

Planning Justification Report for the Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration Site

Proposed Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment
Concession 2, South Part Lot 10, in the Geographic
Township of Derby, Township of Georgian Bluffs

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Prepared by - Stephanie Lacey-Avon (RPP, MCIP, Senior Planner, Grey County) &
Scott Taylor (RPP, MCIP, Director of Planning, Grey County)

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Planning Report

Introduction

The Proposal

The Owen Sound Agricultural Society, Chatsworth Agricultural Society, Bluewater School District, and Grey County have partnered to create a proposed *Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration (RALD)* site. This site will be situated on lands acquired by the County, approximately 8.1 hectares (20 acres) adjacent to Grey Roots, legally described as Concession 2, South Part Lot 10, in the Geographic Township of Derby, Township of Georgian Bluffs.

The proposed *Regional Agricultural Learning and Demonstration (RALD)* site will be visited and used by Grey County residents, visitors, and students from the *Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)* in Agriculture program, learning about the importance of agriculture and the role it plays in our food system (i.e. how is food grown, where does food come from, what are the jobs connected to this industry). By having the site immediately adjacent to Grey Roots Museum and Archives, the opportunity exists to educate not only about Grey County's agricultural history but also about current and future agricultural practices.

This space will aim to convey the importance and value of this industry to Grey's economy. Education, teaching, and learning are recognized as the guiding principles of the *RALD* site. There will be a range of programming and events offered throughout the year, including the SHSM in Agriculture program, the regional fair, charitable events, educational programming, and agricultural practices.

Historically, the Owen Sound Agricultural Society (165+ years) and the Chatsworth Agricultural Society (155+ years) had their own respective properties, where they were host to yearly agricultural events in support of the agricultural community. Both the Owen Sound Agricultural Society and Chatsworth Agricultural Society have recently experienced constraints with their respective properties, posing future operational challenges. These two societies are looking to merge and create a new Agricultural Society that would reflect the needs of both the existing Owen Sound and Chatsworth groups. There are significant efficiencies gained by offering similar programs and services at one shared location.

The subject lands for the new *RALD* site fall within the planning jurisdiction of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP), and the County of Grey Official Plan. An Amendment to the Niagara Escarpment Plan is required for the new proposed use on the subject

lands. Future development permits would also be required, should the Niagara Escarpment Plan Amendment (NEPA) be approved.

Although the lands are in the Township of Georgian Bluffs, neither the Township Official Plan, nor the Township's Comprehensive Zoning By-law are in effect for the subject lands; given that the Township's Plan only covers settlement areas, and the Zoning By-law does not cover areas under Niagara Escarpment Commission Development Control.

Proposed Buildings and Agriculturally Focused Recreational and Educational Events

The initial proposal includes the construction of three main new buildings. One will be used as an office and possible classroom for the Agricultural Society staff and the SHSM in Agriculture program. This will include staff washrooms, desks, and a large room to display agricultural exhibits. The second and third buildings will be barns used for various livestock shows and exhibits, along with educational displays, workshops, and programs pertaining to current farming practices and food production. A small sugar shack, storage shed and greenhouse were also recently approved (via development permit application G/A/2023-2024/83)* for the RALD site. The sugar shack, storage shed, and greenhouse are smaller and more portable in nature with no foundations. Future buildings may be considered, in accordance with the policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, which support the *RALD* site and the goals of educational programming and agricultural practices.

*Temporary relocation of the Chesley SHSM in Agriculture program will take place in winter 2024 (semester two of the high school year) to Grey Roots and a small portion of the RALD site. Separate from this NEPA application, County staff and the Bluewater District School Board (BWDSB) secured approvals from the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) to use portions of the Grey Roots and RALD sites for the Chesley SHSM program (via development permit applications G/A/2023-2024/83 and G/A/2023-2024/84). Permanent relocation of the SHSM program to the *RALD* and Grey Roots sites is conditional on the NEC issuing approval of the subject NEPA and future development permit applications, to ensure program sustainability for the long-term.

The SHSM program is a 4 credit, 1 semester program for ~15-20 grade 11 and 12 students in the BWDSB. In previous years students from separate school boards have also attended. Students are exposed to horticulture practices (e.g. plant biology and seed germination, pollination principles, design and planting a market garden, etc.), crop science (e.g. exploration agriculture career possibilities, soil science, etc.), animal science (e.g. animal rights and animal welfare groups, animal health, etc.), and livestock

production (e.g. breeds and characteristics, dairy cow selection, etc.). More information on the history of the Chesley SHSM can be found in this short video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7A81EWxULk>

Some of the existing facilities at Grey Roots will offer temporary and/or permanent supports for the program, including the bank-barn for livestock, the historic schoolhouse for school instruction, theatre, or Delton Becker room on an as needed basis, and the kitchen/café kiosk for food sales. Initially the SHSM program may use more Grey Roots facilities, until such time as a decision has been rendered on the RALD site NEPA. Should the NEPA be approved, and future development permit applications also be approved, some of the SHSM facilities may shift over to the RALD site e.g., in class learning. As noted above, future development permit requirements will be explored further once a decision has been rendered on the RALD site. The 3 or 4-season greenhouse for plant propagation along with the maple syrup shack for maple syrup production is intended to be built on and remain on the RALD site.

The RALD site had been previously used for cash crop purposes and is currently being leased for cash crop purposes. At the time of writing this report, the site is currently planted in winter wheat. This site will offer an accessible space for the SHSM program to offer the horticulture and crop-science components of the course. Program participants will play a large role in growing and tending to the agricultural demonstration plots (e.g., corn, wheat, barley) and the orchard. They will also be supporting events held on the RALD site either through school hours, or when fulfilling their required community service hours.

A multi-day Regional Fall Fair is also intended to be held at the RALD site, should the NEPA and development permit approvals be granted. Both the Chatsworth Agricultural Society and Owen Sound Agricultural Society have held fall fairs in their respective communities for over 150 years. The newly established Regional Fair will include cattle displays and competitions, household arts and handcraft sales, horse and tractor pull, demolition derbies, beef and poultry show, horse show, petting zoo and the traditional midway and games. Educational programming and displays will also be included. The Agricultural Societies would like to create agricultural demonstration plots (e.g., corn, wheat, barley), an orchard, and an interpretive treed pathway including local tree species (e.g., apple trees) that emphasize the importance of trees and forestry management best practices. The interpretive treed pathway on the RALD site could also offer education on Indigenous history based on advice from the Indigenous Advisory Circle. Services and amenities will be temporarily provided at the Regional Fair for visitors, including food trucks, tents, portable washrooms, bleachers, and additional parking.

Other youth and family focused agricultural events will also be held on site throughout the year, such as the Grown in Grey initiative. This is a two-day educational event that was previously held at the Chatsworth Community Centre. Each spring, 700-800 grade 5 students from Grey County schools attend the event and learn about agribusiness, and agricultural products. More information on Grown in Grey can be found here:

<https://www.growinggrey.org/>

This site will host 4-H clubs, allowing them space to provide workshops and training opportunities to youth. 4-H is a non-for-profit youth development organization that focuses on furthering responsibility, self-confidence, and leadership skills.

Another event that will be held at the new site is the Harvest for Hunger. This is a one-day fundraiser for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank – an organization that focuses on engaging and educating Canadians about global hunger. With the help of sponsorship and agricultural businesses, this event provides a day at the farm with animals, music, farmer Olympics, horse and buggy rides, children's activities, food booths and equipment display. More information on Harvest for Hunger can be found here:

<https://owensoundharvestforhunger.ca/>

Local scouting and forest school programs may also take interest in using the site.

A further event that may be held across the Grey Roots and RALD site is the Sydenham Fall Fair, which has been running for over 160 years and is the last known remaining school-run agricultural fair left in Canada. The Sydenham Fall Fair was previously held at Grey Roots, but 'out-grew' Grey Roots when the former Sydenham School was closed and amalgamated into the larger East Ridge School. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, East Ridge had continued to run the fair on either their own school property in Owen Sound or the Owen Sound Agricultural Society lands at Victoria Park. More recently the Sydenham Fall Fair utilized grounds at the Sydenham Campus (formerly Sydenham School) to hold components of their fall fair. The *RALD* site and Grey Roots partnership would facilitate the continued operation of this fair, with the larger number of students at East Ridge. More information on the Sydenham Fall Fair can be found here:

<https://www.sydenhamfallfair.com/>

Cultural and historical displays and events will also offer valuable insight to the agricultural prominence in Grey County. Some of these events will be held in conjunction with some existing Grey Roots events, while others will be specific to the site. Some of these initiatives include: a steam show with threshing and sawmill displays, wood processing demonstrations, showcasing local art in the barn, and hosting a local farmers market. Efforts will also be made to connect with the First Nation and Metis communities in the area to share their history with respect to agriculture and the use of native tree species and medicinal plants.

