



Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review

Municipality of Trent Hills

Final Report

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1. Introduction and Study Objectives

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (Watson), in association with Dr. Robert J. Williams, hereafter referred to as the Consultant Team, was retained by the Municipality of Trent Hills to conduct a comprehensive Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review (the Review). The Review included two phases.

The first phase of the Review prepared Trent Hills Council to make decisions on:

- whether to change the way the Deputy Mayor is selected;
- whether to change the composition of Council; and
- whether to maintain the existing ward structure or to adopt an alternative arrangement, including dissolving the wards in favour of electing all members of Council by general vote.

Two reports were presented to the community and to Council in relation to the first phase of the Review: a Discussion Paper (January 27, 2020) and an Interim Report (March 17, 2020). Both documents are available on the Municipality's website; this report assumes that those interested in the recommendations included herein have reviewed the reports prepared by the Consultant Team.

At its meeting on March 17, 2020, Council approved five resolutions that resolved the first phase of the Review:

- Commencing with the Municipal Election in 2022, the Municipality of Trent Hills continues to elect Councillors in a ward system.
- Commencing with the Municipal Election in 2022, the size (composition) of Council be maintained at seven members, including the Mayor.
- Commencing with the Municipal Election in 2022, the position of Deputy Mayor be elected at-large (by general vote).
- Commencing with the Municipal Election in 2022, the wards each elect an equal number of Councillors.
- The Consultant Team are to prepare ward boundary options for the May 12, 2020 Public Information Session based on a five-ward system.¹

¹ The May 12, 2020 meeting was re-scheduled for July 27, 2020 and re-formatted into a virtual session in compliance with the provincial public health emergency requirements.

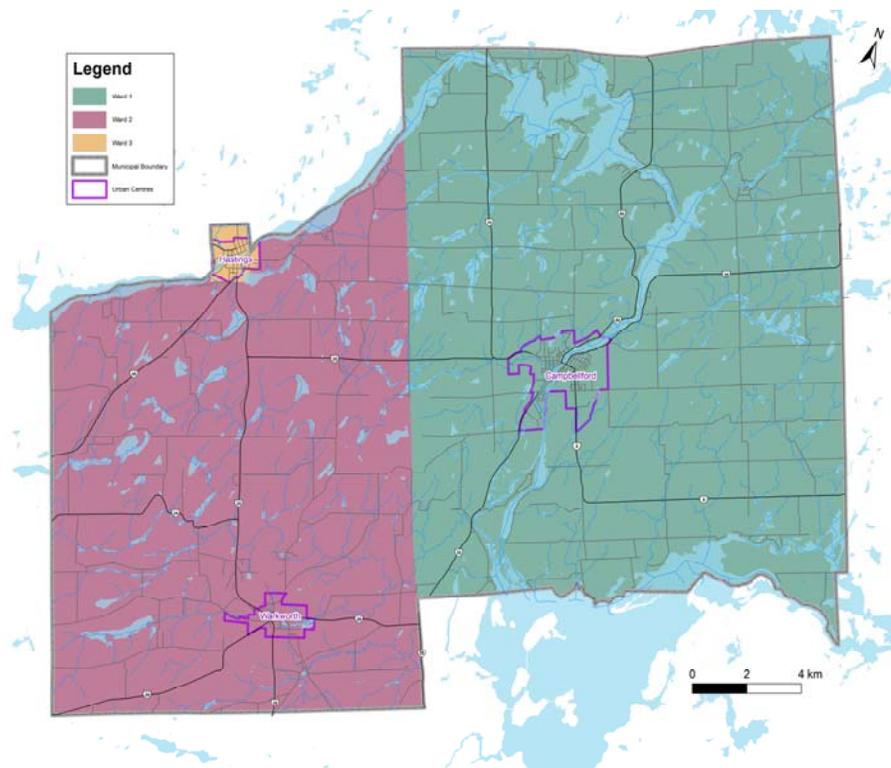


The second phase of the Review is based on these resolutions and a Preliminary Options Report that was presented to the community ahead of a virtual public information session held on July 27, 2020. The report included a review of the process and guiding principles for the Ward Boundary Review in Trent Hills leading up to the presentation of four preliminary ward system designs. The Preliminary Options Report is also available on the Trent Hills website.

