



2024/2025 Ward Boundary Review

Township of Severn

Final Report

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Table of Contents

	Page
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Study Objective	1
3. Context	2
4. Existing Population and Forecast Growth in the Severn	4
4.1 Existing Population and Structure	4
4.2 Forecast Population Growth, 2025 to 2035.....	5
5. Public Consultation	6
5.1 Online Engagement	8
5.1.1 Engagement Page	8
5.1.2 Surveys	8
5.1.3 Social Media Engagement	9
5.2 Public Consultation Sessions.....	10
5.3 Interviews and Direct Community Outreach.....	10
6. Evaluation of the Existing Ward Structure	11
7. Final Ward Boundary Options	16
7.1 Final Option 1a	16
7.2 Final Option 1b	20
8. Next Steps and Council Decisions.....	23
Appendix A Public Engagement Overview	1
Appendix B Preliminary Option Council Workshop Presentation	1
Appendix C Survey Results (Phase 1).....	1
Appendix D Survey Results (Phase 2).....	1



1. Introduction

Township of Severn has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and Dr. Robert J. Williams, hereinafter referred to as the Consultant Team, to conduct a comprehensive and independent Ward Boundary Review (W.B.R.).

The primary purpose of the study is to prepare the Township of Severn's Council to make decisions on whether to maintain the existing electoral structure or to make changes. This report provides alternative ward boundary designs that have been created based on preliminary research and two rounds of public consultations with the residents and interested parties of Severn.

The review is premised on the democratic expectation that municipal representation in Severn would be effective, equitable, and an accurate reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and people across the Township.

2. Study Objective

The project has several key objectives:

- Develop a clear understanding of the present electoral system, including its origins and operations as a system of representation;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the present electoral system based on guiding principles adopted for the study;
- Develop and conduct an appropriate consultation process in accordance with Severn's public engagement practices to ensure community support for the review and its outcome;
- Prepare population projections for the development and evaluation of alternative electoral structures for the 2026 and 2030 municipal elections; and
- Deliver a report that will set out recommended alternative council ward boundaries to ensure effective and equitable electoral arrangements for Severn, based on the principles identified.

In November 2024, the Consultant Team prepared a series of Discussion Papers that set out:

- The parameters and purpose for the review;
- The basic electoral arrangements in Severn;



- Council's legislative authority to modify electoral arrangements in the Township; and
- An initial assessment of the Township's current ward boundary system.

The Discussion Papers also provided a set of guiding principles that will inform the study and the work of the Consultant Team, as follows:

- Representation by population, also referred to as population parity;
- Consideration of current and future population trends;
- Consideration of physical and natural boundaries; and
- Consideration of communities of interest.

Taken together, these principles will contribute to achieving the over-arching principle of effective representation.

Each principle is described in detail in Discussion Paper E and can be found on the Township's W.B.R. engagement page. ^[1]

The purpose of this Final Report is to provide:

- A summary of the work completed to date;
- A summary of the information received from the public engagement sessions and tools, such as the survey and website; and
- Two final ward boundary options for consideration.

3. Context

The basic requirement for any electoral system in a representative democracy is to establish an electoral system used to determine the people who will constitute the governing body that makes decisions on behalf of electors. Representation in Canada is organized around geographic areas, units referred to as constituencies in the federal and provincial parliaments, and typically as wards at the municipal level, as is the case in the Township of Severn.

Severn's Township Council comprises seven members, including the mayor (elected at-large), the deputy mayor (elected at-large), and five councillors, elected in five wards. The Township has used a five-councillor and five-ward system since 1994, when the

^[1] <https://severn.ca/wbr>



Village of Coldwater was amalgamated with the Townships of Matchedash and Orillia, and portions of Tay and the former Medonte Townships to form Severn Township.

The Council of a “local municipality” has the authority under the *Municipal Act, 2001* to make changes to the way members of that Council are elected; that is, “to divide or redivide the municipality into wards or to dissolve the existing wards.”^[2] In 2016, Council exercised that authority to establish the current five wards based on a comprehensive W.B.R. conducted by Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. and Dr. Robert J. Williams.

Council adopted the terms of reference for this W.B.R. and awarded the sole source procurement of the project in August 2024. Work completed to date includes:

- Research and data compilation;
- Interviews with councillors, the mayor, the deputy mayor and municipal staff; and
- Public consultation on the existing ward structure and preliminary alternatives.

Interviews with staff and Council, and meetings with the clerk’s office and other staff concerning this study, were conducted virtually. The Consultant Team also conducted a virtual workshop with Council in September 2024 and two rounds of public consultation in November 2024 and April 2025. In both rounds, live sessions were held at various locations around the Township, with one hybrid virtual session in the second round as well. Information regarding these sessions is available on the project engagement page.

Throughout the 2024-2025 ward boundary review, the Consultant Team respected the strengths of the existing system while addressing areas of concern, both current and future. Working with the guiding principles, the team had three main goals throughout the project:

- Address population disparities between certain wards now and into the future, while making minimal changes to wards that are already providing for parity and strong representation;
- Rationalize boundary lines where needed, ensuring that they follow natural and identifiable infrastructure; and

^[2] *Municipal Act, 2001* s. 217 (1) 4



- Explore options to provide better representation for all communities of interest within the Township, while not disrupting current communities of interest that are now comfortably housed within the present wards.

4. Existing Population and Forecast Growth in the Severn

As previously discussed, a basic premise of representative democracy in Canada is the notion that the geographic areas used to elect a representative should be reasonably balanced with one another in terms of population. Accordingly, a detailed population estimate for the Township of Severn, including its constituent wards and communities, was prepared to allow evaluation of the existing ward structure and subsequent alternatives in terms of representation by population in the current year (2025). Population figures presented throughout this report include both populations captured by Census and, additionally, the seasonal population that is not captured through Census enumeration.

The Township of Severn is forecast to experience population growth over the next decade and beyond. For this reason, it is important that representation by population is assessed for both the existing and future-year populations. In accordance with the study's terms of reference, representation by population was analyzed over the next two municipal elections, extending through to 2036. A population and housing forecast for the Township for the 2025 to 2036 period, consistent with the Township of Severn 2024 Development Charges Background Study, was determined. The results of this analysis are discussed below.