Inspired by the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Grey Roots Museum and Archives worked to produce a physical display that chronicles the treaty process with traditional territory keepers, Saugeen Ojibway Nation and is located at the entrance of the Grey County Gallery. The goal of the permanent installation, entitled *Saukiing Anishinaabekiing: Presents Our Stores*, is to recognize the Indigenous existence in this area from time immemorial and to emphasize that Grey County's history does not begin with European settlement. A series of seven maps illustrate the traditional land use of First Nations communities and the changes to the territory brought about by the colonial treaty process. The maps are enlivened with the addition of beautiful artwork by Nyle Miigizi Johnston, painter, muralist, and storyteller from the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. The display will be a foundational initiative that will spark the creation of public programming and nurture community dialogues focused on Truth and Reconciliation.

Several agricultural-related events will also be suitable for the site and can serve to connect members of the community to agriculture and to fundraise for the newly formed agricultural society. These events may include a tractor/truck pull, a barbeque and barn dance, a travelling horse rodeo, a dog show, penning and sheep herding competitions, an antique car, truck, and tractor display, and a highway tractor show and shine.

Members of the Agricultural Society envision this property being suitable to host farm machinery exhibitions, tradeshow, information sessions from Farm Credit Canada, farm insurance companies and seed companies, and local agricultural meetings for the business community. These events will help address the needs of local farmers through the display of new farming equipment and by educating on all farming related matters.

Approvals Required

An amendment to the Niagara Escarpment Plan, Section 1.5.3 (Permitted Uses) under Escarpment Rural Areas is required to recognize the proposed uses on the subject property. Should the NEPA be approved, future development permit applications would follow for the RALD site.

Background Studies

Based on the pre-submission consultation meeting with Niagara Escarpment Commission staff and the County of Grey, a planning justification report is required as part of the Planning Act applications submission packages. County staff have also recently engaged with staff from the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON), as to whether or not an Archaeological Assessment is needed at either the NEPA or future development permit stages. SON staff noted that an Archaeological Assessment will be required prior

to ground disturbance, but that it could come following the NEPA (if approved) and prior to the development permit applications.

Location Selection

The subject lands are in the Township of Georgian Bluffs, centrally located within a few kilometres of the City of Owen Sound, the Municipality of Meaford, and the Township of Chatsworth. The RALD site will reach a similar catchment area as the properties that were previously available for the Owen Sound and Chatsworth Agricultural Societies in their respective municipalities. Access will improve to the SHSM program from its previous location in Chesley, given Owen Sound is a central hub for school transit networks.

The RALD site lands were donated to the County by a local landowner. Although the County is the current owner of the site, the intent of the donation is that that lands will be held for the future ownership of the Agricultural Societies (or an amalgamated Agricultural Society). The County's ownership of the RALD site is considered to be temporary in nature.

The proposed RALD site is also strategically situated immediately adjacent to the Grey Roots Museum and Archives because there are clear synergies between these two uses. The County's Museum and Archives facility has been established in its current location since 2004, and is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Grey Roots, alongside the museum's Moreston Heritage Village, continue to be a valued asset in the local community. Its mission statement is *to engage and educate our communities about the human and natural history of Grey County by preserving and sharing collections, stories and memories that define our collective identity and guide our future*. Whereas the goal of the *RALD* site is to engage and educate members of the community about historical and present-day agricultural practices.

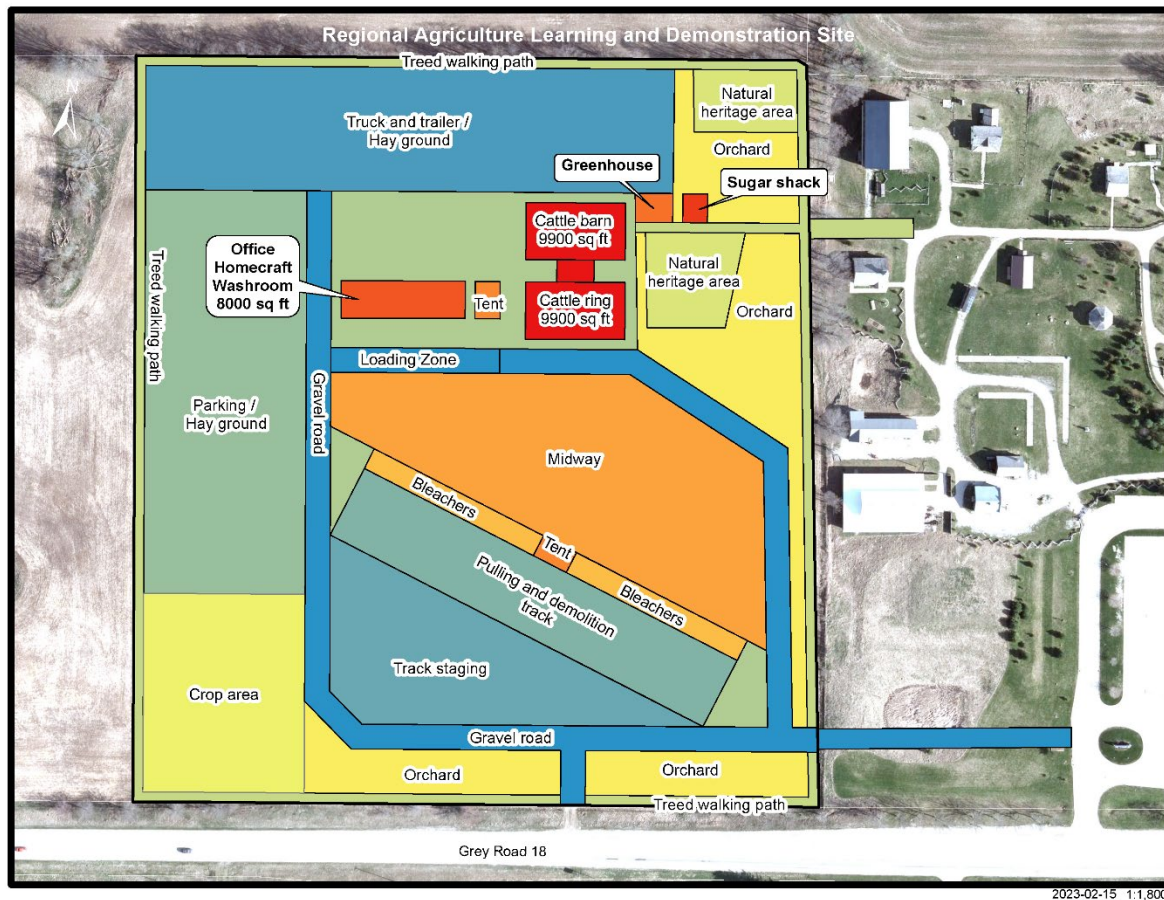
Visitors to Grey Roots will not only be able to learn about the County's agricultural history through print, digital medium, and displays, but through a more hands on interactive manner. There will be opportunities for people to see how crops grow, to watch demonstrations of both new and old farm equipment and learn about livestock during the Regional Fair and other events. The site can also be used as a space to explore and discuss agricultural innovation, by understanding how existing practices have changed, and through observing new agricultural practices and technology.

Grey Roots hosts a wide variety of events throughout the year that incorporate an educational component for visitors. An example is the Regional Heritage Fair, where students research and showcase their findings about Canadian heroes, legends, milestones, and achievements. The agricultural lands and the facilities at the proposed

RALD site will be used to support events held at Grey Roots, especially those tied to agriculture.

Access to the proposed RALD site will be from the existing Grey Roots entrance off Grey Road 18. A new entrance will not be required, but the existing farm entrance may continue to be used for some secondary purposes (see the analysis of section 8.3.2(11) of the County Official Plan for further information). During the Regional Fair and agricultural events, the parking facilities, washrooms, and other amenities at Grey Roots can be shared between the two sites. Grey Roots already has a 180-car parking lot with 9 RV/truck/trailer spaces and 6 bus spaces, often underutilized throughout most of the year. Sharing amenities will reduce the need from the Regional Fair to install temporary accommodations for attendees during the fair or other events.

A concept plan for the RALD site has been included below.



