the calculation of what will be called an “optimal” ward population in Barrie, a figure computed by dividing the population by the number of wards in the City. The population of a ward will be considered “optimal” when it falls within 5% above or below that number (noted in green). A ward population would be considered within the acceptable population range if it is between 5% and 25% of the “optimum” population (noted in pink). Populations that are above or below 25% of the “optimal” population are considered outside the acceptable range (noted in red). It is important to remember that, as the overall population of the City changes, the “optimal” population size of a ward will also change.

An example of these ranges is provided for Barrie’s current 10-ward system for the 2025 and 2036 populations and shown below in Table 8-1 and Table 8-2. Based upon the figure calculated for the City’s overall 2025 population (167,040) and a 10-ward system, the optimal population would be 16,704. By 2036, the City’s forecast population will be approximately 223,559 and the optimal ward population would be 22,356.



Table 8-1
City of Barrie
Estimated Population by Existing Ward, 2025

Ward	Total Population ^[1]	2025 Population Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	16,379	0.98	O
Ward 2	18,450	1.10	O+
Ward 3	12,996	0.78	O-
Ward 4	13,915	0.83	O-
Ward 5	13,501	0.81	O-
Ward 6	18,682	1.12	O+
Ward 7	19,009	1.14	O+
Ward 8	16,995	1.02	O
Ward 9	16,700	1.00	O
Ward 10	20,412	1.22	O+
Total	167,040	-	-
Optimal Population	16,704	-	-

^[1] Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

While the Consultant Team found that the current ward system largely provided for adequate population distribution, some areas of concern were highlighted in Discussion Paper D. Using 2025 population data, some wards are close to departing the acceptable range of variation (+/- 25%); Wards 2, 6, 7, and 10 are on the upper end of the population range, while Wards 3, 4, and 5 are on the lower end. Those on the upper end of the range are areas of rapid growth – namely the downtown core (Ward 2) and southern parts of the City where development pressures are high (Wards 6, 7, and 10). Even without leaving the acceptable range of variation, there is a sizable difference between the more heavily populated and sparsely populated wards. For instance, the population disparity between Ward 3 and Ward 10 is 7,416 residents.



As noted in section 5.2, population growth over the next decade within Barrie will be substantial but concentrated in certain parts of the urban settlement area. The downtown core and the southern portions of the City are projected to see the sharpest increase in growth. One goal of this study is to maintain a balance through subsequent municipal elections. It is generally not practical to change electoral boundaries for every election; hence, the wards designed in 2025 will seek to accommodate anticipated changes in the size and distribution of the population and electors over the next three elections in 2026, 2030, and 2034.

As with addressing the current population distribution in Barrie's ward system, the goal in forecasting is to design a system that will comprise wards that are generally in equilibrium to one another as growth takes place. The concept of an optimal ward size (with an associated range of variation) will be used to assess the success of the individual wards and the overall configuration, making use of a population and housing forecast for Barrie and its communities for the 2025 to 2036 period.

Table 8-2
City of Barrie
Existing Wards' 2025 and 2036 Population Distribution

Ward	2025 Total Population ^[1]	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	16,379	0.98	O	17,597	0.79	O-
Ward 2	18,450	1.10	O+	26,507	1.19	O+
Ward 3	12,996	0.78	O-	14,308	0.64	OR-
Ward 4	13,915	0.83	O-	15,110	0.68	OR-
Ward 5	13,501	0.81	O-	14,780	0.66	OR-
Ward 6	18,682	1.12	O+	22,044	0.99	O
Ward 7	19,009	1.14	O+	32,224	1.44	OR+
Ward 8	16,995	1.02	O	23,887	1.07	O+
Ward 9	16,700	1.00	O	25,464	1.14	O+
Ward 10	20,412	1.22	O+	31,638	1.42	OR+
Total	167,040	-	-	223,559	-	-
Average	16,704	-	-	22,356	-	-

^[1] Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.



By 2036, the City of Barrie is projected to have a population of 223,559. The average ward size will increase to 22,356 from the current 16,704. Examining this growth by ward demonstrates clearly that some of the trends in disparity highlighted above worsen as the City moves towards the 2036 municipal election. Specifically, forecasts show that if left unchanged, the population growth in Wards 7 and 10 rapidly accelerate, with Ward 7 having 32,224 residents and Ward 10 having 31,638 residents. Both exit the acceptable range of variation. Wards 2 and 11 are within, but close to leaving, the range as well. Conversely, Wards 3, 4, and 5 are substantially below the acceptable range of population variation. By this point, the population gap between the most and least populated wards increases to close to 18,000 residents.

In Discussion Paper D, we used population data from the census period (2021) to evaluate the existing wards, concluding that “the ward system in 2021 met population parity reasonably well.” At the time of writing, the Consultant Team had not yet had a chance to evaluate the ward system using 2025 data or population projections. It was noted in Discussion Paper D that the City of Barrie was experiencing tremendous growth and, using existing forecasts, the Consultant Team noted that the population of the City would almost double by 2051. It was also noted that this growth will be uneven and felt more acutely in certain sections of the City, namely southern communities.

Using this information, it was determined that the existing disparities in the system would worsen, but without more refined data it was not possible to determine how and in which wards this growth would present greater challenges. It is now clear that the population disparities expected in Discussion Paper D are far worse than expected. As noted above, five wards fall from the acceptable range of variation by 2036 leading to a change in the original evaluation of the existing wards and increasing the urgency to complete a Ward Boundary Review. In Discussion Paper D it was determined that the existing wards were largely successful in providing for representation by population both now and in the future. Considering more accurate forecasting data, that evaluation needs to be lowered to only partially successful.

8.2 Respecting Established Neighbourhoods and Communities

The creation of electoral districts in Canada is not guided solely by population figures. Another customary consideration is “communities of interest,” which prompts those designing electoral districts to ensure they comprise cohesive units and areas with



common interests related to representation. Barrie has several distinctive neighbourhoods that would easily qualify as a community of interest. In Discussion Paper D, the Consultant Team listed several, such as Allandale, Letitia Heights, and Kingswood. Each of those identified has an individual history and a sense of community connection. It was concluded that the current ward system does a good job of containing many of these neighbourhoods in single wards, with only a few being divided between two or more wards.

Beyond the neighbourhood level, the downtown core could also rightfully be considered a community of interest. The City also has an identifiable "north" and "south" being mostly newer areas that have been largely developed over the past two decades. Each of these geographic blocks could also constitute a community of interest, even though there is not a precise, agreed-upon geographic centre that divides the two. Some wards, such as Wards 6, 8, and 10 could be considered as having portions of both north and south Barrie. The Consultant Team argued that, as a result, the existing ward system did a reasonably good job in maintaining existing neighbourhoods as communities.

8.3 Respecting Geographical Features and the Defining Natural and Infrastructure Boundaries

Ward boundaries should be easily recognizable and take advantage of natural and built geographic features such as arterial roads, waterways, and railway lines. Often these features already tend to separate communities within the City anyway, which usually explains their historical use as boundary lines between existing wards and communities.

The major infrastructure dividing point in the City of Barrie is Highway 400, which effectively bisects the community. None of the current wards cross Highway 400. Each runs along Kempenfelt Bay and mostly conform to major roadways and markers. In Discussion Paper D, however, the Consultant Team identified several points where marker lines were used in unnatural ways. For instance, the boundary between Wards 4 and 5 abruptly halts at Cundles West Park, while the boundary between Wards 6 and 7 runs along Harvie Road from Essa Road and continues after the conclusion of Harvie Road, aligning with Ardagh Central Creek Trail and bisects Mapleton Avenue.

The Consultant Team aims to correct some of the unnatural use of boundary markers identified above. Through the initial round of public consultation and interviews with



Council and staff, the Consultant Team found that there is not consensus on continuing to use Highway 400 as a major dividing point between the wards. While Highway 400 is a major transportation corridor with strips of commercial activity largely on both sides, there are meaningful connections between the residential communities on both sides that were not obvious from exploring only the existing ward map. These connections have been largely facilitated by frequent infrastructure connections over and under Highway 400 throughout the City. As a result, it may not be necessary to continue to use Highway 400 as a dividing point between the wards. The Consultant Team will explore alternative options that cross Highway 400.

Overall, the present Barrie wards do a reasonably good job of conforming to natural and physical boundaries, with a few notable exceptions identified above.

8.4 Effective Representation

As stated in Discussion Paper D, the guiding principles are subject to the overarching principle of “effective representation,” meaning that, to the extent possible, each resident should have comparable access to an elected representative and each councillor should speak on behalf of an equal number of residents. Deviations from population parity can be justified if they contribute to more effective representation.

