



## **Wilderness Ratepayers and Residents Association**

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### **Development Diligence** **Guidance for WRRRA in Response to Applications and Proposals** **for Development, Building Permits, Re-zoning, Relaxations, OSCA** **Permits, Mining Operations, Tourist Developments, etc. in** **Wilderness**

As an Interested and Affected Party, the WRRRA receives applications from The Town Planning Department of the George Municipality for land use changes including for OSCA permits. In addition, we review draft municipal planning documents such as the Spatial Development Framework and the Zoning Ordinance. Other applications come to our attention through word of mouth and newspaper advertisements, including for NEMA-related studies.

Most applications from property owners in Wilderness are for a variety of changes to land use. These include requests to develop land, to alter or renovate existing buildings, to re-zone, to permit new construction, to relax building line setback requirements, and more. The Municipality has an adopted set of by-laws and regulations that are intended to control such changes to land use. The Municipality thus has provided itself with a rationale for approvals (often with conditions) and disapprovals, all intended to be consistent with adopted plans, such as the Integrated Development Plan and the Spatial Development Framework.

The WRRRA's first aim and objective, as stated in the constitution, is *to protect and further the interests of the Ratepayers and Residents of Wilderness*. In the absence of a policy that is directly focused on proposed changes to the character and environment of the area, this guidance serves to establish the principles of our approach to the challenge of balancing *growth and development* with *maintaining the unique village and community atmosphere*.

We seek to support the preservation of what people have invested in (peace, quiet, forests, rivers, coastline, and more), but we are well aware that we cannot prevent progress. Indeed, the WRRRA understands the rights of land owners to propose new developments and changes to existing uses and buildings. We are, however, concerned that some proposals by themselves, and certainly all proposals taken together, might have the potential to change the distinctive appeal of Wilderness village as well as Wilderness Heights, Kleinkrantz, and the greater Wilderness area.

It's easy to identify what we don't want: high density residential and commercial developments, including buildings of more than three stories; beach encroachment;

mountain and forest clearing; power transmission lines; mining; fast-food franchises; large and garish signage, etc. We are concerned that sparsely populated and beachfront areas could incrementally evolve into pockets of dense, town-like suburbs that consume scarce resources, burden existing infrastructure, increase population densities, and produce light, air and noise pollution.

Put simply, the WRRRA does not want significant and irreversible changes to the exceptional character of the area.

What we do want are changes that add value, serve the public and fill a genuine need while improving (at least not detracting from) the aesthetics, the environment, and the atmosphere of village and rural life.

The WRRRA endeavours to keep informed of projects in the area, and if appropriate, will engage with the local authorities. We encourage members to become involved in the public participation process as well. We will review each application on its own merits as well as the overall impact on the area. Where the proposal is considered inappropriate, we will provide written, constructive comments to the authorities, seeking to avoid confrontation with our members and property owners but adhering to the principles outlined above.

*12 July 2019*