Proposed RALD Site Concept Plan

Business Interest and Public Need

The Owen Sound and Chatsworth Agricultural societies have held an important role in both of their respective communities for over 150 years. They bring the agricultural community together to celebrate the value of agriculture in Grey County. This sector is critical to the overall economic wellbeing of Grey's rural economy, with over 2,600 jobs, and over \$300 million dollars of exports from Grey. According to the 2016 Census of Agriculture, Grey County added young farmers at more than double the national rate with a 20% increase in farmers under 35. Grey County also ranks number one in the province for farm direct sales with over 400 farms selling products directly to buyers.

One of the main events funded and held by both societies, in their respective communities has been a fall fair. The tradition of fall fairs has been long-established throughout the agricultural communities. These fairs offer an opportunity for members of rural communities to gather and connect with the agricultural community. Grey County has a significant proportion of residents living in rural environments, and our agricultural sector plays such a prominent role in our economy.

Fall fairs also offer an opportunity for those living in settlement areas to connect with agriculture and food production. As Grey County's demographic continues to change, members of Grey's communities need to stay connected to the rural way of life to help recognize the benefits of this sector. Through these events, farmers in the community and industry leaders are also given an opportunity to network and learn about new farming practices and products available.

Both the Owen Sound Agricultural Society and Chatsworth Agricultural Society have recently experienced constraints with their respective properties, posing future operational challenges. The previous site for the Chatsworth fall fair closed, and the community centre was subsequently demolished. The property used for the Owen Sound fall fair is extremely restrictive in size, with no access to the lands outside of the 4-day yearly fair event for fundraising endeavors or horticulture activities. Relocating the fall fairgrounds to the subject site will address the need from Owen Sound, Chatsworth, and surrounding communities to continue to educate members of the community about farming, and to support those working in the agricultural sector.

The Owen Sound and Chatsworth Agricultural Societies currently operate as non-for-profits and rely solely on fundraising and donations to fund their events. By amalgamating the two agricultural societies there will be significant financial benefit and efficiencies gained from volunteer and board committee involvement. Resources will be pooled to help maintain the long-term sustainability of the Regional Fair (combined

Chatsworth and Owen Sound fall fair). With a larger permanent site, the societies will be able to use the lands for other agricultural-related events such as fundraising initiatives, educational, or community focused events. The Owen Sound and Chatsworth Agricultural Society members see this proposal as a strategic move to ensure the Regional Fair and other agriculturally focused events will consistently run year over year.

Additionally, temporary relocation of the Chesley SHSM in Agriculture is proceeding in winter 2024 to Grey Roots and the RALD site. Permanent relocation will occur to the RALD and Grey Roots sites is conditional on the NEC issuing approval of the subject NEPA and future development permit applications to ensure long-term program sustainability. This program was the first of its kind in Ontario. It had been operating out of the Chesley High School over the past number of years. Given this course is focused on agriculture, a site that can accommodate both classroom facility requirements and agricultural needs is an identified priority. Locating this program at Grey Roots and the future RALD site will allow it to be better positioned to connect with more students in the BWDSB, being in proximity to existing bus routes travelling to Owen Sound. The school board sees this as a significant benefit to the ongoing success of this program.

As the RALD site had been previously used for cash crop purposes and is currently being leased for cash crop purposes, this site will offer an accessible space for the SHSM program to offer the horticulture and crop-science components of the course. Program participants will play a large role in growing and tending to the agricultural demonstration plots (e.g., corn, wheat, barley), the orchard, and the interpretive treed pathway on the *RALD* site. They will also be supporting events held on the *RALD* site either through school hours, or when fulfilling their required community service hours.

Adjacent Lands

As part of the development proposal, consideration should be given to the adjacent lands when reviewing the compatibility of this type of use. There should also be an assessment as to whether there will be any potential visual impacts from the permanent and temporary installments to neighbors and members of the public. Mitigation measures and overall impact to neighboring properties will be discussed further on in the report.

- Immediately to the east of the subject lands is the Grey Roots Archives and Museum facility and Moreston Heritage Village. The Museum is open year-round to members of the public, but the Moreston Heritage Village is only open seasonally.
- A large cash crop farm is located to the south.
- A small 4-acre rural residential lot is located to the south.

- The property located southwest of the RALD site at the corner of Concession 3 Derby and Grey Road 18 (on the southeast side of the intersection) contains a dwelling and a nursery and landscaping operation.
- North of the subject lands is a vacant lot with a licensed aggregate pit. The maximum annual tonnage that can be removed from this aggregate pit is 20,000 tonnes. County staff understand that there may be a proposed expansion to this pit further east towards the proposed RALD site. Given the nature of the proposed RALD site and its sporadic use and programming throughout the year, County staff do not view this pit to be incompatible with the uses proposed on the RALD site. The proposed truck & trailer parking / hay ground, orchard, and natural heritage areas along the northerly part of the *RALD* site would provide a buffer between the pit expansion and the human occupied portions of the site such as the office / homecraft area. Other buildings such as the greenhouse, storage shed, and sugar shack are only used sporadically and would not be impacted by neighbouring aggregate operations.
- Northwest of the RALD site on Concession 3 Derby there some small 1.5 and 0.5-acre rural residential lots. These residential lots are 300+ metres from the RALD site.
- The lands located immediately to the West of Concession 3 Derby are used for cash crop purposes.

Consistency with the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act

The following sections of the *Niagara Commission Act* require that amendments to the Plan be justified.

Section 6.1(2.1) states:

An application to the Commission by a person or public body requesting an amendment to the Plan shall include a statement of the justification for the amendment and shall be accompanied by research material, reports, plans and the like that were used in the preparation of the amendment. 2005, c. 1, s. 25 (1); 2009, c. 12, Sched. L, s. 9(1).

Section 10(6) states:

At a hearing under subsection (3), the persons proposing the amendments or their representatives shall present the proposed amendments and the justification therefor and shall make available for public inspection research material, reports, plans and the like that were used in the preparation of the

amendments, and, subject to the rules of procedure adopted by the hearing officers for the conduct of the hearing, the persons presenting the amendments and any other persons who make presentations at the hearing may be questioned on any aspect of the amendments by any interested person. 1999, c. 12, Sched. N, s. 4 (6).

Comment: During the pre-submission consultation meeting, Niagara Escarpment Commission staff outlined a Planning Justification report was required for this amendment application. No other studies or research materials were requested.

Section 2.2 of the *Niagara Commission Act* states:

No person or public body shall make an application or request to amend the Niagara Escarpment Plan if the application or request relates to land that is within the land use designation of Escarpment Natural Area, Escarpment Protection Area, Mineral Resource Extraction Area or Escarpment Rural Area of the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the application or request seeks to,

- a) Redesignate the land to the land use designation of Minor Urban Centre, Urban Area or Escarpment Recreation Area of the Niagara Escarpment Plan; or*
- b) Make any other amendment to permit urban uses. 2005, c. 1, s. 25 (1); 2009, c. 12, Sched. L, s. 9 (2).*

Comment: The proposed RALD site is intended to be the future permanent location for the newly proposed joint agricultural society (i.e., the amalgamation of the Chatsworth and Owen Sound Agricultural Societies). All the proposed uses for the RALD site and the accompanying events will be agricultural and institutional in nature (as per section 3.2 of this report). The institutional nature of the proposed site is fundamentally tied to the agricultural landscape (e.g., operation of the SHSM in Agriculture program), and success of this site as envisioned would not be viable within an urban area. Many of the proposed land uses and programming will have associated odours (e.g., livestock) and will require agricultural lands to grow and maintain agricultural demonstration plots, crops, plantings of local tree species, and an apple orchard.

Niagara Escarpment Plan Conformity

Land Use Designation

The Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP, 2017) designates the subject lands as 'Escarpment Rural Area' as shown on Figure 4. These lands are recognized as particularly important, providing a buffer to the more ecologically sensitive areas of the Escarpment.

The objectives of the Escarpment Rural Area include:

- To maintain the *scenic resources* of lands in the vicinity of the *Escarpment* and the *open landscape character* of the *Escarpment*;
- To conserve *cultural heritage resources*, including features of interest to First Nation and Metis communities;
- To encourage forest management and recreation;
- To provide for *compatible* rural land uses;
- To encourage agriculture and protect agricultural lands and *prime agricultural areas*;
- To provide a buffer for ecologically sensitive areas of the *Escarpment*;
- To provide for the consideration of new Mineral Resource Extraction Areas which can be accommodated by an amendment to this Plan.