Effective representation is not based on the performance of incumbent councillors. It is, rather, a concept that is premised on serving the on-going relationship between residents and elected officials, not just on the way the resident is “counted” on election day, although that is an important component of a fair system of representation. The expectation should be that the wards support the capacity of councillors to represent their constituents, rather than hinder councillors performing those responsibilities. Are the individual wards plausible and coherent units of representation? Are they drawn in such a way that representatives can readily play the role expected of them? Do they provide equitable (that is, fair) access to councillors for all residents of the municipality?

Overall, Barrie’s present wards have many strengths and come close to achieving effective representation. The boundary lines largely conform to natural and recognizable markers and most communities of interest are comfortably contained within the current wards. None of the current wards exceed the 25% acceptable population variance. While this is a significant strength, there are growing population



disparities between the wards which, as the Consultant Team demonstrates above, significantly worsen as the City moves towards the 2036 municipal election.

The Consultant Team is therefore provided with a unique challenge in maintaining the existing strengths of the system, while targeting revision to areas of concern now and in the future. As a result, the team has three main goals as the project proceeds:

- Correct population disparities between certain wards now and into the future, while making minimal changes to those that are providing for parity and strong representation.
- Rationalize boundary lines where needed, ensuring that they follow natural and identifiable infrastructure.
- Explore options to provide better representation for all communities of interest within the City, while not disrupting current communities of interest that are comfortably housed within the same wards.

If completed successfully, targeting attention in certain areas of concern may produce a familiar configuration of wards, but also one that provides more insurance for effective representation as the City moves towards the 2030 and 2034 electoral cycles. To put it simply, the current system is good, but with strategic intervention can be improved. The following sections expand on this analysis and evaluate the ward system using the guiding principles.

Discussion Paper D and this report provides an initial evaluation of the current ward system, and the analysis has revealed aspects that fall short in some regard to meet the ward boundary principles set out for the W.B.R. The Consultant Team has since taken the feedback received through the various engagement activities and again, for the most part, members of the public have confirmed many of the initial perceptions. On the whole, the present wards constitute a plausible system for the 2026 municipal election but the same cannot be said about its capacity in the future, as evaluated in Figure 8-2.



Figure 8-2
City of Barrie
Present Barrie Ward Configuration Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle*	Comment
Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population Trends	Partially Successful	All wards are within the acceptable population range using 2025 data; however, growth patterns create disparities that lead to five wards falling from the acceptable range of population variation by 2036.
Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries	Largely Successful	Roadways and waterways are largely utilized well as boundaries.
Communities of Interest	Largely Successful	Most neighbourhoods are intact and contained fully in one ward; differentiation between north and south portions of the City occurs over two wards.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Effective representation is achieved with current population figures, but population growth will hinder the achievement of fair representation across the City.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).

9. Alternative Ward Boundary Options

The evaluation of the current ward system in Barrie suggests that there are some identifiable shortcomings when evaluated against the guiding principles for this W.B.R. Council could still choose to retain the status quo by turning down all recommended options for an alternative ward configuration. That decision, however, could result in a petition submitted under section 223 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*. The analysis presented herein suggests that, while the current system works reasonably well, there



are some areas (i.e., some wards' population disparity, future growth) that could benefit from a change in ward boundaries.

If Council decides to change the ward boundary system, what would alternatives look like? The Consultant Team has prepared preliminary options for consideration at this stage of the W.B.R. The preliminary options attempt to keep the identifiable communities of interest intact, creating wards with roughly equal populations, and providing for effective representation throughout Barrie. Balancing all the guiding principles can pose a challenge, however, given the large geography and uneven population distribution in some areas across the City. As a result, certain Preliminary Options lean more heavily into certain principles over others, demonstrating what might be possible if one were to favour one principle over another. The goal of this report and the subsequent round of public input is to generate discussion about what an optimal ward system looks like for Barrie. The Preliminary Options presented below demonstrate a spectrum of plausible alternatives to the current system. At this stage, endorsing one option over another is not necessary. Rather, providing the Consultant Team with input to refine and improve upon the existing system and the alternatives presented below ought to be the priority.

9.1 Preliminary Option 1

This first option can be considered a familiar option since it preserves much of the existing ward map, targeting certain challenges around current and future population disparities identified above.

Ward C is extended west to St. Vincent Street, a marker that was used in a previous ward design. Most notably, Ward C also extends over Highway 400, towards Cundles Road East, providing the first of two iterations where ward boundaries are extended over the highway. As described above, the Consultant Team learned during the early phases of the review that this may be a plausible configuration given the connections between certain communities on each side of the highway. The Consultant Team is eager to test this configuration during the second round of public engagement.

On the other side of Highway 400, Ward J extends to Anne Street North, with Ward E extending towards the southern border of the current Ward B at Dunlop Street West. Ward B extends south using Mapleton Avenue and Essa Road as a border. This configuration better balances the population between the current wards in this part of



the city. Each ward is currently below the population per ward average of 16,704. These disparities worsen significantly towards 2036. With this new configuration, each ward is currently over the average (with Ward J outside the acceptable population variance range) but comes into line by 2036. In fact, Wards B and J enter the optimal population range by this time.

Turning attention to the southern portions of the map, Ward D runs from Big Bay Point Road to the southern municipal boundary. Ward I runs from Dunlop Street, encompassing much of Allandale, down to the southern municipal boundary. Wards H and G contain much of the rapidly developing areas south of Big Bay Point Road. Ward A contains the Kingswood neighbourhood. During the early phases of this project, the Consultant Team heard that this area has more in common with the communities around Kempenfelt Bay than the newer communities south of Big Bay Point Road. Adjustments to the southern portions of the ward map provides for far better population distribution than currently available. Wards F and H are within the optimal range in 2025, while Wards B, C, D and J enter the optimal range in 2036.

This option provides familiarity to residents and retains some of the existing ward characteristics that work well, while addressing some of the issues raised in the evaluation. Population distribution improves when compared to the existing wards, with only Ward J currently outside the acceptable range of variation. This ward, however, enters the optimal range as Barrie moves towards 2036.



Table 9-1
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 1 – Population by Proposed Ward

Ward	2025 Total Population ^[1]	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward A	14,574	0.87	O-	18,438	0.82	O-
Ward B	19,891	1.19	O+	23,361	1.04	O
Ward C	19,390	1.16	O+	21,420	0.96	O
Ward D	13,233	0.79	O-	22,073	0.99	O
Ward E	18,145	1.09	O+	19,634	0.88	O-
Ward F	15,904	0.95	O	23,807	1.06	O+
Ward G	14,083	0.84	O-	24,981	1.12	O+
Ward H	16,700	1.00	O	25,464	1.14	O+
Ward I	13,318	0.80	O-	20,940	0.94	O-
Ward J	21,802	1.31	OR+	23,441	1.05	O
Total	167,040	-	-	223,559	-	-
Average	16,704	-	-	22,356	-	-

Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.



Figure 9-1
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 1





Figure 9-2
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 1 – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle*	Comment
Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population Trends	Largely Successful	Except for Ward J, all wards are within the acceptable population range; parity improves towards 2036, with four wards in the optimal range.
Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries	Largely Successful	Roadways and waterways are utilized well as boundaries.
Communities of Interest	Yes	Most neighbourhoods are intact and contained fully in one ward.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Effective representation is largely achieved, and the guiding principles are well balanced. There is some familiarity with the existing system, but the boundary changes that have been made account well for future projected growth.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).



9.2 Preliminary Option 2-A

Preliminary Option 2-A is the first of two options that, again, provide a familiar configuration to residents, but provide different configurations for southern Barrie. Both provide very good population parity but achieve this in different ways.

Ward C has a similar configuration as it does today, running along Duckworth Street towards Highway 400. Unlike Preliminary Option 1, Ward C does not cross the highway. Ward F is substantially reduced to account for population growth in the downtown core, running along Dunlop Street East towards Highway 400. On the other side of the highway, Ward J is extended to Coulter Street, while Ward E meets Dunlop Street as its southern boundary. Ward B is the lone ward that crosses Highway 400 in this Preliminary Option. In this configuration it runs from Kempenfelt Bay west to the municipal boundary, using Dunlop Street as a northern boundary and Cumming Road (north of Harvie Road) as a southern boundary. These adjustments provide for very good population parity among the northern wards, with the exception of Ward C, which drops to the lower end of the acceptable range of population variance towards 2036.

In the southern portions of the City, Ward D takes on a much smaller configuration, running along Essa Road to just south of Loughheed Road and Columbia Road North. Despite the size in comparison to the other wards, Ward D provides for excellent population parity using current figures and is in the optimal population range. Ward I extends along Essa Road, towards the southern municipal boundary and eastward to Highway 400. The defining feature of this ward is that its population is substantially below the average using 2025 population statistics. Currently, this ward would have a population of 7,263 residents. By 2036, however, the substantial development within the ward brings it into the optimal population range, providing an option that really grows well overtime. The current population disparity, however, is difficult to justify, but given the growth in the southern portions of Barrie, it may be well worth exploring the feasibility of a ward configuration such as this during the second round of public consultation.