2. Context

At present, Trent Hills Council is comprised of seven members, including the Mayor, elected at-large and six Councillors elected in three wards. The existing ward structure is presented in Figure 1. In the 2022 municipal election, Trent Hills Council will consist of a Mayor and Deputy Mayor elected at-large and five councillors elected in five wards. As discussed in the Preliminary Options Report (pages 13-14), a five-ward configuration must set aside the three historical wards to meet the guiding principles established for wards in Trent Hills, presented in detail in the same report (pages 4-10).

Figure 1 – Present Wards Municipality of Trent Hills





A survey conducted after the release of the Discussion Paper invited residents to indicate which of the guiding principles should be given priority in the design of wards in Trent Hills since alternative ward designs may vary according to which principle is given the highest priority. In that survey, protection of communities of interest was ranked as the highest priority and representation by population the next highest. The two other “population principles” related to future shifts in population were about equal in significance, slightly behind the representation by population principle itself.

3. Alternatives: Preliminary Options

The Preliminary Options Report included four options for consideration by the community that were prepared by the Consultant Team with reference to a variety of factors such as data on the present and future distribution of population, the historical nature of the communities within Trent Hills, the topography and geography of the Municipality, personal observation, research conducted for the Review and two sets of survey responses. Several designs were developed and evaluated but were set aside by the Consultant Team as unworkable for various reasons; the four options that were retained were judged to be successful to varying degrees in embodying the guiding principles. Two options (B and D) made population parity the priority and were successful in meeting that principle. The other two preliminary options placed a priority on identifying groupings of communities but showed mixed results in terms of the representation by population principle.

There are three components of the Preliminary Options that differentiate them from one another:

- The boundary between the proposed Wards 4 and 5 west of County Road 25 follows Concession Road 8 in Preliminary Options A and B and County Road 24 in Preliminary Options C and D. The former produces a more balanced population distribution than the latter, but County Road 24 is a more significant potential ward boundary “marker.” Either scenario is defensible.
- The area of Trent Hills (in the former Seymour Township) east of the Trent-Severn Waterway is sparsely settled and is aligned in similar groupings in Preliminary Options B, C, and D. Only Preliminary Option A divides the northern part of Trent Hills along the Trent-Severn Waterway. The wards that include this entire area are plausible components of the four Preliminary Options.



- The proposed Ward 3 in Preliminary Option A includes the entire Campbellford urban settlement area and a small rural fringe in a single ward, while Preliminary Options B, C, and D each locate the Campbellford urban settlement area in two wards with significant rural territory attached to the north and/or southeast. Keeping the Campbellford community together means that the population of the proposed Ward 3 in Preliminary Option A is projected to be slightly higher than the optimal range by 2030.

4. Public Consultation on the Preliminary Options

Residents were invited to participate in a survey on the alternative designs but the participation rate was low and the preferences fairly balanced: slightly more respondents ranked Preliminary Option A as their first or second choice than Preliminary Option B. No one ranked Preliminary Options C and D as their first preference; in fact, one respondent stated, “Options C and D are unacceptable.”

The overall assessment of the Consultant Team is that it is only the placement of Campbellford – either in one ward or two – that could be considered contentious, but some of the comments submitted as part of the survey confirm that perspective. For example, some saw the value in a ward that included all of Campbellford:

- “Splitting the urban centre in Campbellford doesn’t make sense. Option A is the way to go.”
- “Primary Option 'A' is the best option for representing the three 'urban' areas and distinctly the 'land between' containing the population spread around the rural area.”
- “As a resident of Campbellford I feel the urban centre should not be divided into two wards. The population of the urban centre is not too large to be represented by 1 person.”
- “It would have been preferable to have an 'Option' where rural only wards along with urban only wards were offered as rural needs and urban needs are generally different. Option 'A' is the closest. However, for Option 'A' Ward 5, I would suggest moving the boundary to County Road 24 (as shown in Options 'C' and 'D') which is a major County Road as opposed to Concession 8.”