Permitted Uses Escarpment Rural Area

Section 1.5.3 (*Permitted Uses*) of the Plan states that the following uses may be permitted subject to Part 2, Development Criteria, (in addition to many others but these were not included because of relevancy):

1. *Agricultural uses*
2. *Agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses*
3. *Accessory uses (e.g., a garage, swimming pools, tennis courts, ponds, or signs)*
4. *Institutional uses, outside of prime agricultural areas*

As discussed in this planning justification report, the proposal is to be classified as an institutional use which is connected to some agricultural uses. Under the NEP (2017), an institutional use is recognized as the use of land, building or structure for some public or social purpose that may include governmental, religious, educational, charitable, philanthropic, hospital or other similar use, including cemeteries, to serve the immediate community. Education, teaching, and learning are recognized as the guiding principles of the RALD site. Additional activities and events may be contemplated provided they are consistent with the agriculturally and educational oriented objectives

of the agricultural society, BWDSB, and Grey Roots. The site would not be used for events such as weddings, as this would not connect back to the guiding principles of the RALD site. Below is a list of the proposed uses and activities for the RALD site.

RALD Site Proposed Uses and Activities

- Agricultural Demonstration Plots (e.g., corn, wheat, barley)
- Local Tree Species Plantings (e.g., apple trees, maple trees)
- Sugar Shack and Maple Syrup Production
- Greenhouse (3 or 4-season)
- Farmers' Market Selling Local Products from the Area
- Cattle Displays and Competitions
- Household Arts and Handcraft Sales
- Horse and Tractor Pulls
- Demolition Derbies as part of the fair
- Traditional Midway and Games as part of the fair
- Educational Programming and Displays (including the SHSM in Agriculture Program)
- Youth and Family Focused Agricultural Events
- 4-H Clubs
- Harvest for Hunger
- Grown in Grey
- School fairs, such as the Sydenham Fall Fair
- Steam Show with Threshing and Sawmill Displays
- Wood Processing Demonstrations
- Local Art Displays
- Barn Dance Fundraiser
- Travelling Horse Rodeo
- Dog Show
- Penning and Sheep Herding Competitions
- Antique Car, Truck and Tractor Display
- Interpretive Treed Pathway including Local Tree Species (e.g., apple trees)
- Barns

General Development Criteria

As per section 1.2.1 (Plan Amendments) of the NEP, Development Criteria set out in Part 2 of the NEP will be considered in the assessment of any amendment to the Plan.

The following NEP Development Criteria are applicable to the subject proposal and will be discussed in further detail:

- Part 2.2 General Development Criteria, including Part 2.2.9 respecting institutional uses;
- Part 2.4 Lot Creation, specifically 2.4.12 regarding lot creation by a *public body*;
- Part 2.7 Natural Heritage;
- Part 2.8 Agriculture;
- Part 2.11 Recreation;
- Part 2.13 Scenic Resources and Landform Conservation

Section 2.2 (General Development Criteria):

The objective is to permit reasonable enjoyment by the owners of all lots that can sustain development.

- 1) *The Escarpment environment shall be protected, restored and where possible enhanced for the long-term having regard to single, multiple or successive development that have occurred or are likely to occur.*

Comment: The proposed development will have careful regard for the escarpment environment by limiting permanent development to only include the office building and barns, or other agricultural buildings, such as a greenhouse and sugar shack, and through land improvements and maintenance with agricultural demonstration plots, corn crops, plantings of local tree species, and an apple orchard.

- 2) *The site shall not be prone to natural hazards, and the development will not impact the control of these natural hazards including flooding hazards, erosion hazards, or other water-related hazards and hazard events associated with unstable soil or unstable bedrock.*

Comment: There are no natural hazards identified on the subject lands.

- 3) *Development is permitted only on an existing lot of record.*

Comment: This is an existing lot of record.

- 4) *A property listed as a nature preserve in Appendix 4 of this Plan, acquired by an approved conservation organization, shall not be used as a building lot or for any other purpose inconsistent with the maintenance and protection of the natural features and values for which the nature preserve was established.*

Comment: The subject lands are not listed as a nature preserve in Appendix 4 of this Plan.

- 5) *Where a lot is located in more than one designation, development shall be located on that portion of the lot located in the least restrictive designation, except where the impact of development on the Escarpment environment would be reduced by locating the development on a portion of the lot located in a more restrictive designation.*

Comment: There is only one designation on the subject lands, Escarpment Rural Area.

- 6) *Any development permitted should be designed and located in such a manner as to promote design and orientation that:*
- a. Maximizes energy efficiency and conservation and considers the mitigating effects of vegetation;*
 - b. Maximizes opportunities for the use of renewable energy systems and alternative energy systems; and*
 - c. Reduces greenhouse gas emissions so that the development is contributing to the goal of low-carbon communities and net-zero communities in Minor Urban Centres, Urban Areas, and Escarpment Recreation Areas.*

Comment: The proposed development includes the construction of three new permanent buildings: an office and classroom building for the Agricultural Society staff and potentially the SHMS in Agriculture program, and two barns. The County's first Climate Change Action Plan was recently endorsed by County Council, and one of the action items of this Plan includes the creation a County-wide green building standard. Should this standard be in place prior to construction on site, this will be reviewed to ensure best practices and building compliance occurs. Generally, the buildings will be modest in size, and local building materials will be used. Energy efficient lighting and heating/cooling measures will be incorporated, and the use of solar panels for electricity has been discussed. Other sustainable building options will be reviewed. These buildings will be serviced by a private well and septic system and the washroom facilities will only be used by staff members and other users of the facility (e.g., SHSM in Agriculture program, 4-H Club, etc.). Members of the Agricultural Society and Grey Roots staff would like to coordinate efforts to maximize use of the existing public facilities at Grey Roots to limit duplication, such as the parking lot and public washrooms. The recently approved sugar shack, greenhouse, and storage shed (via development permit application G/A/2023-2024/83) are much smaller in size and more temporary in nature. Other facilities, such as non-permanent tents may also be placed on-site on an as-needed basis, in accordance with future development permit application approvals.

8. *Development permitted should be designed and located in such a manner as to provide for or protect access to the Niagara Escarpment, including the Bruce Trail corridor.*

Comment: The proposed development is intended for members of the public, by offering agriculturally focused recreational and educational events. This development would not impact the public's ability to access the Niagara Escarpment. There may be an opportunity to connect to the Bruce Trail located north of the subject property, forming part of Lot 16, Concession 2. Access to this trail will not be hindered by the proposed development.

Institutional uses

9. *The gross floor area of buildings and related structures used for institutional uses shall not exceed 500 square metres, unless a larger size can be demonstrated to be compatible with the site and the surrounding landscape.*

Comment: A total of three permanent structures will be constructed on the subject lands. One building would be an office and classroom for the Agricultural Society staff and the SHSM in Agriculture program, including staff washrooms, desks, and a large room to display agricultural exhibits. This building will be designed to look like an agricultural building and will be approximately 743 square metres (8,000 square feet) in size.

The second and third structures would be barns which would be used to temporarily house livestock during the regional fair and agricultural events. These barns would also house educational displays and be used for agricultural workshops and programs regarding current farming and food production. Combined, the barns would be approximately 1,765 square metres (19,800 square feet) in size (each being 9,900 square feet).

The office and classroom building exceeds the 500 square metres limit noted above by 243 square metres. This building along with the two barns will be designed to be in keeping with the overall agricultural aesthetic, ensuring compatibility with the site and the surrounding landscape. These buildings are proposed to be built in the north of the subject lands, sited in a manner to generally avoid significant natural heritage features and areas (see Figure 5 – Concept Plan). Additional agricultural buildings may be contemplated on this site in the future, provided they are consistent with the guiding principles of the RALD site and the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

Home Occupations & Home Industries

10. N/A – no home occupations and home industries are being proposed.

Secondary Dwelling Units

11. N/A – no secondary dwelling units are being proposed.

Signs & Billboards

12. N/A – no signs & billboards are being proposed.

Section 2.7 (Natural Heritage):

There are no identified natural heritage features on the subject lands. Development standards to be used for the office and the barn will be energy efficient and sustainable. Efforts will be made design these buildings to resemble other farm accessory buildings in the area. Some of these lands will continue to be used for crop purposes, and with the focus of the institutional RALD site being agricultural there will be significant care provided to the lands to ensure long-term viability.

Section 2.8 (Agriculture):

1) Prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long-term agricultural use.