Elsewhere in the south of Barrie, Wards A, G, and H have very familiar configurations to the existing ward system, with the only real adjustment coming to the northern boundary of Ward A. Using these boundaries, Wards A and H currently provide for excellent population parity (both are in the optimal range) but Ward G is almost at the upper



portion of the acceptable range of variation in 2025 and moves substantially outwards by 2036.

Table 9-2
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 2-A – Population by Proposed Ward

Ward	2025 Total Population ^[1]	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward A	16,207	0.97	O	21,133	0.95	O-
Ward B	18,909	1.13	O+	24,961	1.12	O+
Ward C	15,790	0.95	O-	16,964	0.76	O-
Ward D	16,506	0.99	O	17,189	0.77	O-
Ward E	20,582	1.23	O+	22,439	1.00	O
Ward F	14,813	0.89	O-	20,485	0.92	O-
Ward G	20,464	1.23	O+	31,692	1.42	OR+
Ward H	16,700	1.00	O	25,464	1.14	O+
Ward I	7,263	0.43	OR-	21,498	0.96	O
Ward J	19,805	1.19	O+	21,733	0.97	O
Total	167,040	-	-	223,559	-	-
Average	16,704	-	-	22,356	-	-

Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.



Figure 9-3
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 2-A





Figure 9-4
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 2 – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle*	Comment
Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population Trends	Largely Successful	Most wards are within the acceptable population range; however, Ward I experiences a substantial disparity in 2025 but grows into parity by 2036.
Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries	Largely Successful	Roadways and waterways are utilized well as boundaries. All wards except one are not divided by Hwy. 400.
Communities of Interest	Largely Successful	Most neighbourhoods are intact and contained fully in one ward. The downtown core is separated into two wards.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Effective representation is achieved with current population figures, with the exception of Ward I, which comes into parity by 2036 but has a sizable disparity currently.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).

9.3 Preliminary Option 2-B

Preliminary Option 2-B presents a different approach to Preliminary Option 2-A, correcting some of the future population disparities seen in Preliminary Option 2-A.

Many of the components present in Preliminary Option 2-A remain in Preliminary Option 2-B. Wards B, C, D, E, F, H and J are the same in both Preliminary Options. The changes occur in Wards A, I, and G in this option. The boundaries for Ward I are extended eastward to Huronia Road. This ward now crosses Highway 400 and uses Little Avenue as a northern boundary, running south along Bayview Drive towards Big



Bay Point Road. Ward A, therefore, becomes substantially smaller and centred on the Allandale neighbourhood. In Preliminary Option 2-A, Ward G left the acceptable range of population variation by 2036. To better provide for population parity, this Preliminary Option reduces the amount of the Kingswood neighbourhood located in Ward G. The ward still extends north past Big Bay Road but now runs along the trail through Valleyview Park towards Wilkins Beach. Doing so brings the population in Ward G into range both in 2025 and 2036, despite substantial growth expected for the area.

Taken together, Preliminary Option 2-B provides for better population parity. Ward I however, is still substantially below the ward population average using 2025 population figures. Including area beyond Highway 400 increases the population, but only marginally. As the City moves towards 2036, the ward does come into optimal population range, much like it does in Preliminary Option 2-A as well.

Table 9-3
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 2-B – Population by Proposed Ward

Ward	2025 Total Population ^[1]	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward A	20,786	1.24	O+	25,707	1.15	O+
Ward B	18,909	1.13	O+	24,961	1.12	O+
Ward C	15,790	0.95	O-	16,964	0.76	O-
Ward D	16,506	0.99	O	17,189	0.77	O-
Ward E	20,582	1.23	O+	22,439	1.00	O
Ward F	14,813	0.89	O-	20,485	0.92	O-
Ward G	15,365	0.92	O-	26,371	1.18	O+
Ward H	16,700	1.00	O	25,464	1.14	O+
Ward I	7,783	0.47	OR-	22,245	1.00	O
Ward J	19,805	1.19	O+	21,733	0.97	O
Total	167,040	-	-	223,559	-	-
Average	16,704	-	-	22,356	-	-

Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.



Figure 9-5
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 2-B





Figure 9-6
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 2-B – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle*	Comment
Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population Trends	Largely Successful	Most wards are within the acceptable population range; however, Ward I experiences a substantial disparity in 2025 but grows into parity by 2036.
Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries	Largely Successful	Roadways and waterways are utilized well as boundaries.
Communities of Interest	Largely Successful	Most neighbourhoods are intact and contained fully in one ward. The downtown core is separated into two wards.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Effective representation is largely achieved with current population figures, except for Ward I, which comes into parity by 2036 but has a sizable disparity currently.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).



9.4 Preliminary Option 3-A

As described in the Discussion Papers and the evaluation of the current ward system, Barrie has several neighbourhoods that could be considered communities of interest. The “north” and “south” of the City could also rightfully be considered a community of interest, as could the student population in and around Georgian College. Differing from the previous preliminary options, Preliminary Option 3-A prioritizes the City's neighborhoods and communities of interest.

Preliminary Option 3-A connects many established communities of interest. Ward C extends to St. Vincent Street – a boundary that was once in place for this ward. Neighbourhoods between St. Vincent Street and Duckworth Street have a strong connection to Ward C. Similarly, the area between St. Vincent Street and Essa Road are largely considered to be the downtown core, so efforts were made to keep this area in a single ward (Ward F). In the south, Allandale and Kingswood also have very similar connections and history. Both are in Ward A in this Preliminary Option. The areas south of Big Bay Point Road also have very similar connections, given their entry into the City via annexation from Innisfil. Wards H and G fully contain these communities, using Yonge Street as a dividing point. None of the wards cross Highway 400 and the north and the south contain an even number of wards, using Ardagh Road as a dividing point.

While this option does protect communities of interest, it does so by accepting population disparities both now and in the future. Five wards (Wards A, B, D, E, and I) are outside the acceptable range of population variation in 2025. Additionally, five wards (Wards B, D, G, I and J) are outside the range in 2036.



Table 9-4
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 3-A – Population by Proposed Ward

Ward	2025 Total Population ^[1]	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward A	22,563	1.35	OR+	27,603	1.23	O+
Ward B	12,336	0.74	OR-	14,305	0.64	OR-
Ward C	18,336	1.10	O+	19,664	0.88	O-
Ward D	26,008	1.56	OR+	29,979	1.34	OR+
Ward E	21,809	1.31	OR+	23,663	1.06	O+
Ward F	17,229	1.03	O	27,140	1.21	O+
Ward G	15,667	0.94	O-	28,319	1.27	OR+
Ward H	15,141	0.91	O-	22,367	1.00	O
Ward I	4,954	0.30	OR-	16,210	0.73	OR-
Ward J	12,996	0.78	O-	14,308	0.64	OR-
Total	167,040	-	-	223,559	-	-
Average	16,704	-	-	22,356	-	-

Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.