The alternative perspective is captured in another response:

- “I feel strongly that the fairest representation should be by population. The most equitable as possible.”

Despite the limited feedback received through public consultation, in our professional assessment two ward boundary configurations (Options 1 and 2) can be recommended to Council as suitable five-ward systems for Trent Hills.

5. Alternatives: Recommended Options

5.1 Recommended Option 1

This was Preliminary Option A; it makes the recognition of communities a priority by locating Campbellford in a single compact urban ward while Warkworth and Hastings each anchor wards that include surrounding rural areas. One consequence of this arrangement is that the proposed ward where most growth is expected over the next decade is already above the optimal population figure, while the proposed wards where there are no sizeable settlement areas that are lower than optimal. On balance, these are acceptable trade-offs that contribute to more effective representation across the Municipality by recognizing the main communities of interest in Trent Hills as the basis for electing councillors.



Figure 2: Recommended Option 1 Ward Structure

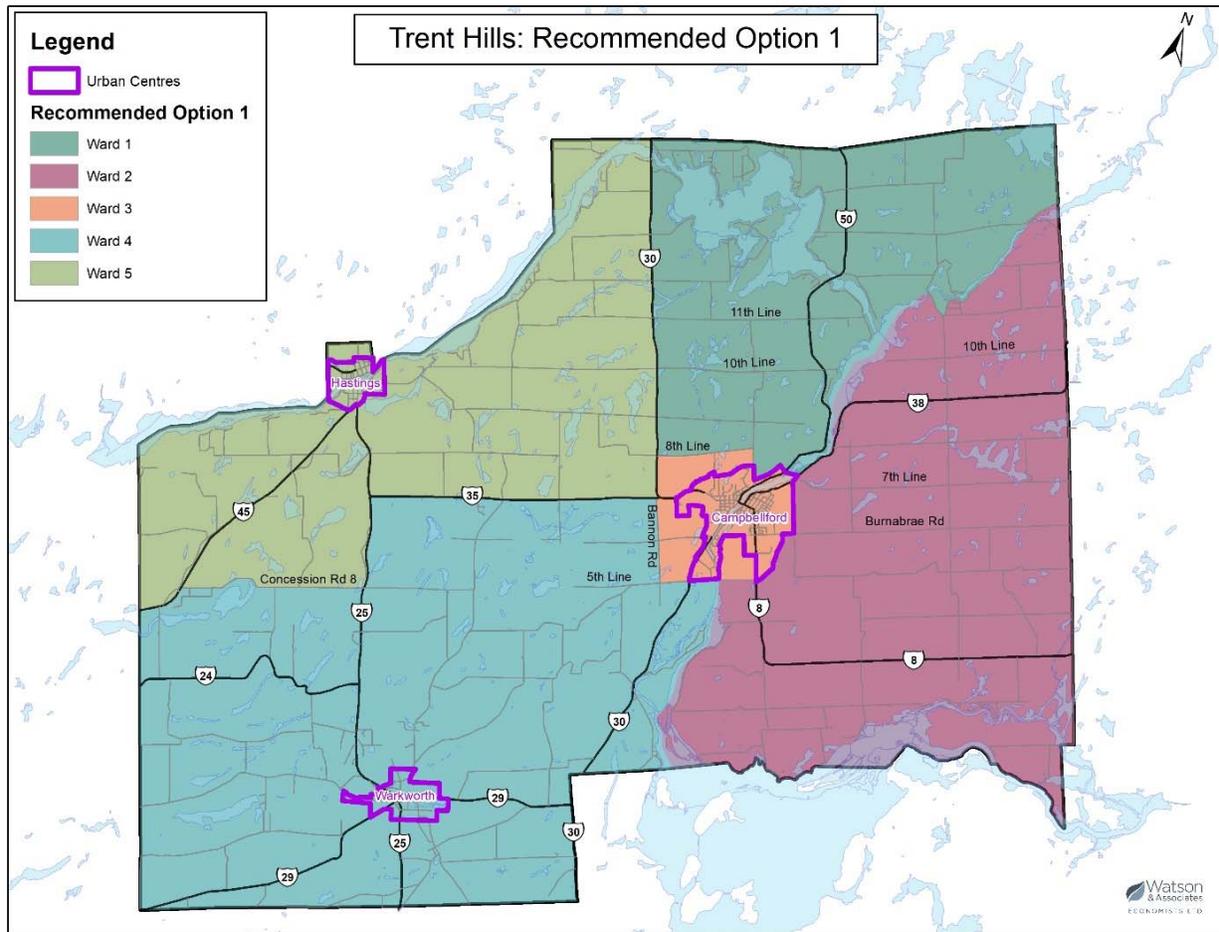


Figure 3: Recommended Option 1 Population Distribution

Recommended Option 1						
Ward	2020 Total Population ¹	Variance	Optimal Range	2030 Total Population ¹	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	3,140	90%	O -	3,150	87%	O -
Ward 2	2,830	81%	O -	2,790	77%	O -
Ward 3	4,150	119%	O +	4,700	129%	OR +
Ward 4	3,540	101%	O	3,590	99%	O
Ward 5	3,780	108%	O +	3,920	108%	O +
Total	17,440			18,150		
Ward Average	3,490			3,630		

¹ Population represents permanent and seasonal residents and includes the Net Census Undercount of approximately 4%.

Numbers have been rounded.



Figure 4: Recommended Option 1 Ward Configuration Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by population	Yes	Higher population in wards with identified settlement areas.