4.1 Existing Population and Structure

Both the existing population (including both Census and seasonal residents) and future population trends were examined. A 2025 population estimate was derived by utilizing the 2021 Census and a review of building permit activity from 2021 through 2024, with an assumed six-month lag from issuance to occupancy. Severn's estimated 2025 population is 22,540 and includes the net Census undercount and seasonal



populations.^[3] Seasonal populations were calculated with an average of 3.58 persons per unit, were estimated at approximately 6,500 in 2021. A further breakdown of the 2025 population distribution, including seasonal, is presented in Table 4-1. Ward 1, which includes a significant seasonal population (approximately 2,950) and covers a large portion of the pre-amalgamation Matchedash Township, has the highest population of all present wards at 5,058. In contrast, Ward 5, which includes the Washago settlement area and extensive seasonal residential areas along the Severn River, has the smallest population at 3,978. This results in a difference of over 1,000 between the smallest and largest wards.

Table 4-1
Township of Severn
2025 Population by Ward

Ward	Area (sq.km)	2025 Total Population ^[1]	Population Variance
Ward 1	198.6	5,058	1.12
Ward 2	161.8	4,010	0.89
Ward 3	53.2	4,913	1.09
Ward 4	19.4	4,576	1.02
Ward 5	130.0	3,978	0.88
Total	563.0	22,536	-
Average	-	4,507	-

^[1] Population includes Census undercount of approximately 3.0%; seasonal population is estimated at 6,550 for 2025.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.

4.2 Forecast Population Growth, 2025 to 2035

The Township of Severn is in Simcoe County, which is home to both year-round residents and a large seasonal community. The growth across the Township is expected to increase over the next decade with populations expected to reach over 24,100 by 2036 (including both seasonal residents and the net Census undercount).

^[3] The net Census undercount is an adjustment to the permanent population to account for the net number of persons who are missed (i.e., over-coverage less under-coverage) during enumeration and is estimated at approximately 3.0%.



Growth, however, is not anticipated to develop evenly across the Township or within the wards but will be directed to the already well-established settlement areas like Westshore.

The Consultant Team has prepared population growth metrics for the 2025 to 2036 period, guided by local, County, and provincial growth targets and policy objectives, and has conducted a comprehensive review of opportunities to accommodate future residential growth through planned residential development and potential intensification. Anticipated population growth over the 2025 to 2036 period was identified on a sub-geographic unit level.

Table 4-2
Township of Severn
2036 Population by Ward

Ward	Area (sq.km)	2036 Total Population ^[1]	Population Variance
Ward 1	198.6	5,084	1.05
Ward 2	161.8	4,140	0.86
Ward 3	53.2	5,406	1.12
Ward 4	19.4	5,514	1.14
Ward 5	130.0	3,958	0.82
Total	563.0	24,102	-
Average	-	4,820	-

^[1] Population includes Census undercount of approximately 3.0%; seasonal population is estimated at 6,600 for 2036.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.

5. Public Consultation

The public engagement component of this study was delivered both virtually and in person and was designed to:

- Inform residents of Severn about the reasons for the W.B.R. and the key factors that were considered in the review; and



- Engage the residents in a manner that provides valuable input to the evaluation of the existing ward structure and the development of alternative ward boundaries.

Two rounds of engagement took place. The first phase had two in-person consultation sessions conducted on November 21, 2024. The second phase had similar engagement sessions to present examples of alternative ward configurations. Two in-person consultation sessions were held at separate locations across the Township: one afternoon session on April 22 and one afternoon session on April 23, 2025. Additionally, on April 23, 2025, a virtual session was conducted in the evening. The Consultant Team's presentation boards and other information about the review are available on the Township's website: <https://severn.ca/wbr> (see Appendix B for more details).

Through the public consultation sessions, surveys, and the project engagement web page's online comment/feedback form, participants were invited to provide their input and opinions with respect to the following:

- Existing Council Composition – Should the Township of Severn maintain a Council of seven members (a mayor, a deputy mayor and five ward councillors)? (Phase 1)
- Existing Ward Structure – What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current ward structure? (Phase 1)
- Guiding Principles – Which guiding principles should be given the greatest priority in the development of ward boundaries? (Phase 1 and Phase 2)
- Alternative Ward Boundary Configurations – Five alternative ward configuration options were developed and presented to the public for further feedback. (Phase 2)

The feedback and comments collected through the public consultation process are reflected in the analysis presented below and helped inform both the preliminary and final set of ward options. While public input from consultation provides valuable insight into the review, it is not relied on exclusively. The Consultant Team utilized the public input in conjunction with its professional expertise and experience in W.B.R.s, along with best practices, to develop the options presented herein.



5.1 Online Engagement

5.1.1 *Engagement Page*

A public-facing engagement page was established to raise awareness about the W.B.R., to disseminate information about the process, and to give the residents of Severn an opportunity to provide feedback. Through this platform, residents could access the online surveys, view the display boards from the in-person consultation sessions, view proposed ward boundary options, review background material, including the Preliminary Options Report, and provide feedback directly to staff and the Consultant Team. A purpose-built Whiteboard Animation Video was also posted on the Township's YouTube channel, which distilled some key information about the W.B.R. into an accessible format.

5.1.2 *Surveys*

Of those who visited the W.B.R. engagement page, a significant number also opted to provide feedback through the public survey. The surveys provided the Consultant Team with an opportunity to evaluate public preferences using both qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques. Surveying was done at two different stages of the public consultation process – an initial round to evaluate public priorities and perspectives on the existing council composition and ward structure (Phase 1) and a later survey that asked respondents to assess and rank a set of preliminary ward boundary options (Phase 2).

The Phase 1 survey was opened from November 23 to December 15, 2024, and resulted in 71 responses. Respondents were asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the existing council composition and ward configuration, and to rank the guiding principles in terms of priority. An in-depth discussion of the Phase 1 survey results is available in the Preliminary Options Report, which can be found on the Township of Severn's W.B.R. web page. In summary, residents indicated that representation by population should be the priority for this review (32.73% of respondents). The communities of interest principle and the consideration of future population trends were both prioritized equally, with 25.45% of respondents ranking them as their top concerns. The last guiding principle (physical and natural boundaries) was prioritized by 16.36% of respondents. Meanwhile, about half of the survey respondents (49.69%) thought it is not reasonable to have wards outside the acceptable



range of population variance, with one ward having almost 2.5 times the population of another ward. On the other hand, 36.36% of the respondents thought it is reasonable. As previously mentioned, these results are discussed in greater detail in the Preliminary Options Report.