Figure 9-7
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 3-A

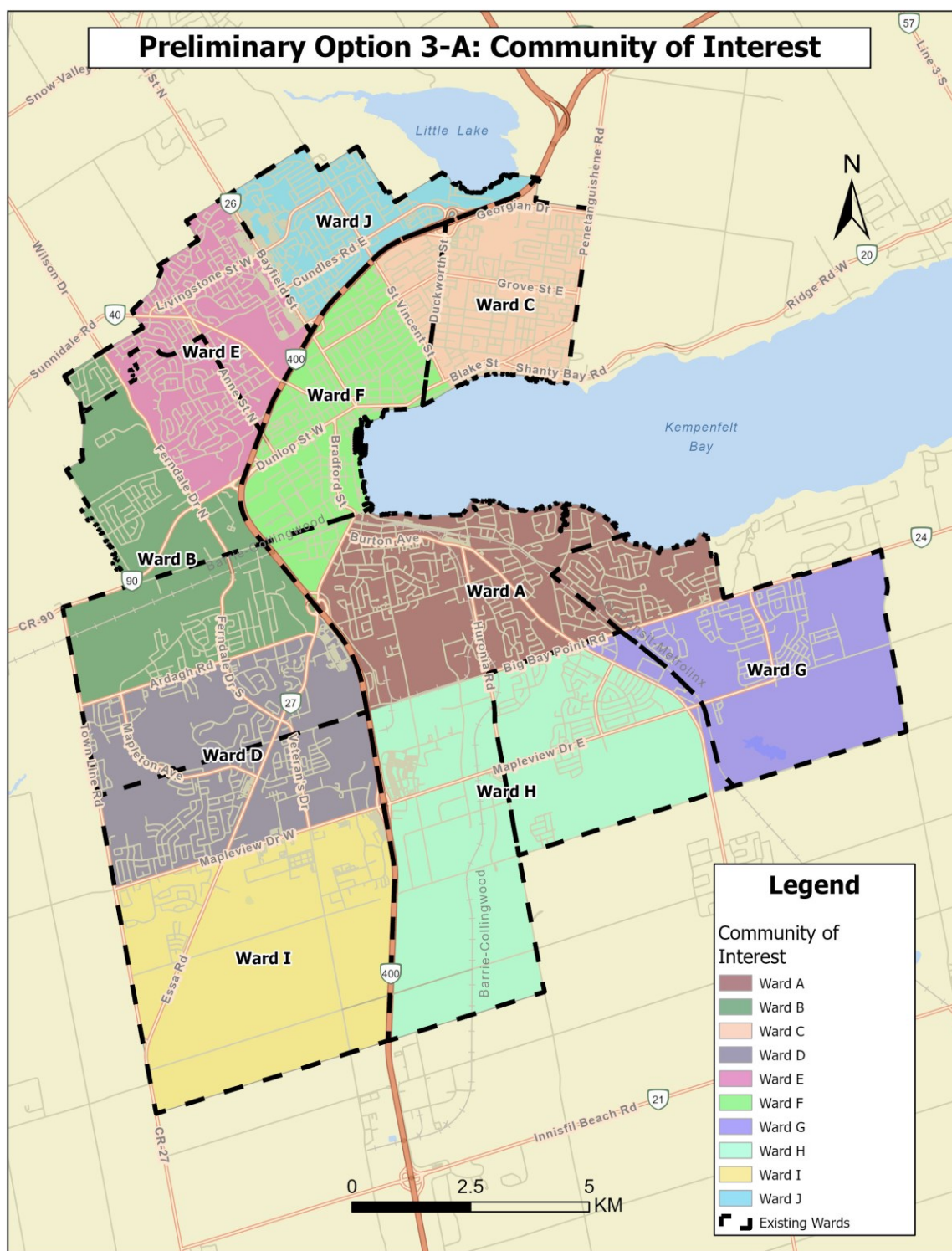




Figure 9-8
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 3-A – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle*	Comment
Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population Trends	No	Five wards in both 2025 and 2036 are outside the acceptable range of variation.
Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries	Yes	Boundary markers conform to natural and major infrastructure features.
Communities of Interest	Yes	Most neighbourhoods are intact and contained fully in one ward.
Effective Representation	Partially Successful	While this option supports all communities of interest and uses natural marker lines, population disparities both now and in the future hold it back from fully providing for effective representation.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “Yes” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “No” (not satisfied).

9.5 Preliminary Option 3-B

Preliminary Option 3-B builds from Preliminary Option 3-A, again prioritizing communities of interest. Recognizing the significant population disparities present in Preliminary Option 3-A, this option attempts to better distribute population between the wards while maintaining major identifiable communities of interest.

To better distribute population, several adjustments were made to Preliminary Option 3-B from Preliminary Option 3-A. The southern boundary of Ward E was moved north from Dunlop Street to Edgehill Drive. The boundary between Wards D and I was adjusted to Essa Road from Mapleview Drive. Finally, the boundary between Wards H



and G was adjusted eastward to the rail line from Yonge Street. Wards A, C, F and J are the same in both Preliminary Option 3-A and Preliminary Option 3-B.

Completing these changes provides for improved population parity, as compared to Preliminary Option 3-A. While four of the wards are outside the acceptable range of population variation in 2025, only two are outside by 2036. In contrast, five wards were outside in both 2025 and 2035 in Preliminary Option 3-A. In Preliminary Option 3-B, two wards are in the optimal population range in both 2025 and 2036.

Table 9-5
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 3-B – Population by Proposed Ward

Ward	2025 Total Population ^[1]	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward A	22,563	1.35	OR+	27,603	1.23	O+
Ward B	12,920	0.77	O-	15,012	0.67	OR-
Ward C	18,336	1.10	O+	19,664	0.88	O-
Ward D	21,122	1.26	OR+	21,946	0.98	O
Ward E	21,226	1.27	OR+	22,956	1.03	O
Ward F	17,229	1.03	O	27,140	1.21	O+
Ward G	14,083	0.84	O-	24,981	1.12	O+
Ward H	16,725	1.00	O	25,705	1.15	O+
Ward I	9,840	0.59	OR-	24,243	1.08	O+
Ward J	12,996	0.78	O-	14,308	0.64	OR-
Total	167,040	-	-	223,559	-	-
Average	16,704	-	-	22,356	-	-

Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 3.0% and the post-secondary student population.

Source: Derived from the Update to Population, Housing and Employment Forecast by Traffic Zone and Small Geographic Unit, March 8, 2024.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.



Figure 9-9
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 3-B

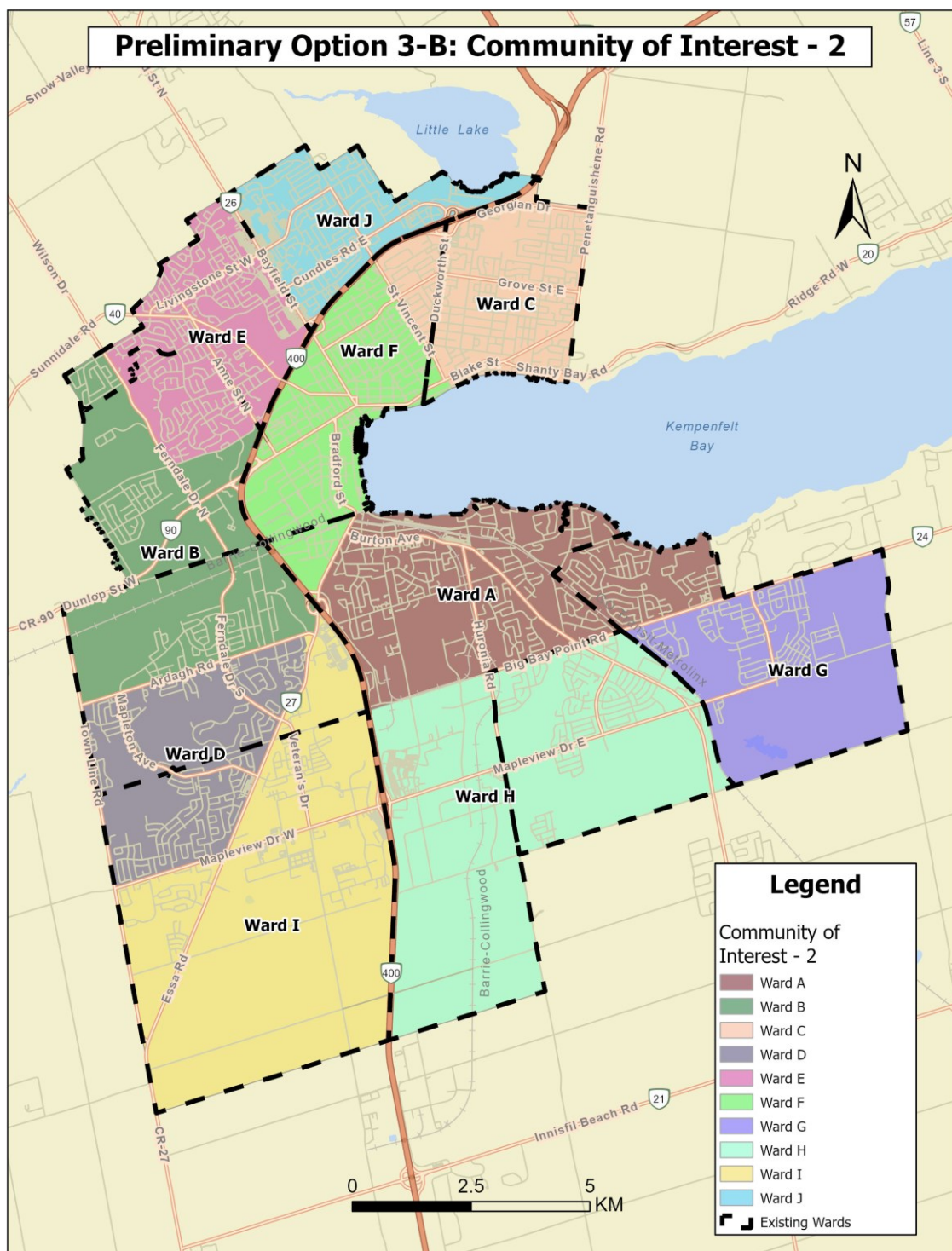




Figure 9-10
City of Barrie
Preliminary Option 3-B – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle*	Comment
Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population Trends	Partially Successful	While four wards are outside the acceptable range of population variation in 2025, parity improves towards 2036 with only two wards out of range.
Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries	Yes	Boundary markers conform to natural and major infrastructure features.
Communities of Interest	Yes	Most neighbourhoods are intact and contained fully in one ward.
Effective Representation	Partially Successful	While this option supports all communities of interest and uses natural marker lines, population disparities both now and in the future hold it back from achieving full effective representation. However, it is possible that a few boundaries could be adjusted to improve parity but with perhaps some slight deterioration of the community of interest principle.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).