Protection of communities of interest	Yes	Three wards encompass major settlement areas; two wards predominantly rural areas.
Recognition of natural or man-made barriers or dividers as boundaries	Yes	All boundaries follow the Trent River, County Roads with one exception (Concession Road 8 West).
Recognition of density	Yes	Higher population where identified settlement areas located; lower population in predominantly rural wards.
Recognition of areas of growth/decline	Largely successful	Settlement areas where most growth is expected already above the optimal population figure; one exceeds the acceptable range by 2030.
Boundaries that accommodate growth/ shifts in population for at least three municipal elections	Partially successful	Settlement areas where most growth is expected already above the optimal population figure but are within acceptable range. Ward 3 will exceed the acceptable range by 2026.

Meets Requirements of Guiding Principle?

Yes	Largely successful	Partially successful	No
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5.2 Recommended Option 2

This was Preliminary Option B; it succeeds in achieving population parity since all wards are within 10% of the optimal population figure both now and in 2030. To reach this balance, however, Campbellford is divided into two wards that each include outlying rural areas, similar to the proposed wards based on Warkworth and Hastings. The proposed ward in the northeastern part of the Municipality includes areas on both sides of Seymour Lake and the Trent River that are not well connected to one another. On balance, drawing lines to achieve population parity by dividing Campbellford and combining dispersed communities in the northeast is an acceptable trade-off that contributes to more effective representation across the Municipality by ensuring that the voices at the Council table from one ward count the same as those from other wards.