Comment: According to the soil classification data, the subject lands are identified as Class 1 soils, meaning they are good for agriculture purposes. A large portion of the subject property will be protected for agricultural purposes, used for crops and tree planting. It can be anticipated that the agricultural uses will become well established, serving as a great resource for educational and demonstration purposes for residents, visitors, and students.

Section 2.11 Recreation

3) In Escarpment Rural Areas, recreational uses shall be designed and maintained to minimize impact on the Escarpment environment and shall be accommodated using existing rural services and infrastructure.

Comment: The proposed regional fair would be considered a recreational use, with the inclusion of the midway games (i.e., Ferris wheel, merry go round, bumper cars, tilt a whirl, etc.). No additional permanent services will be required to accommodate this use as emphasis will be placed on utilizing existing facilities at Grey Roots (i.e., parking lot, washrooms, etc.) along with temporary facilities (i.e., porta-potties, bleachers, tents, etc.). Limits will be placed on hours of operation and lighting provisions. Other events on-site such as educational (e.g., Grown in Grey) or fundraising events (e.g., barn dance fundraiser for the agricultural societies), would be limited in size and

frequency to avoid conflict with neighbouring uses and the escarpment environment. Events proposed on-site would be of a similar nature to events currently held on the abutting Grey Roots property. Areas that are intended to be utilized and preserved for agricultural purposes will be intentionally marked and access will be limited.

Section 2.13 Scenic Resources and Landform Conservation

- 5) *Planning, design and construction practices shall ensure that Escarpment Related Landforms are maintained and enhanced, and that development is visually compatible with the natural scenery and open landscape character of the Niagara Escarpment.*

Comment: The property exhibits *Escarpment Related Landforms*, including large rocks and boulders scattered throughout the lands. Some of these may have to be moved or altered to accommodate the proposed use. The existing trees located on the northeast corner of the site will be maintained and will be used for educational purposes.

Purpose and Objectives of the NEP and the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act

An amendment is required to the NEP to permit this proposed development. In accordance with Section 1.2.1 of the Plan, the purpose and objectives of the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act* and the Niagara Escarpment Plan are required to be met. The following section reviews the purpose and objectives of the NEP and details how the development proposal remains consistent with these criteria.

Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to provide for the maintenance of the Niagara Escarpment and land in its vicinity substantially as a continuous natural environment, and to ensure only such development occurs as is compatible with that natural environment.

Comment: The visual landscape on the subject lands will be modified only slightly to accommodate the three buildings proposed on site. One will be used as an office and classroom for the Agricultural Society staff and the SHSM in Agriculture program. This will include staff washrooms, desks, and a large room to display agricultural exhibits. The second and third buildings will be barns used for various livestock shows and exhibits, along with educational displays, workshops, and programs pertaining to current farming practices and food production. These buildings will be modest in size, and building materials will be used to ensure visual compatibility with the surrounding

rural landscape. The design of these buildings will resemble other farm buildings in the area.

The RALD site will be used for agriculturally focused recreational and educational events. All the events being held on site throughout the year will be short-term and will only include temporary installations. Temporary tents may also be used for limited duration on-site as part of the fair or other on-site events. For most of the year, the lands will simply have the two barns, sugar shack, greenhouse, storage shed, and the office / homecraft building, as well as the agricultural demonstration crops and local tree species. Measures will be put in place to ensure the site is cleaned following a large public event to minimize any long-term adverse effects to the environment, and to remain visually consistent with the surrounding rural landscape. During these events, there will be portable washrooms available and garbage and recycling receptacles. Grey Roots facilities will also be shared.

There are no identified natural heritage features on site. Limited site grading will take place to accommodate the new buildings, along with any temporary installations, such as bleachers and tents. This will increase public safety, by removing any tripping hazards and uneven surfaces. The intent is to maintain the natural 'bowl' shaped terrain on the property which will help mitigate any visual and noise impacts from the various events proposed on site. The hedgerow located on the northern edge of the subject lands will be maintained to preserve the natural environment and to provide a buffer between neighboring properties. A treed pathway will also be planted around the boundary of the subject lands which will not only act as a visual/noise buffer for surrounding land uses but will also provide an educational opportunity to learn about native tree species.

A well and septic system will be installed on site to service the proposed office/agricultural exhibit building. These will be installed by a licensed operator and will meet all permit and building code requirements.

Objectives

- 1. To protect unique ecologic and historic areas;*

Comment: Development on the subject lands for the RALD Site will not affect the integrity of the hedgerow located on the north side of the subject lands. The existing trees located on the northeast corner of the site will be maintained and will be used for maple syrup production purposes. Further trees will be planted throughout the site including a treed pathway along the property boundary of the subject lands and an orchard area for education and

demonstration purposes. All other development will have a negligible effect on the existing natural environment.

2. *To maintain and enhance the quality and character of natural streams and water supplies;*

Comment: Under Appendix B of the County Official Plan, there are no identified water features on the subject lands like 'other identified wetlands' or 'streams'. These lands are outside of Grey Sauble Conservation Authority's regulated area. Furthermore, because these lands have been used for cash crop purposes, the soil has been tilled and traversed by heavy farming equipment over the years, limiting the possibility of there being an existing undisturbed natural stream or water supply system.

3. *To provide adequate opportunities for outdoor recreation;*

Comment: Most of the events and activities held at the RALD Site will have some element of outdoor use or recreation. Attendees of the Regional Fair will have an opportunity to view the agricultural demonstration plots and walk along the interpretive treed pathway. There will be cattle displays, horse and tractor pull, demolition derbies, and traditional midway and games. Other events held on site throughout the year will be agriculturally focused for youth, family, and the farming community at large.

4. *To maintain and enhance the open landscape character of the Niagara Escarpment in so far as possible, by such means as compatible farming or forestry and by preserving the natural scenery;*

Comment: The RALD site will be compatible with the surrounding rural and farming properties. As part of the development proposal, three new permanent buildings will be constructed, as described previously in this report. Smaller more temporary buildings will include a sugar shack, storage shed, and greenhouse, will not have permanent foundations. The Regional Fair will be held during multiple consecutive days throughout the calendar year. During that time, there will be temporary food trucks, tents, portable washrooms, bleachers, and additional parking. For the remainder of the year, the events held on the site will also be agricultural in nature and include only temporary displays. Some of these displays and events will include farming equipment, farm machinery, horse and buggy rides, a horse rodeo, penning and sheep herding competitions, and a truck and tractor display.

5. *To ensure that all new development is compatible with the purpose of the Plan;*

Comment: The proposed development will be compatible with the purpose of the Plan because there will only be three permanent structures built on the subject lands. These buildings will be modest in size, and building materials will be used to ensure visual compatibility with the surrounding rural landscape. The design of these buildings will resemble other farm accessory buildings in the area. All the events held on the site throughout the year will have an agricultural and educational focus. Members of the Agricultural Society and the students from the BWDSB will be good stewards of the land by ensuring the property is kept clean from garbage and debris, and buffers to the surrounding properties during events will be adequately put in place to minimize disturbances.

6. To provide for adequate public access to the Niagara Escarpment; and

Comment: The proposed development on the site is intended for members of the public, by offering agriculturally focused recreational and educational events. This development would enhance public access to the subject lands (the Niagara Escarpment).

7. To support municipalities within the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area in their exercise of the planning functions conferred upon them by the Planning Act.

Comment: The proposed development will have no impact on the County's or Township's ability to exercise planning functions conferred upon them by the *Planning Act*. The proposed development requires building permits for the three structures, and as such, the Township of Georgian Bluffs will be directly involved in the review of this development proposal.

Consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement 2020

Section 1.6.6 (Sewage, Water and Stormwater) of the PPS (2020) states:

1.6.6.1(d) Planning for sewage and water services shall: integrate servicing and land use considerations at all stages of the planning process

Comment: Servicing of the subject lands will be by a private well and septic. This will be used to service the office and classroom building being built on site. It is anticipated that there will be minimal use of these services because they are only for employees and other users of the facility (e.g., 4H Club, etc.). Should the NEPA be approved to establish the principle of the use, the installation of services would require future development permit applications.