9.6 Evaluation Summary

In the Discussion Papers and earlier in this report, it has been established that the current ward boundary system in Barrie has substantial strength, but rapid growth is placing pressure on certain areas of the City that are experiencing increased development. The Consultant Team, therefore, generated options that aim to maintain the existing strength in the system, while also better supporting the City as it grows.

The options provided in this report provide a spectrum of potential alternatives. Recognizing the strengths of the existing system, the first option provides a familiar, minimal disruption option that provides for very good population parity, both now and in the future. Preliminary Options 2-A and 2-B begin to depart from a familiar system, achieving very good population parity, with one ward (Ward I) having a significant disparity in 2025, but coming fully into parity by 2036. The modifications in Preliminary Option 2-B rectify some of the population imbalances in Preliminary Option 2-A. Preliminary Options 3-A and 3-B prioritize communities of interest. In doing so, Preliminary Option 3-A has several population disparities between the wards. Preliminary Option 3-B makes several adjustments to reduce, but not fully eliminate, those disparities in population.

A summary evaluation of the options is provided in Figure 9-11.



Figure 9-11
City of Barrie
Preliminary Options – Evaluation Summary

Preliminary Option	Representation by Population and Consideration of Future Population Trends	Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries	Communities of Interest	Effective Representation
Existing Wards	Partially Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful
Option 1	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Yes	Largely Successful
Option 2-A	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful
Option 2-B	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful
Option 3-A	No	Yes	Yes	Partially Successful
Option 3-B	Partially Successful	Yes	Yes	Partially Successful

Levels of evaluation for how the Guiding Principles are met

Yes	Largely Successful	Partially Successful	No
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Higher Rating

Lower Rating



9.7 Further Considerations

The options presented herein are preliminary; they reflect the application of the core principles for this review to the distribution of population and communities within Barrie.

Designing an electoral system that will deliver effective representation to such a diverse and growing community requires some accommodation: designs that put an emphasis on representation by population today can hinder fair representation for residents who will move to growing parts of the City in the coming decade. Designs that place a priority on grouping selected urban neighbourhoods can result in the over- or under-representation of those same communities around the council table.

The purpose of this report is to stimulate discussions in Barrie and encourage residents to consider their preferred ward boundary configurations for the City. The options included are deliberately called “preliminary” since much of the next phase of this review involves gathering the perspectives of residents on these alternatives.

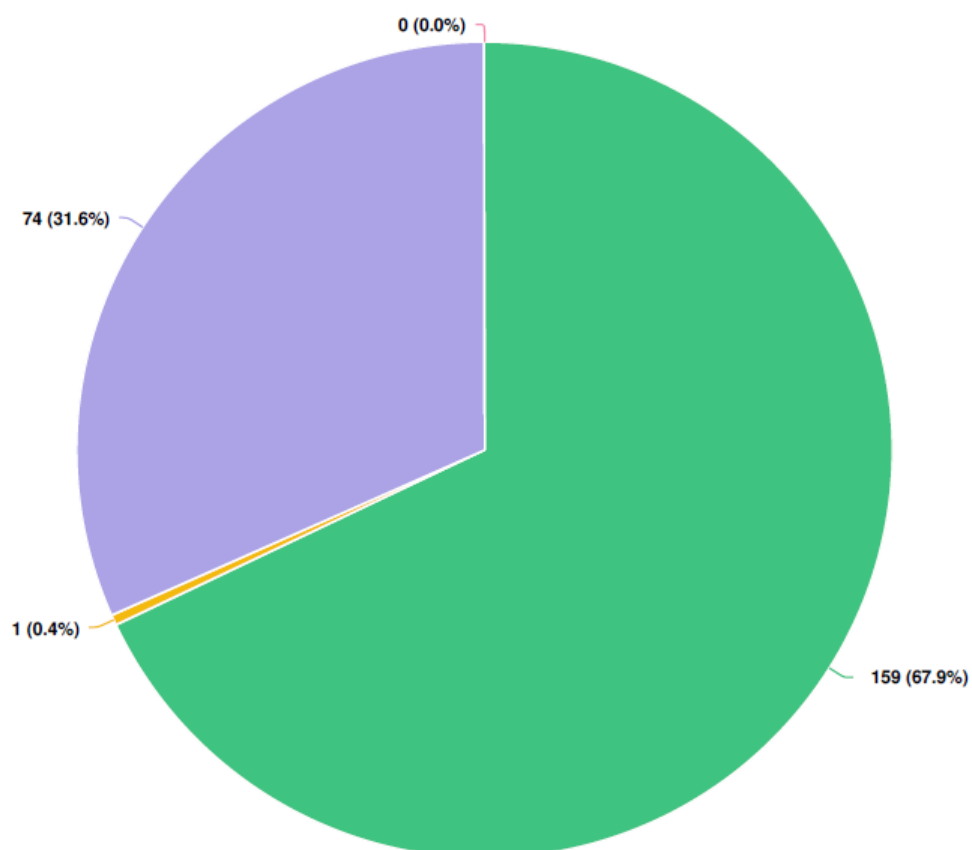


Appendix A

Survey Results



Q2 What best describes you?

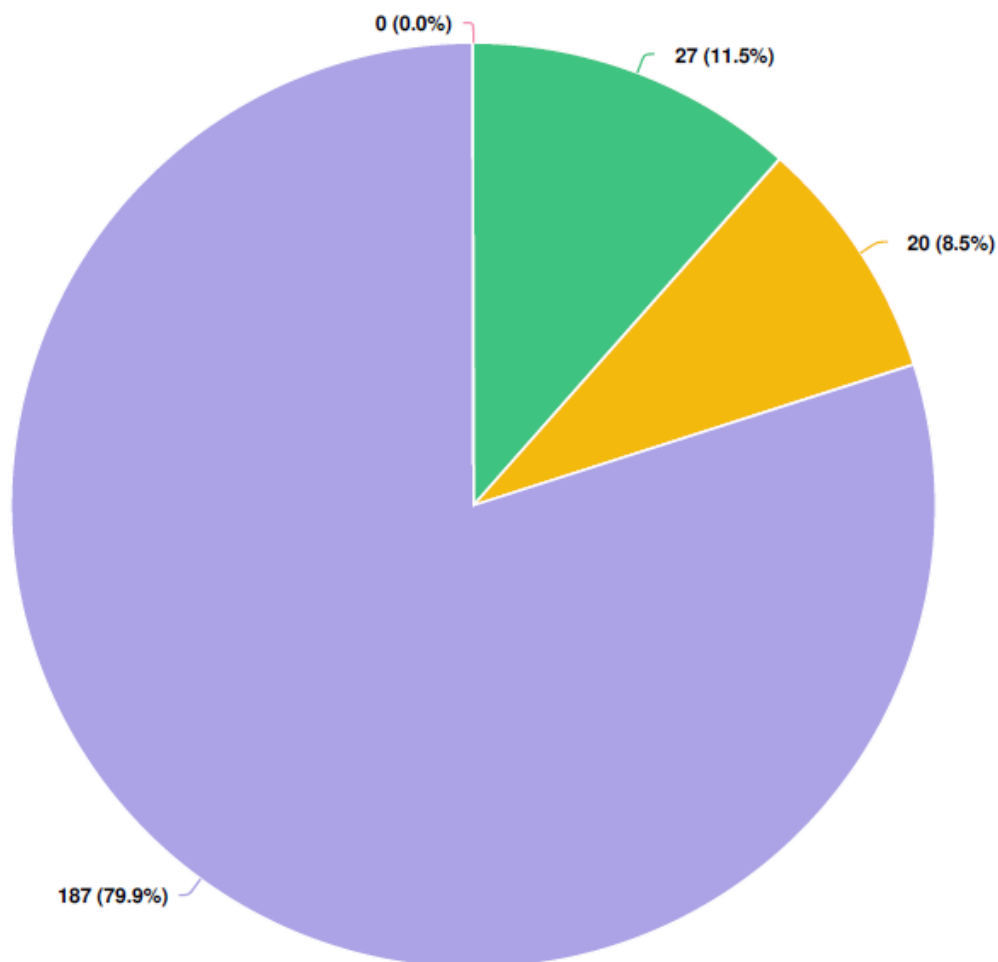


Question options

● I live in Barrie ● I work in Barrie ● I live and work in Barrie ● None of the above



Q3 | How long have you lived in Barrie?