Figure 5: Recommended Option 2 Ward Structure

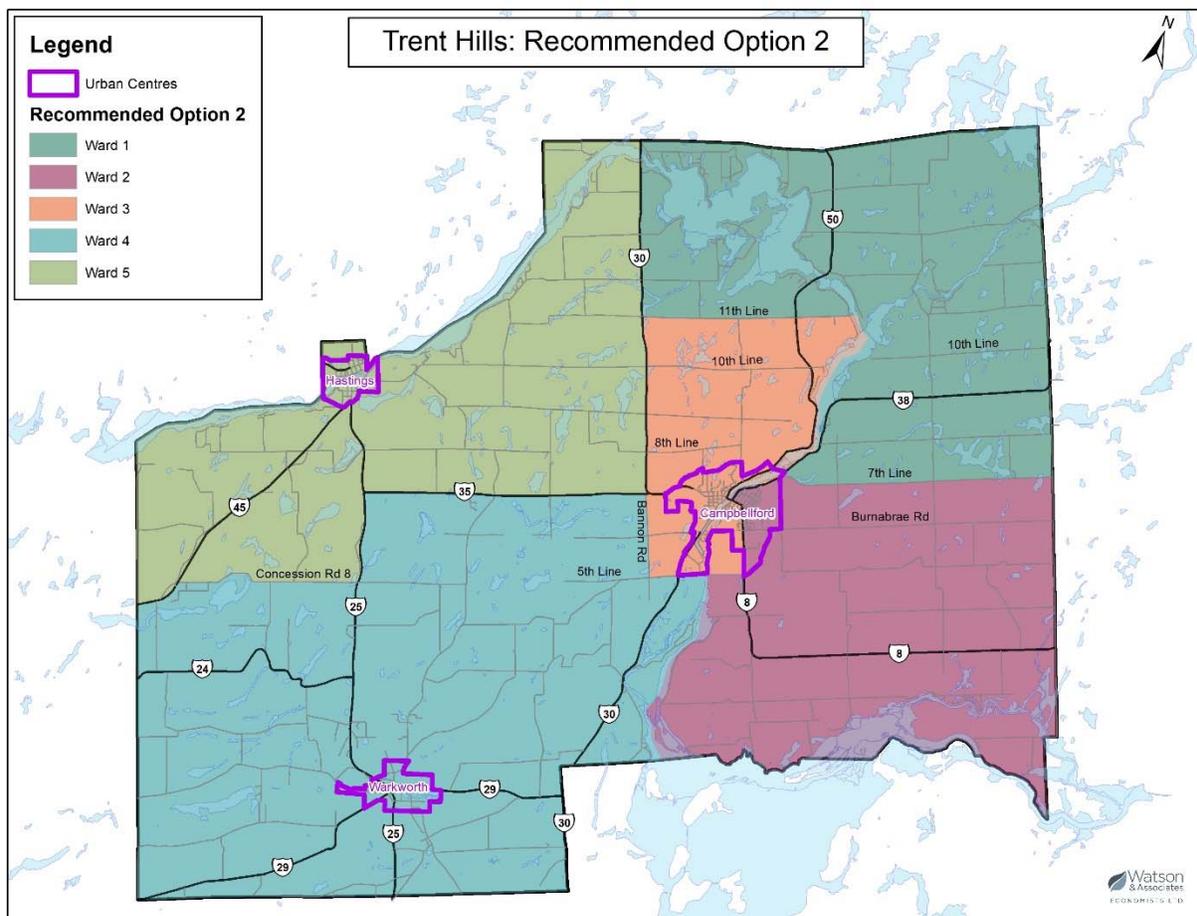




Figure 6: Recommended Option 2 Population Distribution

Recommended Option 2						
Ward	2020 Total Population ¹	Variance	Optimal Range	2030 Total Population ¹	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	3,500	100%	O	3,510	97%	O
Ward 2	3,480	100%	O	3,610	99%	O
Ward 3	3,130	90%	O -	3,520	97%	O
Ward 4	3,540	101%	O	3,590	99%	O
Ward 5	3,780	108%	O +	3,920	108%	O +
Total	17,440			18,150		
Ward Average	3,490			3,630		

¹ Population represents permanent and seasonal residents and includes the Net Census Undercount of approximately 4%.

Numbers have been rounded.



Figure 7: Recommended Option 2 Ward Configuration Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by population	Yes	All wards at or within 10% of optimal.
Protection of communities of interest	Partially successful	Northeastern area is a single ward that crosses the Trent River; combines dispersed communities. Campbellford divided into two wards.
Recognition of natural or man-made barriers or dividers as boundaries	Largely successful	Some local roads serve as boundaries (11 th Line West and 7 th Line East; Concession Road 8 West) rather than major roads. All other boundaries suitable.
Recognition of density	Largely successful	Achieving population parity reflects variations in population density.
Recognition of areas of growth/decline	Yes	Settlement area where most growth is expected below the optimal population figure but within acceptable range at present.
Boundaries that accommodate growth/ shifts in population for at least three municipal elections	Yes	All wards within 10% of optimal in 2020 and 2030.

Meets Requirements of Guiding Principle?

Yes	Largely successful	Partially successful	No
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6. The Next Steps

This report will be presented to Municipal Council at a meeting scheduled for September 15, 2020. Depending on Council's decision related to the Recommended Options, ratification of a by-law to implement the preferred option is expected to occur at that time.