The Phase 2 survey was later opened from March 24 to April 27, 2025, which had a low level of engagement of only 29 participants. Survey respondents were asked which of the five preliminary ward options they preferred. Preliminary Option 4 was selected by approximately 26.67% of the residents of Severn as most preferred. Favoured second was Preliminary Option 1A at 20% of respondents. Meanwhile, Preliminary Options 1B and 3 were equally favoured by 13.33%. Preliminary Option 2 was least favoured at 6.67% and 20% of respondents had no preference.

In interpreting these results, it is important to highlight that this survey does not constitute a representative sampling of the population and is by no means a scientific assessment of public preferences. The level of participation in this survey was weak with respect to surveys completed in other studies. Additionally, most survey respondents did not answer all questions, with only 15 respondents selecting a preferred preliminary option (52%). The surveys were nevertheless a good source of insight for the Consultant Team but should be viewed as one of several resources informing the recommendations provided in this report.

5.1.3 Social Media Engagement

Social media proved to be an effective platform for disseminating information about the W.B.R. to the public. For example, a short brain-teaser survey entitled “How Well Do You Know Your Township?” was hosted on SurveyMonkey and circulated through the project’s web page, which quizzed respondents on their knowledge of their Township. It was intended to be a fun method for informing the public, which would hopefully generate excitement about the W.B.R., as well as direct participants to the survey.

Throughout the review, five news releases were posted via severn.ca and were sent to +600 subscribers. In addition, four pop-up notification banners were used on the website to notify residents of the review.

Notices were also posted on Facebook, X, and Instagram, raising awareness and directing the public to the feedback survey. In total, posts related to the W.B.R. reached over 72,000 people, generating nearly over 6,400 post engagements across platforms.



5.2 Public Consultation Sessions

The Consultant Team also held a series of public consultation sessions with Severn residents. Five public open houses were conducted: two in-person on November 21, 2024, during Phase 1, and three in Phase 2 (one in-person session on April 22, 2025, one in-person session on April 23, 2025, and one virtual session on April 23, 2025). Feedback from these sessions was used to inform the final recommendations provided in this report. The Consultant Team's presentation and other information about the review are available online at <https://www.severn.ca/wbr>.

During these sessions, members of the public had opportunities to provide their impressions of the current ward system, their preferences for the guiding principles and, during the second round of engagement, their thoughts on the alternative options.

From this initial feedback, the Consultant Team provided four preliminary options during the second round of feedback. Largely consistent with earlier preferences about the guiding principles, those attending sessions during the second round of public engagement gravitated towards Options 1 and 3. These examples emphasized communities of interest while maintaining relatively good population parity, both now and in the future. Even with the strength of these options, those attending the consultation sessions did provide useful feedback on how each could be adjusted. Some of this feedback concerned very minor changes to certain wards; other feedback concerned the entire ward system. The Consultant Team aggregated this feedback, incorporating portions into the final options below.

5.3 Interviews and Direct Community Outreach

In addition to the public engagement, it was crucial for the Consultant Team to benefit from the perspectives of those serving in Severn's government. A series of interviews were conducted with the mayor, members of Council.

The feedback and comments received through the consultation process are reflected in the analysis and have helped inform the findings and recommendations. As has been mentioned previously in this report, public input from consultation provides valuable insight into the review, but it is not relied on exclusively. This is in part because only a subset of the population participated in the W.B.R., which may not be representative of Severn's population as a whole. The Consultant Team interpreted the public input



using its professional expertise and experience in W.B.R.s, along with knowledge of best practices, to develop the recommended options.

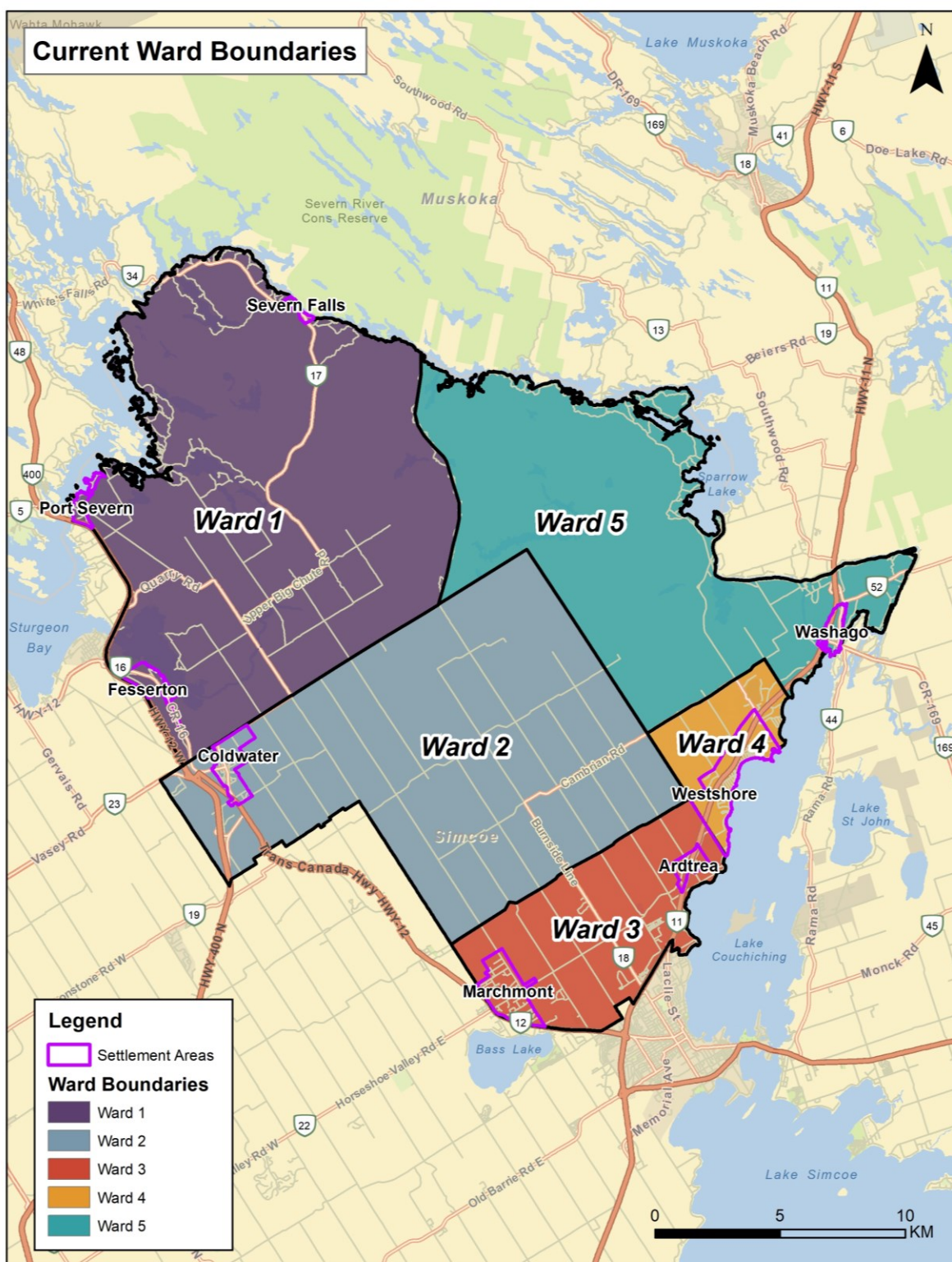
6. Evaluation of the Existing Ward Structure

