

## COGNASHENE COMMUNITY PLAN

### Residents' February 5, 2006 Workshop



# Cognashene Community Plan February 5, 2006 Workshop

## Purpose

The Cognashene Cottagers' Association (CCA) has initiated the preparation of a Community Plan to provide a context for continued stewardship activities within the Cognashene community, and to suggest possible Official Plan policies that can be incorporated into the Township of Georgian Bay Official Plan that will further protect the character of the community.

PLANSCAPE has been retained by the Cognashene Cottagers' Association to assist in the preparation of a Community Plan. The overall project comprises of five components:

- Assemble available background information, including past association, agency and Township studies;
- Convene a community workshop to review the issues and development options;
- Conduct a survey of community residents.;
- Prepare a Community Lake Plan, part of which may be included in the Township Official Plan; and,
- Monitor the Township's ongoing Zoning By-law Review to ensure any proposed regulations are in keeping with the intended policies of the Community Plan.

To assist in the identification of the issues and concerns of the residents of Cognashene, a workshop was held. PLANSCAPE worked closely with the Cognashene Cottagers' Association Strategic Planning Group in the preparation and facilitation of this workshop.

## Overview of Workshop

Approximately 80 people participated in the workshop, held at the Lawrence Park Community Church located at 2180 Bayview Avenue in Toronto. The workshop started with a welcome and introduction by David Matthews, President of the Cognashene Cottagers' Association and Jane Loughborough, Chair of the Strategic Planning Group.



This was followed by a powerpoint presentation by Rick Hunter and Greg Corbett of PLANSCAPE, the CCA's consultant, addressing the role and purpose of a community plan and the process to be followed in its formulation. Following this presentation, the participants broke up into 7 groups to provide input on several themes.



The workshop highlighted the strong sense of community that the resident's of Cognashene share and their strong commitment to the community. The comments provided on each of the issues of discussion will be incorporated into the background report which will provide the basis upon which the community plan will be formulated.

The following provides an overview of the topics and the questions pertaining to each topic that was discussed during the breakout sessions.

### **The Character of Cognashene and Future Goal**

The Vision Statement refers to Cognashene as having a unique character, but what exactly is that character and how would you go about trying to define it?

#### Character

- a) The Vision Statement refers to Cognashene as having a unique character, but what exactly is that character and how do you define it? What distinguishes the Bay from the inland lakes?
- b) What would tell you that you were in Cognashene and not say in Honey Harbour?
- c) Within Cognashene itself, are there differences that need to be recognized such as the outer islands and the mainland?
- d) What would you consider the most important aspects of the Cognashene Community that should be preserved?
- e) What aspects of the Cognashene Community would you like to see changed? Of these, what would be the three (3) with the highest priority?
- f) One of the characteristics that have been identified for Cognashene is the lack of roads and the exclusiveness of water access. Should access continue to be exclusively water access?
- g) Currently there are limited commercial properties in Cognashene. Should new commercial uses be prohibited? What about home occupations or bed and breakfast establishments?

#### Goal

- a) The Township of Georgian Bay Official Plan does not specify an overall goal for the Township. Do you think that the Goal for the Cognashene Community would be different from the goal of the rest of the Township?
- b) Section B.37.1 of the Plan does provide a goal for cottage communities that are "To protect and preserve the existing character of the areas designated." How would you enhance this goal for the Cognashene Community?



## Density of Development

The establishment of appropriate policies regarding the density of development is often one of the major challenges facing a cottage community. It is imperative that policies are formulated that find a balance wherein the character of these communities are preserved while allowing appropriate development.

### Impression of Density

- a) Would you consider all or part of the Cognashene area to be over-developed? If so, where?
- b) What factors did you use as the basis of your answer? (i.e., number of people, number of lots, number of buildings, boating, etc.)