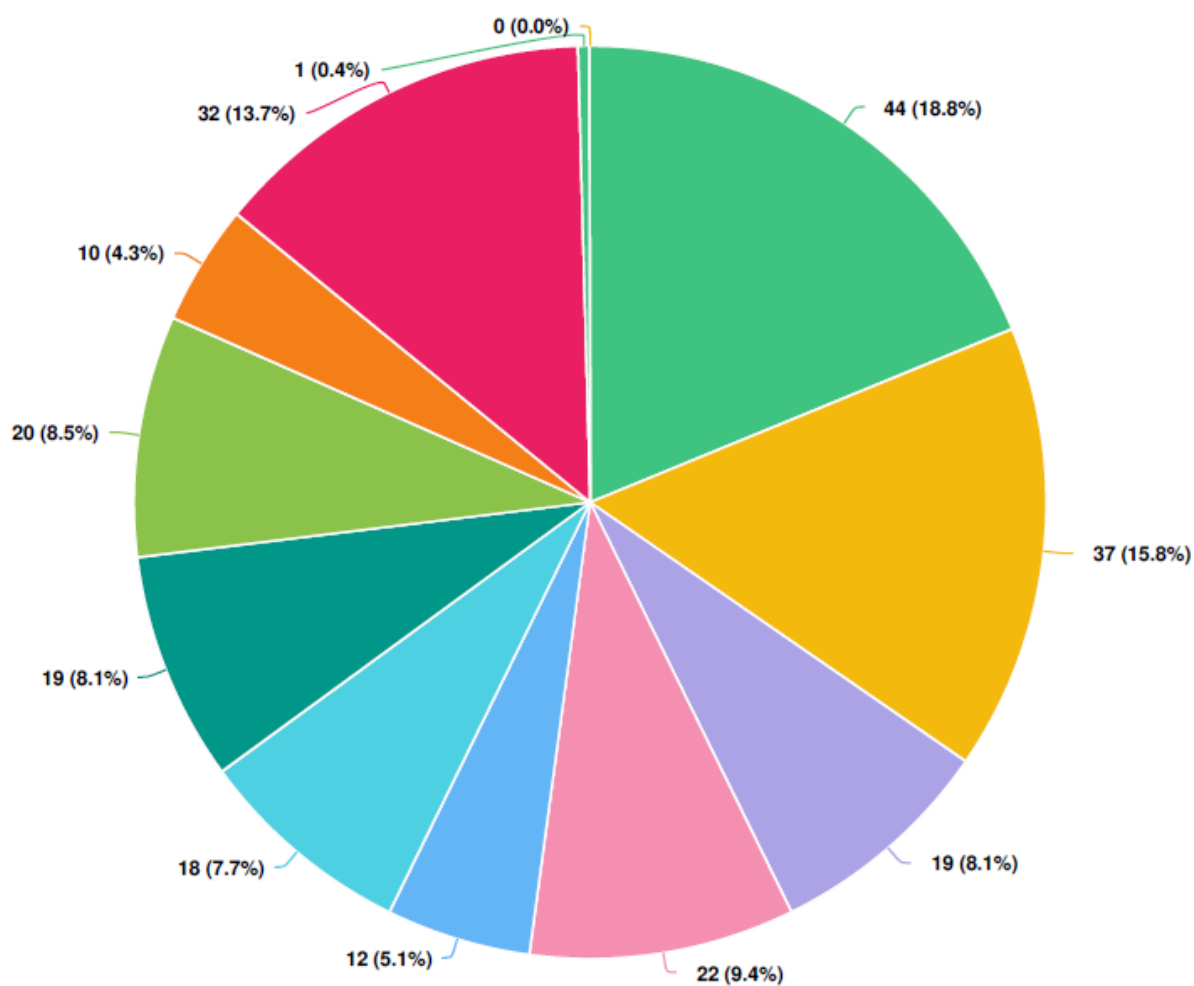


Question options

0-5 years 6-10 years 10+ years I do not live in Barrie



Q8 Which ward do you live in (see map below or view the City's interactive map)

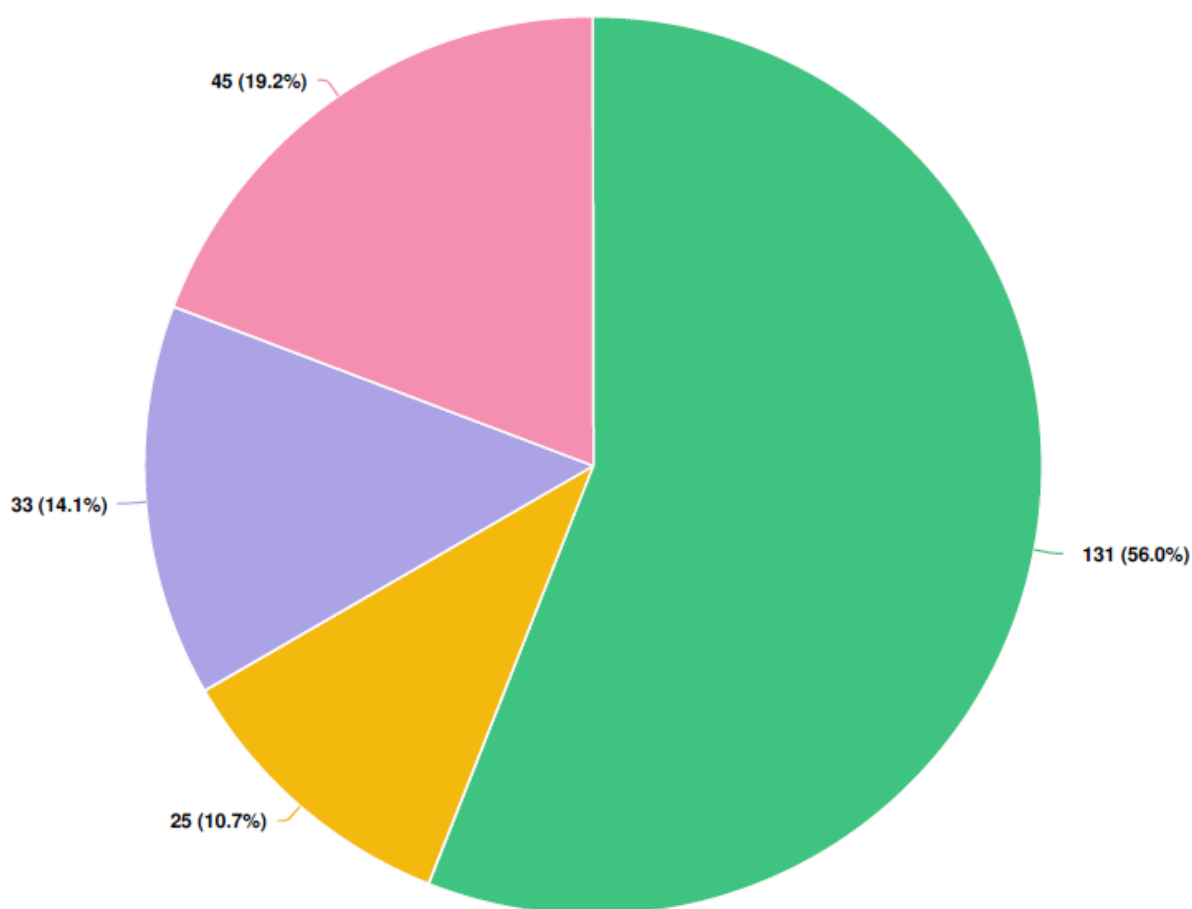


Question options

- Ward 1 Ward 2 Ward 3 Ward 4 Ward 5 Ward 6 Ward 7 Ward 8 Ward 9
Ward 10 I don't live in Barrie I don't know



Q11 | With Local Councillors representing approximately 15,200 constituents per ward, is a ten-ward system with ten Councillors the appropriate number?