A survey, conducted as part of the initial phase of public consultation, asked respondents to assess the current wards in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. The survey in the second phase of the study sought the assessment of residents on alternative ward systems, presented as preliminary options. These responses can be used to add depth to the evaluation of the existing ward structure included in Discussion Paper E and the Preliminary Options Report where the application of the guiding principles is discussed in depth. For reference, the current wards are presented in Figure 6-1.

This section revisits those evaluations, integrating information received during the second round of consultation and addressing certain challenges identified in parts of the existing ward system, as heard from residents of Severn. More importantly, the assessment of the two population principles will be based on updated total population data (that is, including both permanent and seasonal residents).



Figure 6-1
Township of Severn Existing Ward Structure





The current system has been evaluated based on four main principles that fall under the overarching principle of effective representation. These principles are discussed at length in section 8 of the Preliminary Options Report in relation to the present wards, so they will not be addressed again in this Final Report. The Consultant Team has thoroughly considered the importance of each principle and carefully evaluated which of the principles is most important for determining an appropriate system of representation for the 2026 municipal election and beyond in the Township of Severn.

The principles contribute to a system that provides for equitable ongoing access between elected officials and residents, but they may occasionally conflict with one another. Accordingly, it is expected that the overriding principle of effective representation will be used to arbitrate conflicts between principles. Any deviation from the specific principles must be justified by other principles in a manner that is more supportive of effective representation.

The priority attached to certain principles makes some designs more desirable in the eyes of different observers. Ultimately, the ward design adopted by Severn's Council should be the one that best fulfills as many of the guiding principles as possible.

The evaluation of the current ward system in Severn suggests that there are identifiable but not insurmountable shortcomings when evaluated against the guiding principles for this review. Our evaluation of the existing wards is summarized in Table 6-3, below.

The ward system in Severn must address two main challenges: ensuring population parity between wards at present and accommodating future population trends in a municipality with several distinctive communities of interest.

The objective of population parity (every councillor generally representing an equal number of constituents within their respective ward) is the primary goal of an electoral redistribution with some degree of variation acceptable considering population densities and demographic factors across the Township. The indicator of success in a ward design is the extent to which all the individual wards approach an "optimal" size.

Optimal size can be understood as a mid-point on a scale where the term "optimal" (O) describes a ward with a population within 5% on either side of the calculated optimal size. The classification "below/above optimal" (O+ or O-) is applied to a ward with a population between 6% and 25% on either side of the optimal size and is considered an acceptable variation. A ward that is labelled "outside the range" (OR+ or OR-) indicates



that its population is greater than 25% above or below the optimal ward size. The adoption of a 25% maximum variation is based on federal redistribution legislation and is widely applied in municipalities like Severn that include both urban and rural areas. These ranges are presented in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1
Township of Severn
Optimal Range for a Five-Ward System

Symbol	Description	Variance	2025 Population Range	2035 Population Range
OR+	Outside Range - High	25% and above	>5,634	>6,025
O+	Above Optimal but Acceptable	5% to 25%	4,733–5,634	5,062–6,025
O	Optimal Population Range	+/- 5%	4,282–4,732	4,579–5,061
O-	Below Optimal but Acceptable	-5% to -25%	4,281–3,380	4,819–3,615
OR-	Outside Range - Low	-25% and below	<3,379	<3,614

Table 6-2
Township of Severn
Existing Wards' 2025 and 2036 Population Distribution

Ward Number	2025 Total Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Total Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	5,058	1.12	O+	5,084	1.05	O+
Ward 2	4,010	0.89	O-	4,140	0.86	O-
Ward 3	4,913	1.09	O+	5,406	1.12	O+
Ward 4	4,576	1.02	O	5,514	1.14	O+
Ward 5	3,978	0.88	O-	3,958	0.82	O-
Total	22,536	-	-	24,102	-	-
Average	4,507	-	-	4,820	-	-

^[1] Population includes Census undercount of approximately 3.0%; seasonal population is estimated at 6,600 for 2036.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.



Data presented in Table 6-2 suggests that one of the five present wards is at the optimal point and the other four are within the acceptable range of variation and by 2036 none of the wards is at the optimal point although all five wards are within the acceptable range of variation. The gap between the smallest and largest wards, however, rises from close to 1,100 residents in 2026 to over 1,550 in 2036.

Table 6-3
Township of Severn
Present Ward Configuration Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle? ^[1]	Comment
Representation by Population	Largely Successful	One ward is at the optimal point but no ward exceeds the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation.
Population and Electoral Trends	Largely Successful	Population growth will not overcome the population disparity between wards, but all wards remain in the acceptable range of variance.
Geographical and Topographical features	Largely Successful	Most boundaries are regular and visible lines, although Highway 11 divides three wards.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Partially Successful	The wards only partially meet this principle since the Lake Couchiching settlements are placed in three wards.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Population disparities amongst some wards could hinder the achievement of effective representation over time. The guiding principles in most cases are largely achieved.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).



Overall, the analysis of the current and future population trends, along with feedback from the public consultation and other features of Severn in 2024/2025, leads to a recommendation that, while the present wards largely achieve effective representation across the Township, that it is still worthwhile for Council to consider adopting an alternate ward configuration.

7. Final Ward Boundary Options

In the Preliminary Options Report and the second round of public consultation, four preliminary options were presented for discussion and evaluation by the community. Subsequently the Consultant Team revised some of those options to take into account the total population of the municipality and updated information related to future population changes, as well as reactions from Severn residents and Township officials. As noted, the population disparities found in the current ward system were not unacceptable and the overall configuration performed quite well when tested against the guiding principles. The two options presented herein include relatively minor adjustments to the current wards, mostly aimed to address current and future population imbalances while better reflecting the communities of interest, especially along Lake Couchiching.