### New Lot Creation

- a) Should additional lots be permitted to be created from privately owned lands in Cognashene?
- b) The Official Plan currently requires that new lots created on islands or on the shoreline of Georgian Bay have a minimum lot size of not less than 1 hectare (2.5 acres). Is such a lot size appropriate for Cognashene?
- c) Should there be a minimum frontage beyond the 120 metres (400 feet) currently required?
- d) If a lot is large enough to be subdivided, should a second dwelling be permitted on the lot in addition to a sleeping cabin or accessory structures? (instead of severing it)

### Existing Lots

- a) The Township currently requires that existing lots on single ownership islands be generally a minimum of 1 hectare (2.5 acres) and no less than .8 hectares (2 acres) in order to be developed. Do you agree with this lot size requirement?
- b) The Township requires that existing lots on subdivided islands or the mainland have a frontage of at least 27 metres (89 feet) and a minimum lot area of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres). Do you agree with this lot size requirement? Should the lot size requirement be different for islands and the mainland?
- c) Should these lot size requirements also apply to the redevelopment or enlargement of existing development? (i.e., a vacant 1.8 acre island would not be permitted to be developed but a 0.8 acre island that contains an existing cottage would be permitted to develop further).



## The Built Form

For the most part, Cognashene has been spared the “trophy” cottage syndrome found on the big lakes of Muskoka. However, just as this has started to spread to other lakes in Muskoka, it too is starting to find its way out onto the Bay.

One of the Guiding Principles established by the Community Visioning exercise was that the built form was not to dominate. But how is this to be accomplished?

### Dwelling Size and Profile

- a) The Township recently passed an Interim By-law restricting the maximum gross floor area of a dwelling to 325 square metres (3,500 square feet). The By-law further redefined gross floor area to now include screened porches, veranda, sunrooms and walkout basements.
  - i. Do you agree with this size restriction?
  - ii. Do you agree that screened porches, verandas and sunrooms should be included as part of the gross floor area of the cottage?
  - iii. Should walkout basements be included?
  - iv. Should decks attached to a dwelling be included as gross floor area?
- b) The Township recently reduced the maximum dwelling height permitted from 8 metres (26 feet) to 7 metres (23 feet). This restriction is not Township wide but is specific to the northern Georgian Bay area including Cognashene (otherwise it is 8 metres (26 feet). Height is measured in different ways depending on the type of roof (see By-law Fact Sheet) and is measured from the average finished grade or natural grade at the front of the building.
  - i. Are you in agreement with this height restriction?
  - ii. What factors would influence the appropriate height?
- c) What factors would you consider in ensuring that the design of structures remain low profile or are in character with Cognashene?

### Setbacks

- a) The Township currently requires that a dwelling on a shoreline residential property be setback a minimum of 20 metres (66 feet). Traditionally, such a setback was based on keeping development off of the Original Shore Road Allowance and allow for some vegetative buffering for aesthetic and environmental purposes. Is such a setback appropriate in an area such as Cognashene, where lots are water access, and there is little vegetation along the shoreline? For example, the setback in the Township of The Archipelago is only 7.5 metres because of this. Should there be provisions prohibiting clearing along the shoreline?

### Lot Coverage

- a) The maximum lot coverage permitted on the majority of properties in Cognashene is 5%. Lot coverage is defined as including all buildings and



structures on the property including boathouses and boatports but excluding docks and decks less than 1 metre above finished grade. Would you agree with what is and isn't included as lot coverage? Think of what your lot coverage might be.

- b) As most development on waterfront lots occurs within approximately 60 metres (200 feet) of the shoreline, some municipalities have adopted policies restricting lot coverage within this 200 feet rather than basing the lot coverage on the entire lot. Should such a system be utilized for development in Cognashene?

Number of Structures

- a) Currently there is no limit to the number of structures on a lot, should there be a limit or should it be related to lot coverage?

- b) The number of sleeping cabins permitted on a lot is restricted by lot size:

<0.3 hectares (.74 ac)	.....	none
0.3 ha to 1.0 ha (.74 ac to 2.5 ac)	.....	1 sleeping cabin
>1.0 hectare (2.5 ac)	.....	2 sleeping cabins

Do you agree?  
Would you apply any specific criteria to the location of a cabin on a lot or island, such as setbacks?

- c) Sleeping cabins are also restricted in size to 50% of the floor area of the main dwelling or 56 square metres (602 square feet), whichever is less. Do you feel that this size restriction is appropriate?

Architecture

- a) If it were possible to mandate and implement architectural control, would you be supportive of it?
- b) Would you include the control of building colours?

