

Blue Mountain Village Association Survey

***Please note “answers” were pre-written choices, some provided a space to add more context in response to the selection. I have included both.**

Name & Position: Rachel Gilliland, Deputy Mayor Candidate

Duration in TBM: Over 30 years part-time. In our third year as a property owner. Between both families we have been spending time up in Georgian Bay since the 70's.

Business Background:

I am a small local business owner and entrepreneur with a professional background in business development, finance, sales, and the beverage industry, where I currently work closely with restaurants, event spaces, and other hospitality businesses throughout the region. I also bring eight years of municipal government experience as an elected official, including service on an Economic Development Board and Business Improvement Area (BIA) Board. This combination of private-sector and municipal experience has given me a strong understanding of the importance of tourism, local business, economic development, and building strong partnerships between municipalities and the business community.

Tourism Economy in TBM

Blue Mountain Resort attracts 3.2 million annual visitors, supporting 165+ businesses, generating \$170 million in revenue and 1,780 jobs in 2025 throughout the municipality. Ontario's 2025–2030 Destination Strategy identifies Blue Mountain as a priority high-performing destination.

*6.Q1 Do you agree that tourism is the primary economic driver of The Blue Mountains?

Answer: Yes! But it must be balanced with other community priorities.

Response:

Tourism is a major economic driver in The Blue Mountains, which I believe also includes the agri-tourism sector. It supports local businesses, jobs and significant economic activity, alongside our agricultural sector and the natural attraction of Georgian Bay.

The challenge is making sure a strong tourism economy also strengthens the community around it. That means balancing the needs of visitors with the needs of permanent residents, supporting agriculture and other local industries, addressing workforce housing and transportation, protecting our natural environment, and investing in infrastructure that serves both residents and visitors.

I support the direction of the Town's Destination Strategy toward managing tourism sustainably and ensuring its benefits are felt across the municipality. Tourism matters, but so do the people who live here every day. We need to respect and support both.

*7.Q1b What specific actions would you take as a Council member to attract new investment and extend the tourism season?

Response:

I would focus on implementing our Destination Strategy and creating the conditions for year-round private investment, including culinary and agricultural tourism, arts and culture, recreation and events. I would work with our economic development partners to identify and actively market investment-ready opportunities, while leveraging Destination Ontario, provincial programs and private-sector partnerships. We also need to address barriers to investment such as workforce housing and regional transportation.

The Town's Municipal Accommodation Tax took effect on January 6, 2025. In 2025, MAT revenue totalled \$2.9 million. Under the current allocation structure, 50% of net MAT revenue is retained by the Town to support its Destination Strategy, and 50% is transferred to the Blue Mountain Village

Association to replace BMVA's accommodation fee with the remainder supporting the Town's designated tourism entity for tourism promotion.

*8.Q2 How should the Town's portion of MAT revenue be allocated?
(Required.)

Answer: Majority of Tourism with a portion allocated for general use.

Response:

I support directing the majority of the Town's MAT revenue toward tourism and implementation of the Destination Strategy. I also believe we should maintain flexibility to invest in municipal priorities that support our tourism economy and benefit our residents. Transit, parking, public spaces and infrastructure are good examples. Council should retain flexibility through the annual budget process, but MAT revenues should remain transparent and guided by clear criteria rather than simply becoming general operating revenue.

*9.Q3 What accountability measures would you require to ensure the MAT funds are spent as intended, that is on tourism infrastructure and visitor experience?

Response:

MAT revenues should be tracked with clear eligibility criteria tied to the Destination Strategy. Council should receive annual public reporting showing where the funds were spent and what outcomes were achieved. For larger investments, I would also expect measurable objectives so we can determine whether the investment delivered value for our tourism economy and our local community.

Resort Condominium Property Tax Classification

The Resort Condominium Property Tax Class (O. Reg. 282/98) is currently available to municipalities with a population under 10,000. The Town of The Blue Mountains is expected to exceed this threshold following the 2026 Census. The Ministry of Finance has recently amended the regulation to

eliminate the population threshold, now awaiting the County bylaw to be passed in early 2027. TBM, Grey County and TIAO supported this decision. Without this bylaw 1,100+ properties could be reclassified as Commercial which is effectively doubling their property taxes, with little material gain for the municipality or county. In 2004, a similar reclassification caused a 126% surge in resales, stalled condo-hotel sales and development, and triggered \$1M+ in developer incentives to restart construction.

*10. What is your position?

Answer: Yes, I support the BMVA's position and will advocate for this at the Provincial Level.

Response:

I support this position because it is grounded in the analysis already undertaken by TBM, Grey County and Municipal Tax Equity Consultants. I believe Council took the appropriate approach by first examining the financial and economic implications before supporting retention of the classification. That analysis showed that moving approximately 1,200 properties to the commercial class could significantly increase their taxes, while much of the additional revenue would flow to the Province rather than benefiting the Town or County. Given the potential impact on investment and our tourism economy, I agree with the Town and County's position and support continuing their advocacy with the Province.

Q11. If elected, what concrete steps would you take to advocate for the Resort Condominium tax class with the local MPP and Ministry of Finance?

Response:

I would continue the advocacy already underway by working with our local MPP, Grey County and Town staff to bring a unified position directly to the Ministry of Finance. I would support formal Council resolutions, direct meetings and delegations at AMO and ROMA, using the financial and economic analysis already completed to make the case for a permanent regulatory solution.

Q. Blue Mountain's tourism economy depends on workers who can afford to live in the region. BMVA members identified a mixed housing approach as their top priority. Transit connectivity is equally urgent: the Town currently has one fixed bus loop with limited reach. Demand-responsive transit solutions, such as those piloted in Bradford and launching in Caledon, could transform mobility for workers, seniors, youth, and visitors.