The two final options closely resemble the current wards and Preliminary Option 2, but each successfully achieves better population parity over the 2025 to 2036 period.

7.1 Final Option 1a

Final Option 1a was originally presented as Preliminary Option 1. Despite being described as including “minimal changes,” all five current wards are modified to some degree. The southern boundary of the present Ward 1 is aligned along Upper Big Chute Road and Kitchen Side Road rather than Mount Stephen Road, with the net effect that the population of the proposed Ward 1 is at the optimal point in both 2025 and 2036. Moving that area from the present Ward 1 to the proposed Ward 2 brings a similar benefit: the proposed Ward 2 is both at the optimal point in 2025 and closer to parity in 2036. By reducing the area of the present Ward 3 to better capture the lakeshore communities in the proposed Ward 4, the present and forecast populations in the proposed Ward 3 are at the optimal point in both 2025 and 2036. The most significant change from the current alignment is the proposal for a lakefront ward (proposed Ward 4), reminiscent of the way this area was represented in the pre-2016



ward configuration. Moving the northern boundary south from Cambrian Road to Highway 11 and extending the boundary west to include all of Menoke Beach Road and Thomson Crescent, results in a ward with the smallest population of the five in 2025, but forecast growth is expected to bring it to the optimal level by 2036. Taking in the area from the present Ward 4 brings the proposed Ward 5 population slightly above the optimal point in 2025, but it aligns with the optimal point in 2026.

Leaving aside the extensive seasonal waterfront population that resides in three of the five wards, each of the proposed wards in this option includes a separate settlement area: Fesserton in the proposed Ward 1, Coldwater in the proposed Ward 2, Marchmont in the proposed Ward 3, Washago in the proposed Ward 4, and the linear lakefront settlements in the proposed Ward 4. In all cases, the boundary lines are clearly identifiable roadways and even in the Ardtrea area the proposed boundary between the proposed Wards 3 and 4 incorporates an alignment familiar to residents of the neighbourhoods located there.

Proposed Option 1a provides for significantly better population parity than the current ward configuration with successful groupings of communities of interest despite the geographic separation of the major population clusters. In the assessment of the Consultant Team, Proposed Option 1a can provide effective representation for the residents of Severn Township.

A summary evaluation of this option in terms of the guiding principles is found in Table 7-2.



Table 7-1
Township of Severn
Final Option 1a – Population by Ward

Ward Number	2025 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2035 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	4,696	1.04	O	4,744	0.98	O
Ward 2	4,373	0.97	O	4,481	0.93	O-
Ward 3	4,678	1.04	O	5,042	1.05	O
Ward 4	3,955	0.88	O-	5,057	1.05	O
Ward 5	4,835	1.07	O+	4,778	0.99	O
Total	22,536	-	-	24,102	-	-
Average	4,507	-	-	4,820	-	-

^[1] Population includes Census undercount of approximately 3.0%; seasonal population is estimated at 6,600 for 2036.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.

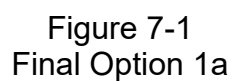




Table 7-2
Township of Severn
Final Option 1a Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Largely Successful	Three of the five proposed wards are at the optimal point in 2025, one falling >10% below.
Population and Electoral Trends	Yes	Four of the five proposed wards are at the optimal point in 2036, one falling <10% below.
Geographical and Topographical Features	Yes	All boundary lines are clear and understandable to residents.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Largely Successful	Successful groupings of communities of interest despite the geographic separation of the major population clusters.
Effective Representation	Yes	Reduced population disparities amongst the wards contribute to the achievement of effective representation over time. Other contributing factors are successfully addressed.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).

7.2 Final Option 1b

Final Option 1b is identical to Final Option 1a except for one change. The boundary between the proposed Wards 1 and 2 reverts to Mount Stephen Road, meaning that these two proposed wards are unchanged from the present Wards 1 and 2. The other three wards are identical in Final Options 1a and 1b. The main advantage to this proposal is locating the area between Ardtrea and Washago in a single ward while retaining the familiar ward configuration across the rest of the Township. The former



feature is a significant improvement over the current ward map that divides the Lake Couchiching settlements into three wards.

The positive attributes of Final Option 1a related to the location of identifiable settlement areas in separate wards, clear and understandable boundary lines, and a good distribution of population across the five wards in 2025 and 2036 are all maintained. The shortfall is the greater population disparity between the proposed Wards 1 and 2 than in Final Option 1a, an aspect that is not conspicuous because the two proposed wards are actually very close to or at the optimal point in both 2025 and 2036.

A summary evaluation of this option in terms of the guiding principles is found in Table 7-4.

Table 7-3
Township of Severn
Final Option 1b – Population by Ward

Ward Number	2025 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2035 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	5,058	1.12	O+	5,084	1.05	O+
Ward 2	4,010	0.89	O-	4,140	0.86	O-
Ward 3	4,678	1.04	O	5,042	1.05	O
Ward 4	3,955	0.88	O-	5,057	1.05	O
Ward 5	4,835	1.07	O+	4,778	0.99	O
Total	22,536	-	-	24,102	-	-
Average	4,507	-	-	4,820	-	-

^[1] Population includes Census undercount of approximately 3.0%; seasonal population is estimated at 6,600 for 2036.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.

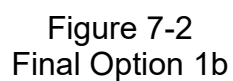




Table 7-4
Township of Severn
Final Option 1b Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Largely Successful	One proposed ward is at the optimal point; four of the five proposed wards are within the acceptable range of variation.
Population and Electoral Trends	Largely Successful	Three of the five proposed wards are at the optimal point in 2036, one falling <20% below.
Geographical and Topographical Features	Yes	All boundary lines are clear and understandable to residents.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Yes	Successful groupings of communities of interest despite the geographic separation of the major population clusters.
Effective Representation	Yes	Reduced population disparities amongst the wards contribute to the achievement of effective representation over time. Other contributing factors are successfully addressed.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).

8. Next Steps and Council Decisions

This report will be presented to the Corporate Services Committee at a meeting scheduled for May 28, 2025.

Within this report, the Consultant Team has highlighted some deficiencies in the current ward boundary system in relation to the guiding principles. These deficiencies have led the Consultant Team to conclude that there are alternative ward boundary systems that can better serve the residents of Severn well and that Council should consider changes



based on one of the alternatives. The public engagement efforts throughout this review have been largely consistent with this view.