**Shoreline Activity Areas**

While the area along the shoreline of waterbodies is important for fish and wildlife, the same area is also highly desired by people. In fact, it is probably what attracted all of you to Cognashene. The added challenge facing a community such as Cognashene, is that utilization of the shoreline is not only desirable, but being a water access community, also a necessity. Added to this is the impact created by the fluctuating water levels of Georgian Bay.

Shoreline Character

- a) When you are out on the Bay in Cognashene, and look at the shoreline, what features of the shoreline, if any, do you find the most aesthetically pleasing?
- b) What do you find most detracts from the aesthetics of the shoreline?



### Area Limitation

- a) The Township has been considering establishing a shoreline activity area wherein the extent of shoreline structures, that being docks, boathouses, boatports and any accessory structure within the required front yard setback is confined to a limited area. Should the amount of shoreline that can contain structures be limited? If so, what would be an appropriate percentage? Or what factors need to be taken into account when locating shoreline structures?

### Docks

- a) The Township recently passed a By-law restricting dock length to 20 metres. Is such a restriction appropriate for Cognashene? Should the fluctuation of Georgian Bay water levels be a consideration in dock length?
- b) Given the fluctuation in water levels, the Township does not consider a ramp leading to a dock as part of the dock and the length of the dock is measured starting at the average monthly water level. Would you agree with this interpretation? Would you have another suggestion?
- c) Should the regulations pertaining to docks differ depending on the type of dock, i.e. should the requirements for a crib dock be different from a floating dock.
- d) Being that Cognashene is a water access community, adequate provision of docking facilities is important. Presently the number of docks permitted is regulated by the length of shoreline up to a maximum of 4 docks. Would you agree with this limitation?
- e) When is a dock not a dock but a deck?

### Boathouses

- a) The Township currently considers a boatport to be a boathouse and will be passing a By-law to clarify this at their next meeting. Would you agree that a boathouse and boatport be consider the same?
- b) The By-law limits the number of boathouses/boatports to one per lot. Would you agree with this limitation?

### **Natural and Cultural Heritage Features**

In a general sense, what are the special places and features of the Cognashene Community? (These are not intended to be specific places that can be identified on a map, but are special to the individual's sense of community)

What specific sites in the Cognashene Community are special to you?

What natural features of the Cognashene Community should be protected?



### Identification

- a) What are your special places when at the cottage (a specific boating place, your deck, etc.)?
- b) What would you consider the landmarks of Cognashene?

### Protection

- a) Should the Cognashene Community establish more restrictive policies to protect these areas than what the Township Official Plan does for the Township as a whole?
- b) Both the District and Township Official Plans contain policies protecting sensitive habitat, however they do not address the protection of wildlife itself. How can this be addressed?

### Blasting and Filling

- a) Blasting and filling, both in the water and on the land, has occurred in the past in the Township in order to accommodate development. This may be to level an area for building, accommodate basements, increase water depths for boating access or create a new boating access. Should regulations be in place to address these activities such as prohibition, permit system, environmental impact report, consultation with neighbour, review by Council, or should there be no restrictions?
- b) Should blasting be permitted to assist in reducing the impact of cottage structures? i.e. reduce the height of the cottage.
- c) Within the water, should there be controls on dredging and blasting activities and if so what? When should such activities be permitted and when prohibited? Is there a difference if it is below the water or above?

### Water Quality

- a) Water quality was rated the #1 issue in a previous survey undertaken by the Association. Would you say that poor water quality is a problem now in Cognashene or is the issue to ensure that it never becomes a problem? If it is a problem now, where are the areas of concern?
- b) What suggestions do you have to improve the water quality?



## Other Issues

We are sure that there are other issues that participants would like to comment on and encourage that these also be raised.

- a) Would you be in support of the Crown releasing additional Crown land for development?
- b) Is the current use of Crown land a concern in Cognashene?
- c) Is transient boat mooring a concern in the Cognashene area? If so, are there specific locations of concern?
- d) Would it be beneficial to establish specific mooring sites in Cognashene? If so, any suggestions as to where?
- e) Should additional development rights be tied to environmental improvements?
- f) Should there be a mandatory septic inspection program? Should other systems besides traditional septic systems be permitted?
- g) Do you feel there is sufficient enforcement of the current rules?