Section 1.7 (Long-Term Economic Prosperity) states:

1.7.1 Long-term economic prosperity should be supported by:

- a) promoting opportunities for economic development and community investment-readiness;*
- h) providing opportunities for sustainable tourism development;*
- i) sustaining and enhancing the viability of the agricultural system through protecting agricultural resources, minimizing land use conflicts, providing opportunities to support local food, and maintaining and improving the agri-food network;*
- j) promoting energy conservation and providing opportunities for increased energy supply;*
- k) minimizing negative impacts from a changing climate and considering the ecological benefits provided by nature;*

Comment: Relocating the RALD site to the subject lands was a strategic decision made in collaboration with the Owen Sound Agricultural Society, the Chatsworth Agricultural Society, and Grey County Council. Both existing regional fair sites in Owen Sound and Chatsworth are causing operational challenges or are no longer usable. The regional fair plays a prominent role in supporting economic development, agri-food, agri-product businesses, and agri-tourism in Grey County. It serves to connect members of the community to better understand the value of the agricultural economy, to make business connections, and share best practices from industry leaders. This event is valuable to the County and its large agricultural community.

Section 2.1 (Natural Heritage) states:

2.1.1 Natural features and areas shall be protected for the long term.

Comment: There are no natural heritage features identified on the subject lands.

Section 2.3 (Agriculture) states:

2.3.3.1 In prime agricultural areas, permitted uses and activities are: agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses.

Proposed agriculture-related uses and on-farm diversified uses shall be compatible with, and shall not hinder, surrounding agricultural operations. Criteria for these uses may be based on guidelines developed by the Province or

municipal approaches, as set out in municipal planning documents, which achieve the same objectives.

Comment: The proposed institutional and agricultural uses will be compatible with and will not hinder surrounding agricultural operations. There are proposed buffer measures and adequate rural services and infrastructure to support these uses.

Section 2.3.6 (Non-Agricultural Uses in Prime Agricultural Areas) states:

2.3.6.2 Impacts from any new or expanding non-agricultural uses on surrounding agricultural operations and lands are to be mitigated to the extent feasible.

Comment: The proposed office and classroom building will be used for institutional purposes and will be limited in size. Materials will be used in the construction of the buildings to be visually compatible with the surrounding agricultural uses.

Section 2.5.2.4 of the PPS states:

2.5.2.4 Mineral aggregate operations shall be protected from development and activities that would preclude or hinder their expansion or continued use or which would be incompatible for reasons of public health, public safety or environmental impact. Existing mineral aggregate operations shall be permitted to continue without the need for official plan amendment, rezoning or development permit under the Planning Act. Where the Aggregate Resources Act applies, only processes under the Aggregate Resources Act shall address the depth of extraction of new or existing mineral aggregate operations. When a license for extraction or operation ceases to exist, policy 2.5.2.5 continues to apply.

Comment: The proposed uses will be sporadic in nature i.e. there will not be full-time human occupation on the site, as there would for a neighbouring farm dwelling. Buffers to the existing pit will be provided through the hay ground, truck and trailer parking, orchard, and natural heritage area. The Chesley SHSM program is offered in the February – June semester. The first few months of this program will be in the winter, when pits are normally dormant. For the May – June months when there may be more pit activity, it is not anticipated that the two uses will be incompatible given the low volume of the pit, and the buffer lands between the pit and the buildings on the RALD site and Grey Roots sites. Other uses on the RALD site such as 4H meetings, Agricultural Society meetings would typically be in the evenings, or have minimal disturbance to neighbouring pit activities. Events such as annual

Fall Fair, Grown in Grey, Harvest for Hunger, or the Sydenham Fall Fair are not anticipated to be in conflict with the pit.

Sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.5 of the PPS state:

- 2.6.2 *Development and site alteration shall not be permitted on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential unless significant archaeological resources have been conserved.*
- 2.6.5 *Planning authorities shall engage with Indigenous communities and consider their interests when identifying protecting and managing cultural heritage and archaeological resources.*

County staff have recently reached out to staff from the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON) to determine if SON staff will request an Archaeological Assessment for this site. SON staff noted that an Archaeological Assessment is required, but that it can be as part of future development permit applications, prior to ground disturbance, should the NEPA be approved.

Grey County Official Plan Conformity

Land Use Designation

The subject lands are designated 'Niagara Escarpment Plan' under Schedule A (Land Use) of the Grey County Official Plan. As noted above, these lands are further designated in the NEP as 'Escarpment Rural Area'.

Section 6 of the Grey County Official Plan states that the Niagara Escarpment Plan must be referred to for determination as to whether lands are affected by the various designations and policies under that planning document. In the event of a conflict between the policies of this Plan and the policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, those of the Escarpment Plan will prevail.

Even though the County Plan does not provide further detail on the permitted uses, or development criteria for Niagara Escarpment Plan lands, staff see the relevance in discussing the Agricultural and Rural policies from the County Plan. In this case, the development proposal includes institutional, accessory, agricultural, and on-farm diversified uses (OFDUs). These uses are generally permitted under the Agricultural and Rural land use designation policies of the Grey County Official Plan. It is however noted that the County Plan is restrictive on institutional uses in the Agricultural designation, and such uses are generally limited to institutional uses on existing lots which serve the horse and buggy community. The Rural designation in the County Plan does have less restrictive policies in this regard.

Section 1 of the County Plan contains several goals which pertain to supporting agriculture, tourism, and the economy. Through the fair site and related events, as well as the educational components of the RALD site, this use would have positive impacts to these goals by:

- supporting agri-tourism,
- helping educate and train future generations of farmers, and
- helping to educate visitors on farm practices and where their food comes from.

Agricultural and Rural Policies

Within the County Official Plan, there is significant emphasis on Agricultural and Rural policies, as these lands reflect a large portion of the lands within the County. Some municipalities in Grey (e.g., Chatsworth, Georgian Bluffs, and West Grey) rely heavily on the County Plan for policy direction for lands located outside of the settlement areas.

A principle of the County Official Plan is to; *“make planning decisions that value growing the rural economy through innovation and on-farm businesses.”* Rural and Agricultural designated lands make up the bulk of the land base in the County and are important to Grey County’s residents, businesses, and visitors. Section 5.2.2, the Agricultural designation policies, of the County Official Plan states that; *“the County supports strategies for encouraging more young farmers, farm succession planning, slowing the decline in the number of farmers, and growing agricultural-related spin-off opportunities.”* To successfully maintain and encourage an agricultural way of life this requires significant community support and resource sharing from neighbours. The support of local fairs and the agricultural SHSM program are both crucial to:

- a. providing connections to agriculture and food production, whether it be as a visitor or as a student, and
- b. providing local educational resources to students in Grey and Bruce counties who may wish to pursue careers in agriculture, or plant/animal science.

Rural and Agricultural land policies have been developed to balance the needs of the farming communities by ensuring lands are protected, and by allowing flexibility for supplementary agricultural-related and/or on-farm diversified uses that help keep a farm operation viable. Other supportive community infrastructure is required for farming communities to sustain living on a farm and operating a farm business. Social and recreational facilities play a key role in rural community development and connection. The new proposed RALD site will serve as an educational and social support for the Agricultural community.

Under the Agricultural and Rural Lands permitted use policies, as defined in section 5.2.1(1) and 5.4.1(1), the County Official Plan permits 'agricultural', 'institutional', and 'accessory' uses. The events and exhibits included as part of the RALD site fit categorically into the above listed uses.

Institutional Uses

The County Official Plan permits institutional uses under both the Agricultural and Rural land use designation policies. As noted above, the Agricultural designation permits a narrower range of institutional uses than the Rural designation. The Rural designation does permit schools as a permitted use, which would be supportive of the SHSM in Agriculture portion of the site. Furthermore, although the Agricultural designation does not necessarily support an institutional use, except as it serves the horse and buggy community; the proposed type of institutional use is agricultural-related and reliant on raising crops and livestock. This type of institutional use can be distinguished for a more traditional list of institutional uses such as places of worship, cemeteries, town halls, schools, etc. which do not have a direct connection back to agriculture and the rearing of livestock and crops.

Through the partnership with Grey County, this proposed use can be considered institutional as the primary goal of the RALD site is to provide educational opportunities for members of the public. It will address the needs from Owen Sound, Chatsworth, Meaford, Georgian Bluffs, and surrounding communities to educate members of the community about farming, and to support those working in the agricultural sector. By incorporating the BWDSB SHSM in Agriculture program on site, it will help expose and further educate the next generation of farmers or agri-business owners.

Another focus area of the site will be to assist in the health and welfare of members in the agricultural community. The regional fair and other agriculturally focused recreational and educational events proposed to be held on the subject lands will bring members of the community together to better understand the value of the agricultural economy, to make business connections, and share best practices from industry leaders. Some of these events could be considered to fall under an agri-tourism category, which is permitted under the Agricultural and Rural policies as an OFDU. By instilling the value and importance of the agricultural economy to the County's people, this will assist in ensuring continued interest in the occupation and strengthen local expertise keeping Grey County an area of agricultural prominence in Ontario.