While the Consultant Team believes that the two final options provide the residents of Severn with an opportunity to establish a new ward system that better aligns with population growth while adhering as closely as possible to the guiding principles adopted for this review, it also concedes that the status quo is nevertheless a viable and defensible option for Severn in 2026 and even out to 2036.

A decision to make no change should not be interpreted as meaning this W.B.R. has been a waste of time and resources, since it has confirmed that the ward configuration adopted in 2016 is still a plausible system of representation for Severn. In fact, that system was designed to serve the municipality for up to three elections, which is what can happen. A review that includes the possibility of retaining a system with some minor limitations can be compared, for example, to a routine maintenance check-up on vehicles or home heating systems. Such a check-up can confirm that conditions are currently working well but may require “repairs” in the future. Alternatively, the W.B.R. provides a benchmark to track the ongoing health of Severn’s system of representation.

Procedurally, Council can respond to this report in two ways:

- It can adopt one of the two final options with or without minor modifications^[4] and later ratify a by-law to implement changes to the boundaries of the wards. Such a by-law is open to appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal, but the Consultant Team is confident that either of the two options would withstand such an appeal.
- It can take no action at all; that is, Council may view the current ward system as adequate and, by default, endorse it by choosing not to select one of the alternative options. If it declines to act, Council must clearly understand that such a decision essentially indicates to the Township’s residents that it believes retaining the existing ward system still serves Severn well.

In that context, it is also important to note that taking no action is a form of decision that can still be appealed, albeit indirectly. Section 223 of the *Municipal Act, 2001*

^[4] It would also be possible for Council to adopt one of the preliminary options but, in our professional assessment, the final options presented better meet the criteria applied in this review.



indicates that one per cent of the electors or 500 of the electors in the municipality, whichever is less, may “present a petition to the council asking the council to pass a by-law dividing or redividing the municipality into wards or dissolving the existing wards.” If Council does not pass a by-law in accordance with such a petition within 90 days after receiving the petition, any of the electors who signed the petition may apply to the Ontario Land Tribunal to have the municipality redivided into wards. If the Tribunal is then persuaded that the shortcomings of the present system should be addressed, this report has included two defensible alternatives, one of which could be implemented through a Tribunal Order and the 2026 municipal election would be run using those wards.

If Council's decision is to endorse one of the final options contained in this report, a by-law to implement a preferred option is expected to occur as soon as possible. The by-law would describe the boundaries associated with the approved wards and assign numbers (or names) to the wards that may be different than those included in Figure 7-1 and Figure 7-2.



Appendices



Appendix A

Public Engagement Overview



Figure A-1: List of Public Engagement Tools

Tool	Description
Severn Ward Boundary Review (W.B.R.) Web Page	A dedicated engagement website was developed for the review at: https://severn.ca/wbr . The web page included an informative whiteboard video, links to public engagement sessions and surveys, and up-to-date messaging to inform the public of the status of the W.B.R.
Public Open Houses	Five open houses were held: <u>Phase 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• November 21, 2024 (x2) <u>Phase 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• April 22, 2025• April 23, 2025• April 23, 2025 (Virtual Session)
Public Engagement Surveys	Two phases of surveys were posted on the W.B.R. web page: the first intended to discern which guiding principles were prioritized by the community, and the second to discern which preliminary option was preferred. See Appendix C and Appendix D for a summary of the results.
Interviews with Members of Government	The mayor and each member of Council were invited to participate in a one-hour discussion with the consultant.
Social Media	<u>Facebook</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 14 posts• Total reach of 72,423• 4,581 total post engagements <u>Instagram</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 posts• 1,851 total interactions <u>X</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 posts



Tool	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 573 total views• 21 total engagements



Appendix B

Preliminary Option Council Workshop Presentation



Township of Severn Ward Boundary Review

Proposed Ward Boundary Options
March 26, 2025



Guiding Principles to Design Wards

A **ward-based** electoral system should address these core principles/guidelines:



REPRESENTATION BY POPULATION

Ensuring residents are comparatively represented on Council, given an equal voice, which is understood to be within $\pm 25\%$ maximum deviation from the average ward population.



CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE POPULATION TRENDS

Including changes in population growth and development, aging communities, etc. (Population and Electoral Trends)



PHYSICAL AND NATURAL BOUNDARIES

Including changing the way in which manmade and natural features such as highways, railways, river valleys, and farmland shape the community. (Geographic and Topographic Features)



COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

Including settlement patterns and existing historical communities in the context of the broader municipality. (Communities or Diversities of Interests)



EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION

The four articulated principles contribute to achieving the over-arching principle of effective representation.



Existing Ward System – Evaluation

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle? ^[1]	Comment
Representation by Population	Largely Successful	One ward is at the optimal point and no ward exceeds the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation.
Population and Electoral Trends	Largely Successful	Population growth will not overcome the population disparity between wards, but all wards remain in the acceptable range of variance.
Geographical and Topographical features	Largely Successful	Most boundaries are regular and visible lines although Hwy 11 divides three wards.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Largely Successful	The wards address this principle successfully despite the complex geography of the Township.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Population disparities amongst some wards could hinder the achievement of effective voter representation over time but the guiding principles in most cases are largely successful.

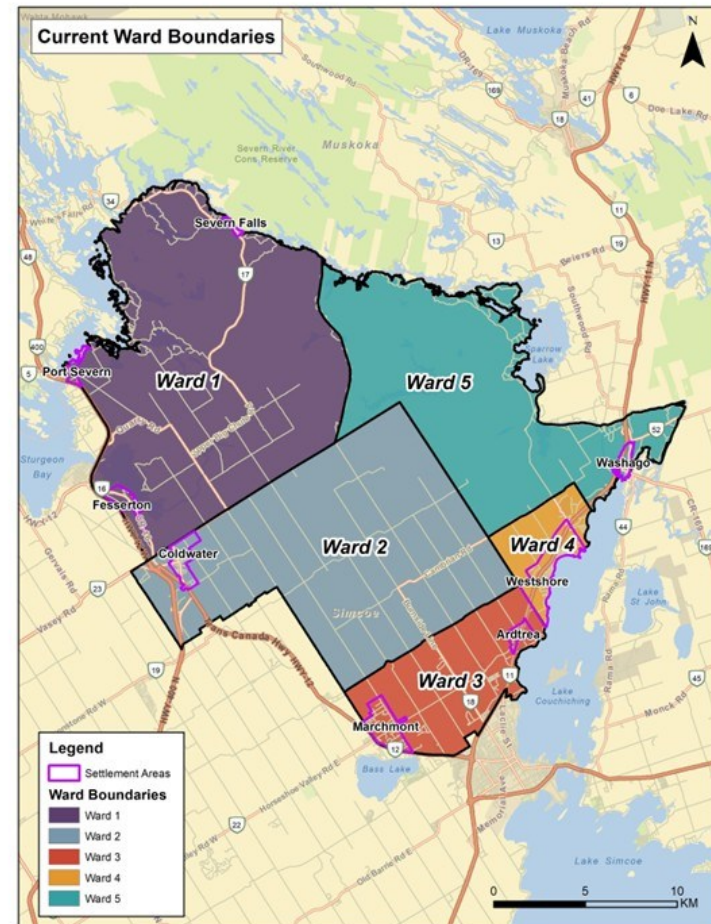
The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as:

- “Yes” (fully satisfied);
- “Largely Successful”;
- “Partially Successful”; or
- “No” (not satisfied)

O	$\pm 5\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	$\pm 5\%$ -25% of the Optimal (Average) Population
OR-	$> 25\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population

Ward	2025			2036		
	Population	Population Variance	Optimal Range	Population	Population Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	5,058	1.12	O+	5,084	1.05	O+
Ward 2	4,010	0.89	O-	4,140	0.86	O-
Ward 3	4,913	1.09	O+	5,406	1.12	O+
Ward 4	4,576	1.02	O	5,514	1.14	O+
Ward 5	3,978	0.88	O-	3,958	0.82	O-
Total/Average	22,536	4,507		24,102	4,820	

* All numbers include projected growth and seasonal populations.





Review Process





Proposed Options



Proposed Option 1a – Minimal Change

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	All wards are within the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation with three within the optimal range ($\pm 5\%$) of the average population.
Population and Electoral Trends	Yes	Population growth within Severn will not result in wards falling outside the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation. Two wards remain within the $\pm 5\%$ range of variation.
Geographical and Topographical features	Largely Successful	Boundaries are clear and/or visible lines. Highway 11 used as Ward 4-5 boundary.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Largely Successful	The wards contain plausible groupings of settlements and/or neighbourhoods.
Effective Representation	Yes	Future population changes and community groupings support effective representation.

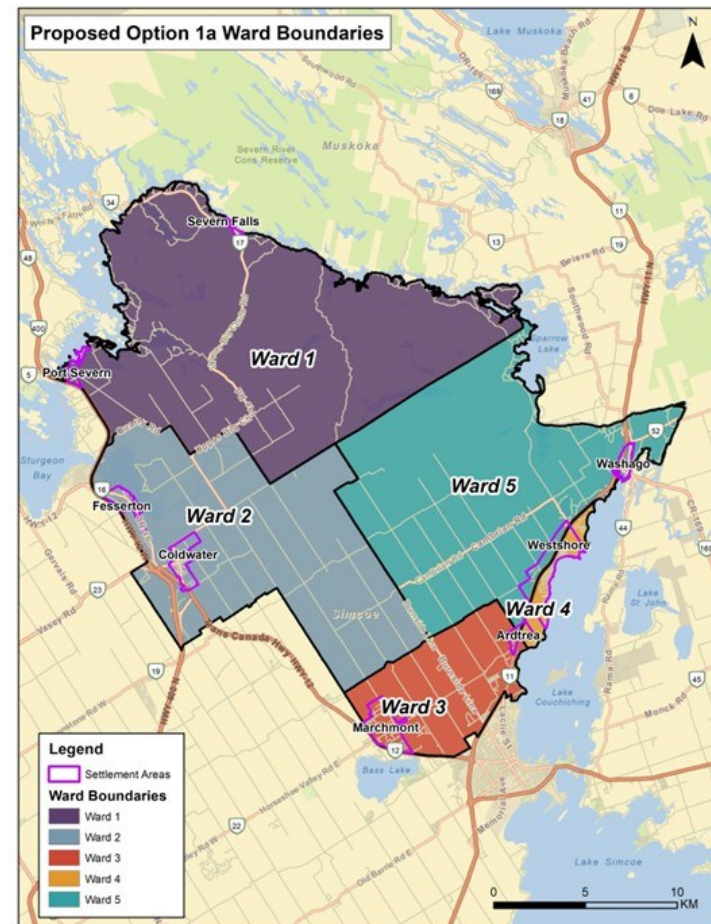
The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as:

- “Yes” (fully satisfied);
- “Largely Successful”;
- “Partially Successful”; or
- “No” (not satisfied)

Ward Number	2025 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	4,929	1.09	O+	5,031	1.04	O
Ward 2	4,372	0.97	O	4,491	0.93	O-
Ward 3	4,402	0.98	O	4,620	0.96	O
Ward 4	4,182	0.93	O-	5,437	1.13	O+
Ward 5	4,651	1.03	O	4,524	0.94	O-
Total	22,536	-	-	24,102	-	-
Average	4,507	-	-	4,820	-	-

* All numbers include projected growth and seasonal populations.

O	$\pm 5\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	$\pm 5\%$ to $\pm 25\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population
O+	$> 25\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population





Proposed Option 1b – Minimal Change

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	All wards are within the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation with three of the five wards within the optimal range ($\pm 5\%$) of the average population.
Population and Electoral Trends	Yes	All wards are within the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation with four of the five wards within the optimal range ($\pm 5\%$) of the average population.
Geographical and Topographical features	Largely Successful	Most boundaries are clear and/or visible lines.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Largely Successful	The wards each contain plausible groupings of settlements and/or neighbourhoods.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Future population balance is offset by the wide variation in the geographic size of the wards. This combination hinders the achievement of complete effective representation.