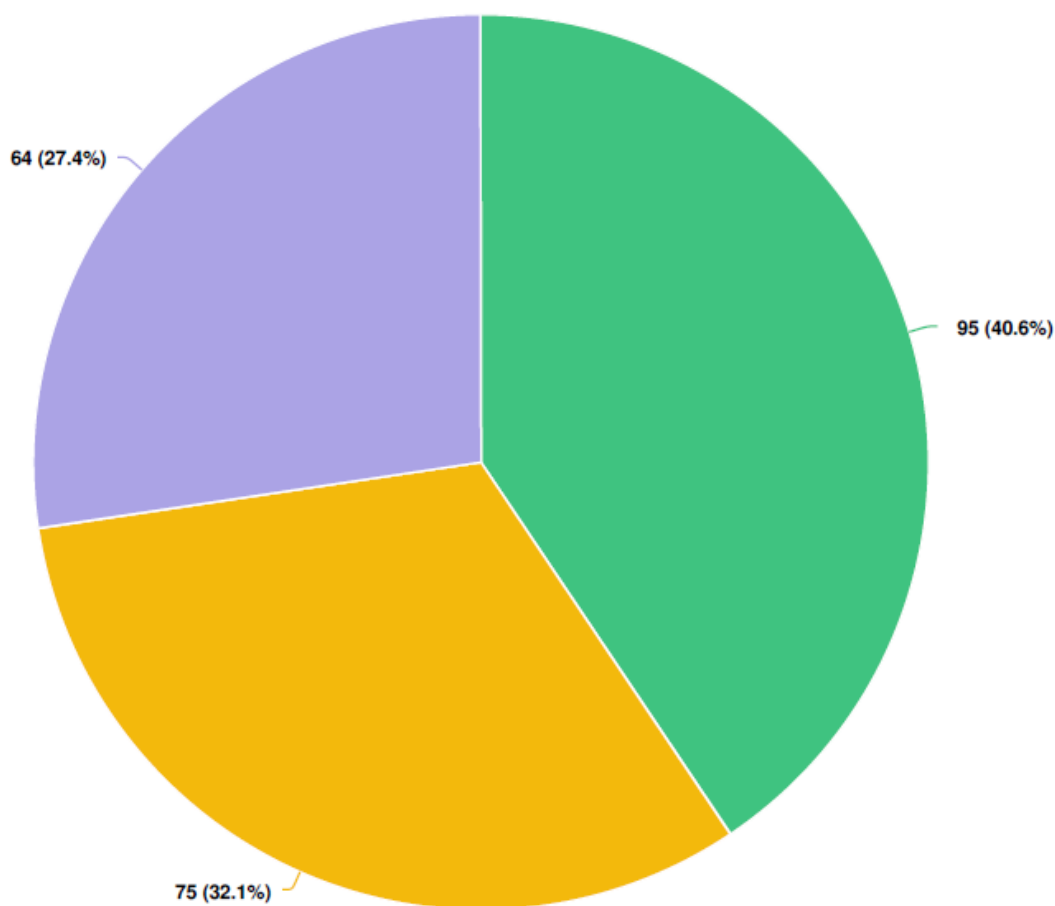


Question options

Yes No, it's too many Councillors No, it's too few Councillors I don't know



Q18 Please indicate the ONE guiding principle that you believe should be given the greatest priority to ensure effective voter representation as we assess the current ward makeup in Barrie:



Question options

- Representation by Population and Future Trends: Balancing population growth or decline to maintain equilibrium in representation by population until the next ward boundary review.
- Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries: Using geographical features, roads, railways, and public transit routes as natural ward boundaries to foster and identify neighbourhood groupings;
- Communities of Interests: Recognizing settlement patterns, traditional neighbourhoods, school districts and community groupings (social, historical, economic, religious, and political diversities) without fragmenting the City.



Appendix B

Public Consultation



WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW

WELCOME

2025 Ward Boundary Review

Which guiding principle should be most prioritized?



Where should ward boundaries be drawn and why?

Process



**Review
Current
System**



**Think about
the Guiding
Principles**



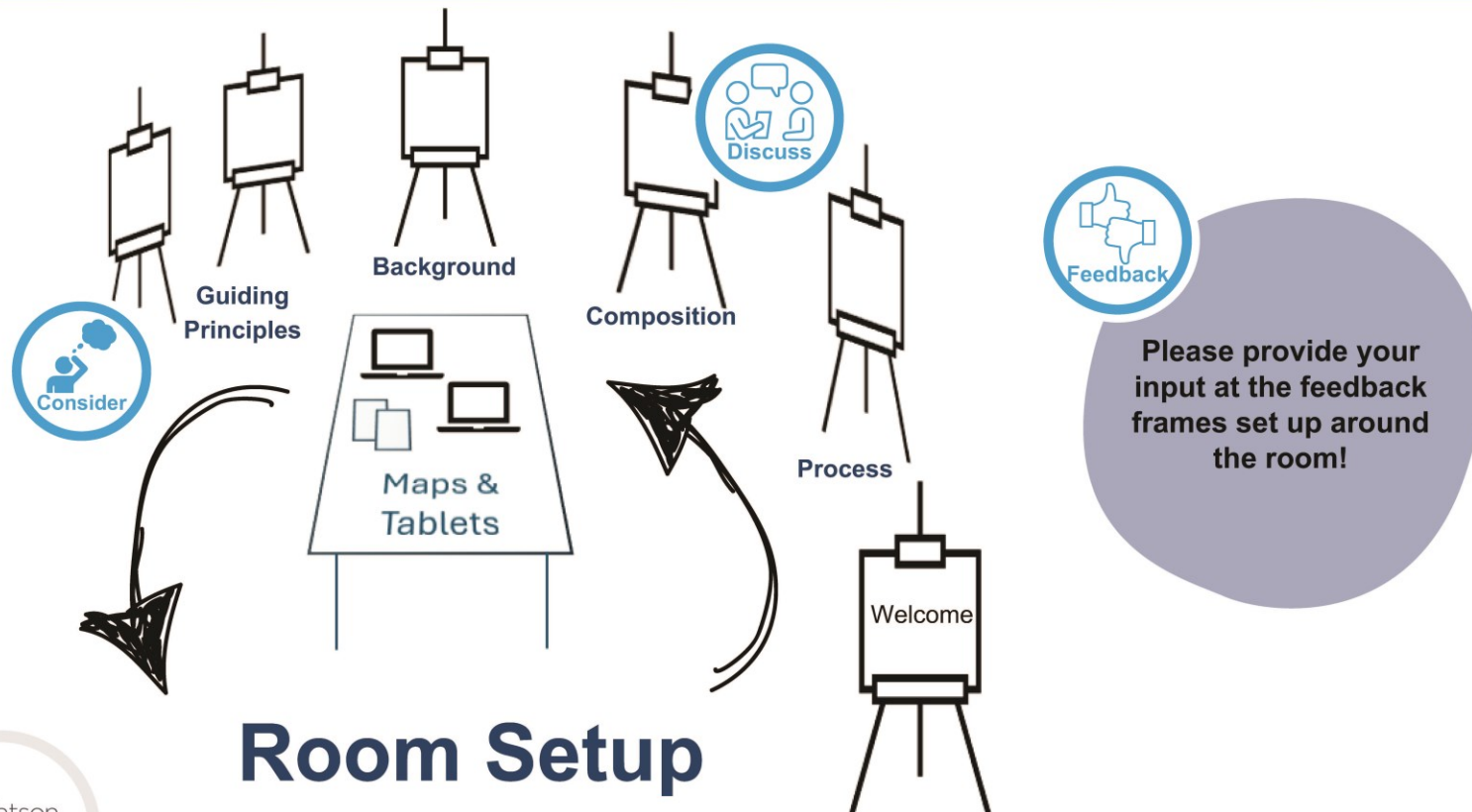
**What is the
Ideal
Outcome?**



**Provide
Feedback at
the Survey**



City of Barrie 2025 Ward Boundary Review



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Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.

In association with Dr. Zachary Spicer
Public Information Session | 2025

City of Barrie 2025 Ward Boundary Review



Public Information Session Ward Boundary Review



We want to hear from you!



For more information, visit
buildingbarrie.ca/WardsReview

**Watson
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ECONOMISTS LTD.

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.






In association with Dr. Zachary Spicer
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Project Overview and Objectives

The City of Barrie has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and Dr. Zachary Spicer to undertake the 2025 Ward Boundary Review.

The primary purpose of the review is to prepare Municipal Council to make decisions about whether to maintain the existing ward structure or to adopt an alternative arrangement.

Key Objectives Include:

-  Develop a clear understanding of the present ward system, including its origins and operations as a system of representation;
-  Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the present ward system on the basis of identified guiding principles;
-  Conduct an appropriate consultation process to ensure community support for the review and its outcome;
-  Identify plausible modifications to the present ward structure; and
-  Deliver a report that will set out recommended alternative ward boundaries to ensure effective and equitable electoral arrangements for the City of Barrie, based on the principles identified.

Existing Council Structure

Mayor



+

1 Councillor for Each Ward (x10)



Both the Mayor is elected at-large and serves as the head of local council.



The minimum size for council of a local municipality in Ontario is five (5), “one of whom shall be the head of council” (mayor).