Accessory Uses

In the context of Agricultural and Rural designated lands, County staff have interpreted accessory uses to mean storage sheds, and other farm-related structures that are

related to farming. Uses such as barns would typically be considered primary to the farm operation, rather than accessory. These uses are permitted in both Agricultural and Rural designated lands. With reference to the subject application, there are two barns and an office / homecraft building to be built on the subject lands. For most of the year, these barns will be used for agricultural related storage (i.e., equipment and vehicles), and for educational purposes, with local art displays and exhibits. They will also be used to temporarily house livestock during the fair and other events. The office and homecraft building will be secondary in nature and can be considered accessory to the overall use of the site.

Agricultural Uses

Agricultural uses are defined by the County Official Plan and the PPS (2020) as:

“the growing of crops, including nursery, biomass, and horticultural crops; raising of livestock, raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre, including poultry and fish; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; and associated on-farm buildings and structures, including, but not limited to livestock facilities, manure storages, value-retaining facilities, and accommodation for full-time farm labour when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment.”

Some of the proposed uses on these lands will be agricultural in nature. There will be agricultural demonstration plots, corn crops, plantings of local tree species, livestock, greenhouse, maple syrup production, and an apple orchard. The agricultural uses will be maintained seasonally with proper care to achieve healthy growth and development. Visitors to the site will be able to observe these agricultural features on the lands to better understand how crops grow, the required maintenance, and different harvesting techniques.

Mineral Aggregate Resources

Schedule B of the County Official Plan identifies a ‘Mineral Resource Extraction’ site adjacent to the subject property. This is an active pit operation with a Class B licensed area of 3.6 ha. The maximum annual tonnage for this site is 20,000 tonnes. The County Plan would generally defer to the Niagara Escarpment Plan policies to assess the provisions under which an institutional use is permitted in proximity to an in-operation pit. A compatibility analysis between the two uses has been included earlier in this report.

Natural Environment

Section 7 (*Natural Grey*) of the Grey County Official Plan includes natural environment policies for natural heritage features such as 'significant woodlands', 'significant wetlands', and 'areas of natural and scientific interest'. Adjacent lands to such environmental features, for the purpose for triggering additional environmental review, is typically 120 metres. There are no natural heritage features identified through the County's Official Plan schedules and appendices within 120 metres of the subject lands.

County Roads

County Transportation Services were consulted as part of this application submission because the subject lands are located adjacent to Grey Road 18. The proposed RALD site requires access from either the existing Grey Roots entranceway or a new entrance off Grey Road 18. Creating a new entrance directly off Grey Road 18 was not preferred for the RALD site. Public access required for this site will be seasonal and periodical during the Regional Fair and other agriculturally focused recreational and educational events. There is an existing field entrance located along Grey Road 18 to the RALD site that will remain operational for limited agricultural purposes. It is anticipated that this farm entrance would be closed or gated during events and the fair, so as not to allow general public access via the farm entrance.

Use of the existing commercial entrance currently serving Grey Roots is the recommended option to access the proposed RALD site for the majority of users. A gravel service road/driveway will be built from the Grey Roots property to the subject lands. This service road/driveway will require a future development permit application, should the RALD site NEPA be approved. Visitors to the site during the Regional Fair will be permitted to park in the existing Grey Roots parking lot, and overflow parking will be accommodated on the RALD site as part of the parking/hay ground shown on the concept plan. Traffic to and from the site for the agricultural SHSM program would be negligible, and generally through the Grey Roots site. The occasional farm vehicle or delivery would be needed, as well as the students and teacher on-site. Some of the farm traffic could use the farm entrance directly onto the RALD site.

Other amenities could be shared between the two properties, including public washrooms and garbage and recycling. Should Grey County give up ownership interest in the lands to the Agricultural Society(ies), an agreement for shared access and an easement for the entrance will be required between the County and the Agricultural Society(ies).

Section 8.3.2(11) of the County Plan states:

“For large development proposals that will generate large volumes of traffic that are located either adjacent to or within the vicinity of a County Road, the County may require a Traffic Impact Study. This Traffic Impact Study will assess the impact of the development on the County Road system, impacts to adjacent access points and local roads, and recommend improvements if required. Integration with the complete transportation system will need to be addressed including how the development will accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, transit, and other forms of transportation. For new proposed industrial operations, the Traffic Impact Study will assess the combined impacts of truck traffic from industrial operations within the area.”

Comment: The overall increase in traffic along Grey Road 18 will be limited because the events that are considered on the subject lands will be held periodically. The largest event anticipated to be held on the subject lands will be the Regional Fair, for multiple consecutive days in the summertime or early fall. Typically, the Owen Sound Fall Fair has attendance of roughly 3,000 to 4,000 people over the four-day event. The Chatsworth Fall Fair typically attracts approximately 1,000 people per year. By combining the two fall fairs into a Regional Fair it is anticipated that the attendance will be roughly the same as the Owen Sound Fair attendance with about 4,000 people over the fair days. County Transportation Staff have not requested a traffic impact study for the subject application. Traffic control may be required during the Regional Fair and this will be determined between the County and the Agricultural Society(ies). Shuttle buses from Owen Sound could also be considered, depending on traffic levels.

Other events throughout the year are anticipated to be smaller in nature and no larger than the events already held on the Grey Roots site. In many cases such as the Grown in Grey or Sydenham Fall Fair events, participants would primarily arrive via school buses which could load or unload in the Grey Roots parking lot.

Students and staff to the agricultural SHSM program would be limited to ~25 on-site at any one time. There may be daily bus drop-off and pick-up for these students, or they may arrive via personal automobile. Occasional deliveries and/or farm vehicle access would also be using the site. There is an existing field entrance off the County Road. Farm vehicle access only may continue to use that field access.

Township of Georgian Bluffs Official Plan Conformity

Land Use Designation

As per schedule A of the Township Plan, the property is designated as the *Niagara Escarpment Plan Area*. The Georgian Bluffs Official Plan focuses its policy efforts on the settlement areas and generally defers to the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the County Official Plan for uses outside of settlement areas.

The Township of Georgian Bluffs Official Plan outlines that the Plan may provide more detailed and restrictive policies, provided such policies maintain the intent of the upper tier plans and are consistent with provincial policy. In such instances, the more restrictive policies may be applied. In the event of a conflict between the policies of the Township of Georgian Bluffs Official Plan and the policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, those of the Niagara Escarpment Plan will prevail, unless the policies of this Plan are more restrictive, then the more restrictive policies will prevail, provided that the intent of the Niagara Escarpment Plan is maintained.

Section 2.7.3(c) of the Plan supports “*the promotion and growth of existing tourism facilities such as the Grey Roots Heritage Centre complex, local golf courses and the various recreation sites associated with the Niagara Escarpment.*”

There are no additional policies within the Township Plan that would limit or restrict the development type on the subject lands.

Conservation Authority Regulation

Regulated Area

The subject lands are not within the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority regulated area, as per the Development, Interference with Wetlands and Alteration to Shorelines and Watercourses Regulation (also known as Ontario Regulation 151/06).

Related Niagara Escarpment Development Permit Application / Amendment Files

Grey Roots Museum and Archives went through two NEPA applications. The current NEPA application is intended to complement the existing approvals at the Grey Roots Museum and Archives. A Memorandum of Understanding is currently being drafted between the Agricultural Societies, Grey Roots, and BWDSB as there will be shared resources and responsibilities from each respective group. As noted earlier in this

report, in addition to the recent development permit approvals for applications G/A/2023-2024/83 and G/A/2023-2024/84, future development permit applications will also be needed for the Grey Roots and RALD site, should the proposed NEPA be approved.

Conclusions / Recommendation

The planning justification report clearly outlines the business interest and public need for this development in Grey County. The proposed RALD will continue the longstanding tradition of fall fairs in rural Ontario, in support of and celebration of the agricultural community, in addition to other year-round agriculturally focused events and educational opportunities. This site will play a critical role in ensuring the economic viability of agriculture in the County, and in supporting the overall 'agricultural way of life'.

This report provides justification for the proposed NEPA, including demonstrating that the proposed development would have minimal impacts on the Niagara Escarpment, the general character of the area, the natural environment, and other land uses in the vicinity.

The proposed development is consistent with the PPS, and conforms to the general development criteria of the NEP as well as the purpose and objectives of the NEP, the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act* and the relevant policies of the Grey County and the Township of Georgian Bluffs Official Plan.