*12.Q6 What is your housing priority for The Blue Mountains?

Answer: A mixed approach combining workforce housing, family housing, and market-driven development.

Response:

I favour a balanced approach. I do not believe the Town needs to become the developer or operator of every solution, but it should be an active facilitator, advocate and partner where transportation and workforce housing are limiting our tourism economy.

Transportation is a good example. We should continue supporting the emerging regional transit network and connections to existing systems, while also pursuing more flexible options such as on-demand and rideshare services. The Province is currently consulting on expanding its Provincial Rideshare Framework across Ontario, which could present a particularly useful opportunity for a community such as ours where traditional fixed-route transit alone may not meet the needs of residents, visitors and hospitality workers.

I also believe the Town has an important role as a champion for appropriate workforce and rental housing. That can include helping bring together landowners, developers, senior governments and other partners, removing unnecessary barriers and strategically leveraging Town-owned assets. The Town-owned 125 Peel Street property remains a significant asset with longer-term development potential and could attract appropriate investment or partnerships.

We are also seeing a promising example in Craigleith, where the proposed 112-unit purpose-built rental development is being advanced alongside the new peopleCare long-term-care facility and future fire hall. Projects like this demonstrate how the Town can help enable housing through partnerships without necessarily becoming the housing developer itself.

For me, the goal is a practical partnership model: champion opportunities, make strategic use of municipal assets, advocate for senior-government investment and create the conditions for the private and non-profit sectors to deliver where they are best positioned to do so.

Q14 Do you support investing in innovative public transit solutions such as demand-responsive transit connecting Blue Mountain, Thornbury, Collingwood, and Craigleith to serve workers, seniors, and visitors?

Answer: Yes in principle but with a business case and analysis.

Response:

I support improving regional transportation options, particularly for workers, seniors and visitors, but any investment should be based on demonstrated need, ridership, cost and available senior-government funding. With the regional transit initiative already underway and the Province now consulting on expanded rideshare options, I believe the Town should actively participate in these opportunities and pursue partnerships rather than duplicate services or commit taxpayers to a model before the business case is clear.

BMVA's 2026 member survey identified pedestrian safety, cycling trails, sidewalks, and road access as the most consistent community priorities in Craigleith across both residential and lodging members. Members also flagged concerns about municipal overspending, unaccountable reserves, and unchecked property tax increases.

*15.Q8 Which infrastructure investments would you prioritize in your first term? (Select all that apply)
(Required.)

Answer: A comprehensive plan covering all of the above,

Response:

Craigleith should not feel like an afterthought as the community grows. I support a comprehensive infrastructure plan that looks at pedestrian safety, cycling connections, roads, recreation and community spaces together rather than addressing them in isolation. That does not mean every project can or should proceed at once. Priorities should be based on safety, demonstrated need, growth pressures, asset condition, cost, available funding and the Town's overall capital plan. The goal should be a clear, phased plan so residents understand what is needed, what comes first and how it will be paid for.

*16.Q9 How would you approach municipal fiscal management?
(Required.) no comment box.

Answer: Strict adherence to balanced budgets with transparent line-item reporting on all major expenditures

*17.Q10 BMVA members raised concerns about raiding of development charge reserves and overspending on municipal projects. What specific measures would you put in place to prevent this?

Response:

I think residents deserve to see a clear connection between growth, the money collected from that growth, and the infrastructure their community needs.

I would support starting with a proper needs assessment, SWOT analysis and strategy to identify current and future gaps in recreation, sports fields,

active transportation and other community services. That work should then feed into master plans and the capital budget so priorities are based on evidence, not politics or pressure.

I would also want clear reserve reporting that shows what has been collected, what it can legally be used for, where it has been spent, and why. If funds are being used in another part of the Town, residents should be able to see the rationale and how that decision aligns with the approved strategy and identified service needs.

That creates a measurable process: identify the need, set the priority, tie the spending to the plan, and report publicly on the result. Growth should help pay for growth, and residents should be able to follow the money.

*18.Q11 What is the single most important issue facing The Blue Mountains that has not been addressed in this survey?
(Required.)

Response:

One issue that deserves more attention is the Town's own organizational capacity and stability. Fiscal responsibility is critical, but we also need to make sure we have our own house in order. With significant turnover at the senior staff level, maintaining strong leadership, institutional knowledge and continuity is essential if we expect the Town to successfully deliver major infrastructure projects, manage growth and provide reliable services. Council also has a responsibility to provide stable, experienced leadership and rebuild public confidence. We need people at the table who are prepared to do the work, make informed decisions and build productive relationships beyond Town Hall. That includes working with Grey County, the Province and federal government, as well as private and non-profit partners and investors, to bring additional resources into our community. The gaps we are facing cannot all be solved through the property tax base. A stable organization, an effective Council and stronger external partnerships will be critical to moving the Town forward.

*19.Q12 What is your message to the BMVA property owners who will vote in this election?

(Required.)

Response:

My message is simple: every part of this community matters. Tourism is a major part of our economy and many property owners have invested here because they believe in The Blue Mountains. At the same time, permanent residents need to know their quality of life, neighbourhoods, services and tax dollars are being respected.

I do not believe those interests have to be in conflict. Good leadership means finding the residential balance and supporting a strong visitor economy, while protecting the character and livability of our communities. We need to plan infrastructure properly, be transparent with public money, and make sure no area feels forgotten.

I am prepared to listen, do the work and build the partnerships needed to move this Town forward. Whether you live here full-time, operate a business, own a short-term accommodation or have invested in this community for years, you should feel that your voice matters and that your Council is working for the whole Town.