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City of Barrie 2025 Ward Boundary Review



Population per Council Size Comparison

Municipality	2021 Population	Area (sq. km)	Council Members*	Persons per Member	Wards/ At-Large
Burlington	186,948	186.12	7	26,707	Wards
Greater Sudbury	166,004	3186.26	13	12,770	Wards
Barrie	147,829	99.01	11	13,439	Wards
Guelph	143,740	87.43	13	11,057	Wards
Cambridge	138,479	112.99	9	15,387	Wards
St. Catharines	136,803	96.2	13	10,523	Wards
Kingston	132,485	451.58	13	10,191	Wards
Ajax	126,666	66.64	7	18,095	Wards
Waterloo	121,436	64.06	8	15,180	Wards
Average	147,577	449.601	10.5	14,929	-

* Includes the head of council.

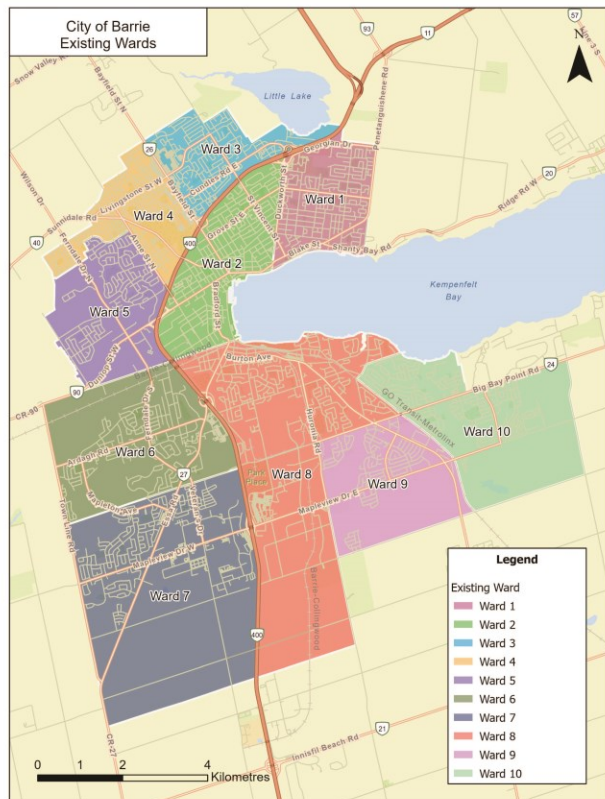
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Existing Wards Evaluation

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as:

- “**Yes**” (fully satisfied);
- “**Largely Successful**”;
- “**Partially Successful**”; or
- “**No**” (not satisfied)

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle*	Comment
Representation by Population and Consideration of Current and Future Population Trends	Largely Successful	All wards are within the acceptable population range, however growth patterns are likely to create population disparities that will worsen over time.
Consideration of Natural and Physical Boundaries	Largely Successful	Roadways and waterways are utilized well as boundaries.
Communities of Interest	Largely Successful	Most neighbourhoods are intact and contained fully in one ward; differentiation between north and south portions of city occurs over two wards.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Effective representation is achieved with current population figures, but population growth will hinder the achievement of fair representation across the City.

Ward	Area (Sq. Km)	2021		
		Population	Population Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	5.7	16,056	1.09	O+
Ward 2	7.4	17,186	1.16	O+
Ward 3	5.0	12,892	0.87	O-
Ward 4	5.1	13,676	0.93	O-
Ward 5	7.2	13,338	0.90	O-
Ward 6	11.1	17,854	1.21	O+
Ward 7	19.8	17,218	1.16	O+
Ward 8	20.1	16,670	1.13	O+
Ward 9	8.1	11,798	0.80	O-
Ward 10	11.2	15,632	1.06	O+
Total/Average	100.7	152,320	15,232	

O	±5% of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	±5%-25% of the Optimal (Average) Population
O+	>±25% of the Optimal (Average) Population

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Guiding Principles

The following principles will be used to evaluate the existing ward structure and subsequent alternative options:

REPRESENTATION BY POPULATION AND CONSIDERATION OF CURRENT AND FUTURE POPULATION AND ELECTORAL TRENDS



Accommodating for and balancing future increases or decreases in population growth or decline to maintain a general equilibrium in the representation by population until the next ward boundary review is anticipated to be conducted;

CONSIDERATION OF NATURAL AND PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES



Utilizing geographical and topographical features, primary and secondary road patterns, railway and public transit routes and servicing districts as natural ward boundaries and to help foster and identify neighbourhood groupings;

COMMUNITIES OF INTERESTS



Recognizing settlement patterns, traditional neighbourhoods, school districts and community groupings (social, historical, economic, religious and political diversities) while at the same time, not fragmenting the City.

EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION

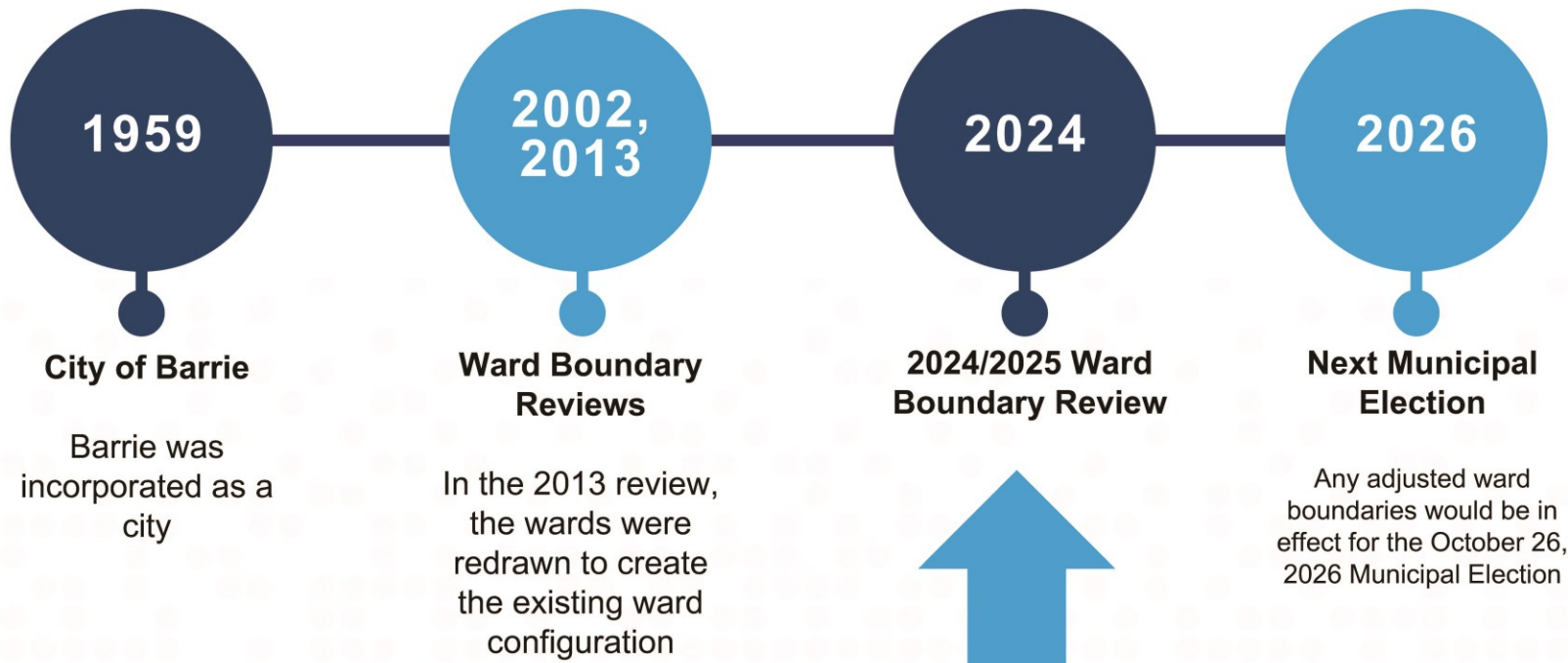


The three articulated principles contribute to achieving the over-arching principle of effective representation.

City of Barrie 2025 Ward Boundary Review



Past and Present



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Legislative Framework

Ontario's *Municipal Act*, 2001 authorizes a local municipality to:

- determine the size of the Council
- determine how Council (other than the Mayor) will be elected
- “divide or re-divide the municipality into wards or dissolve the existing wards”

No stipulated schedule, standardized process or established criteria exist for electoral reviews in Ontario

- Each municipality must set its own terms, parameters, guiding principles, etc.
- A review is typically framed by established procedures and principles applied in several Ontario municipalities (and by the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) and judicial rulings on representation)

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