Based on the foregoing, the proposed amendment to the Niagara Escarpment Plan should be given favourable consideration by the NEC.

Respectfully submitted,

County Planning Staff

Figure 1: Aerial Photograph



Part Lot 10, Concession 2
Geographic Township of Derby
Township of Georgian Bluffs

Figure 2: County Official Plan Schedule A



Part Lot 10, Concession 2
Geographic Township of Derby
Township of Georgian Bluffs

Figure 3: County Official Plan Schedule B

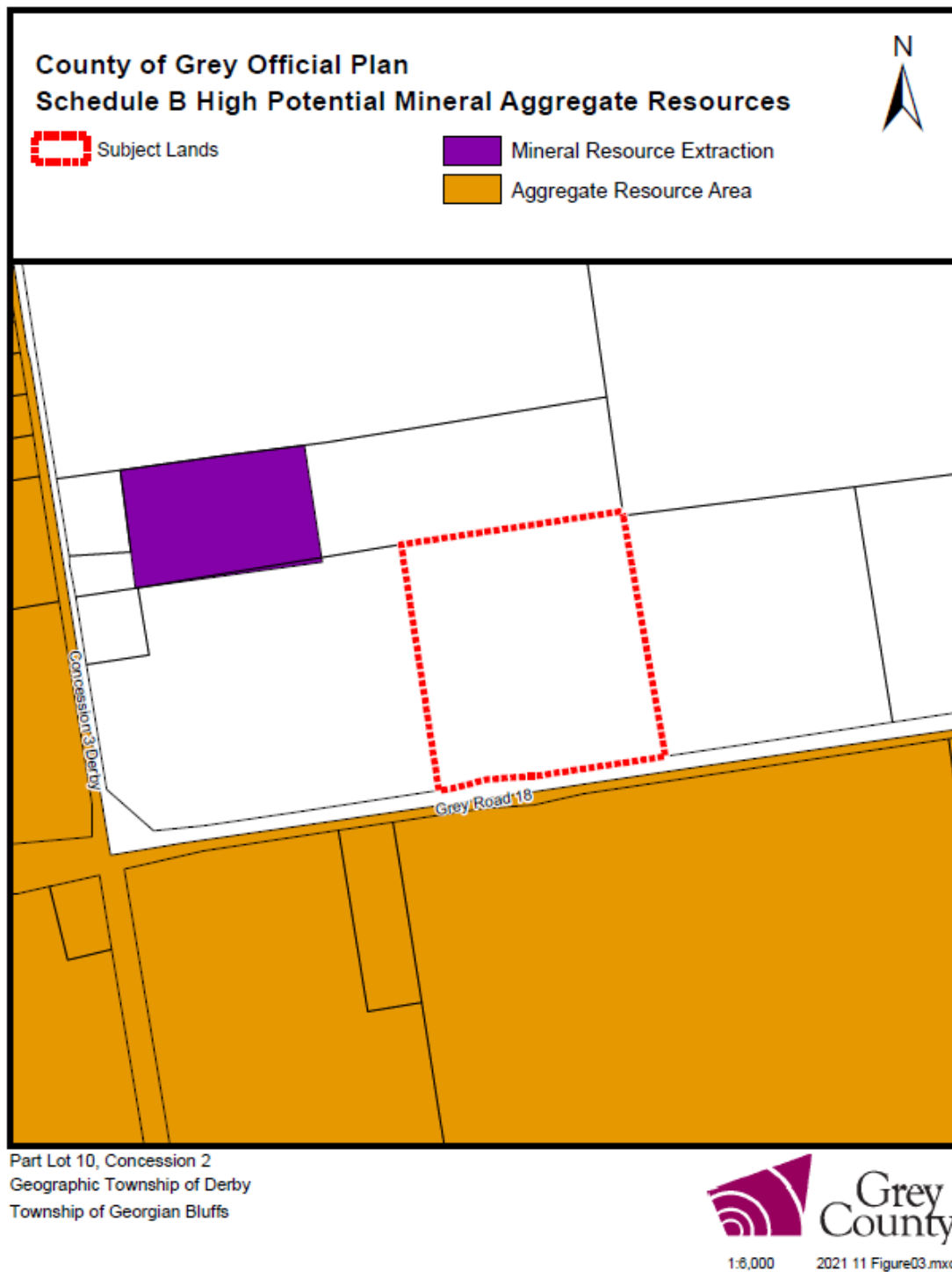
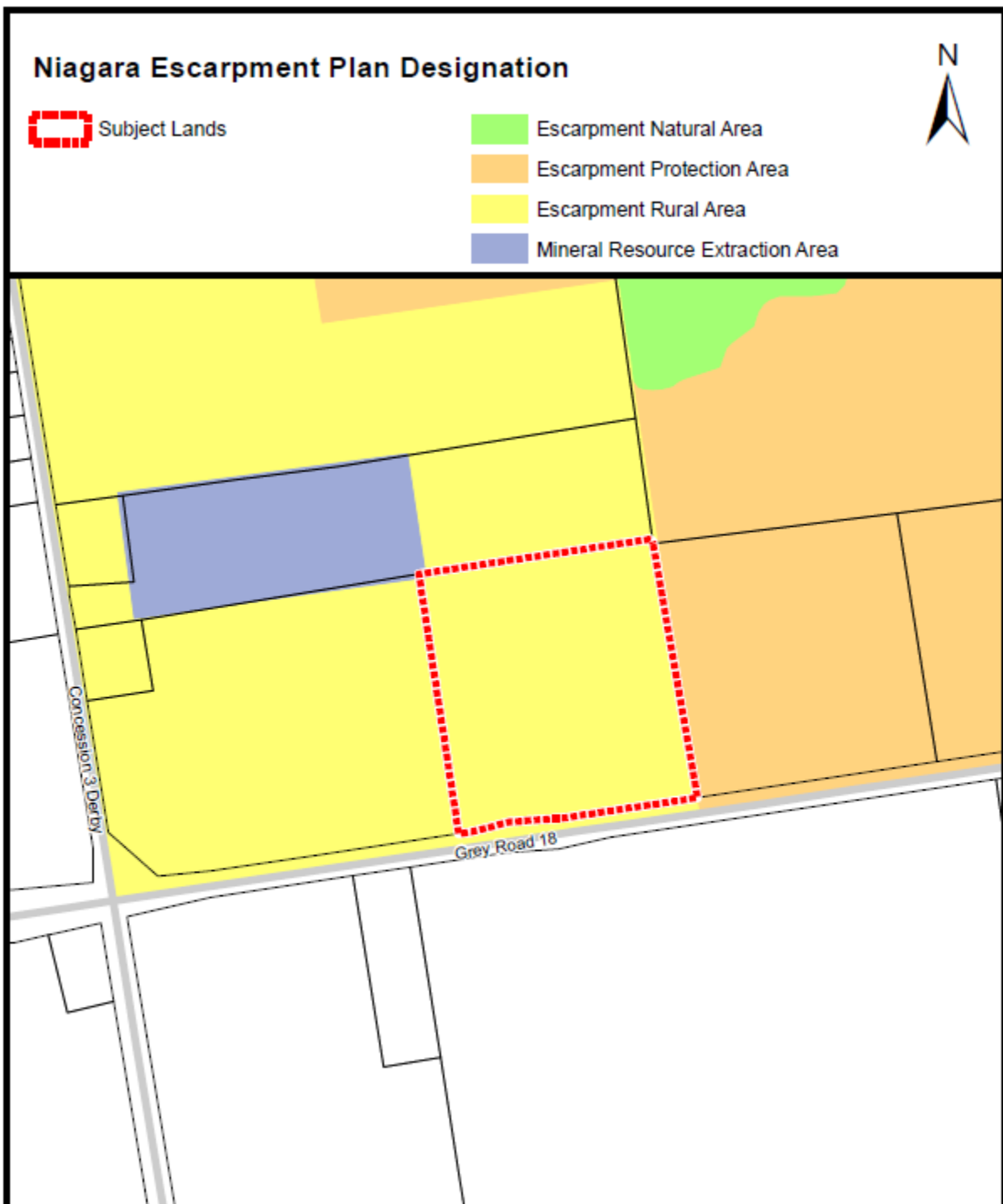


Figure 2: Niagara Escarpment Plan



Part Lot 10, Concession 2
Geographic Township of Derby
Township of Georgian Bluffs

Figure 5: RALD Site Concept Plan