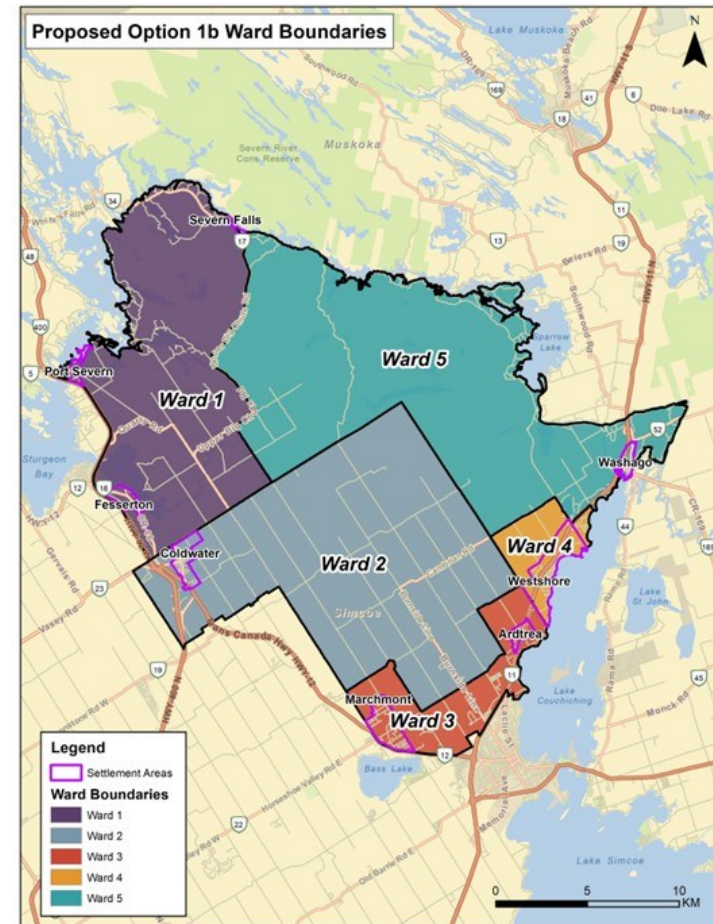
The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as:

- “Yes” (fully satisfied);
- “Largely Successful”;
- “Partially Successful”; or
- “No” (not satisfied)

Ward Number	2025 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	4,593	1.02	O	4,624	0.96	O
Ward 2	4,400	0.98	O	4,502	0.93	O-
Ward 3	4,524	1.00	O	5,044	1.05	O
Ward 4	4,025	0.89	O-	4,981	1.03	O
Ward 5	4,994	1.11	O+	4,951	1.03	O
Total	22,536	-	-	24,102	-	-
Average	4,507	-	-	4,820	-	-

* All numbers include projected growth and seasonal populations.

O	$\pm 5\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	$\pm 5\%$ - 25% of the Optimal (Average) Population
O+	$> 25\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population





Proposed Option 2 – Community of Interest

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Largely Successful	All wards are within the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation with three of the five wards within the optimal range ($\pm 5\%$) of the average population.
Population and Electoral Trends	Partially Successful	Population growth creates large imbalance between the proposed Wards 4 & 5; the two wards fall outside the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation.
Geographical and Topographical features	Largely Successful	Most boundaries are clear and/or visible lines.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Largely Successful	The wards each contain plausible groupings of settlements and/or neighbourhoods.
Effective Representation	Partially Successful	This Option maintains communities of interest but with a wide variation in the geographic size and population of the wards

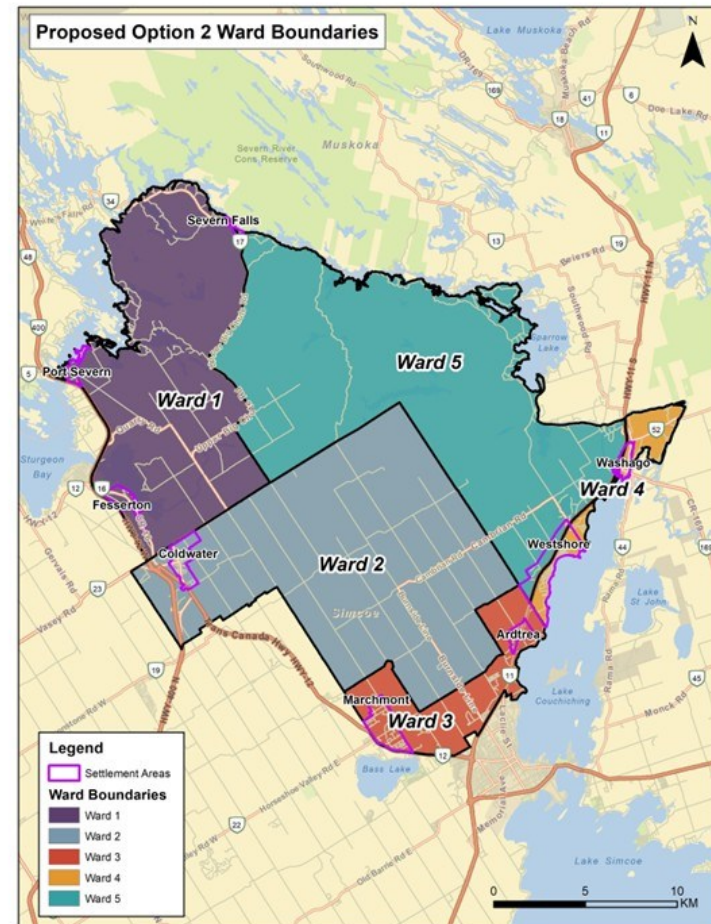
The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as:

- “Yes” (fully satisfied);
- “Largely Successful”;
- “Partially Successful”; or
- “No” (not satisfied)

Ward Number	2025 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	4,593	1.02	O	4,624	0.96	O
Ward 2	4,400	0.98	O	4,502	0.93	O-
Ward 3	4,524	1.00	O	5,044	1.05	O
Ward 4	5,238	1.16	O+	6,212	1.29	OR+
Ward 5	3,782	0.84	O-	3,720	0.77	O-
Total	22,536	-	-	24,102	-	-
Average	4,507	-	-	4,820	-	-

* All numbers include projected growth and seasonal populations.

O	$\pm 5\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	$\pm 5\%$ - 25% of the Optimal (Average) Population
OR-	$> \pm 25\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population





Proposed Option 3 – 2036 Pop Parity

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	All wards are within $\pm 10\%$ range of optimal, with two of the five wards within the optimal range ($\pm 5\%$) of the average population.
Population and Electoral Trends	Yes	Population growth within Severn settlement is distributed so that all wards are within the $\pm 5\%$ range of variation.
Geographical and Topographical features	Largely Successful	Other than the boundary between proposed wards 2 & 3, boundaries are clear and/or visible lines.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Largely Successful	The wards contain plausible groupings of settlements and/or neighbourhoods.
Effective Representation	Yes	Strong population parity in 2025 and 2036 result in the achievement of effective representation.

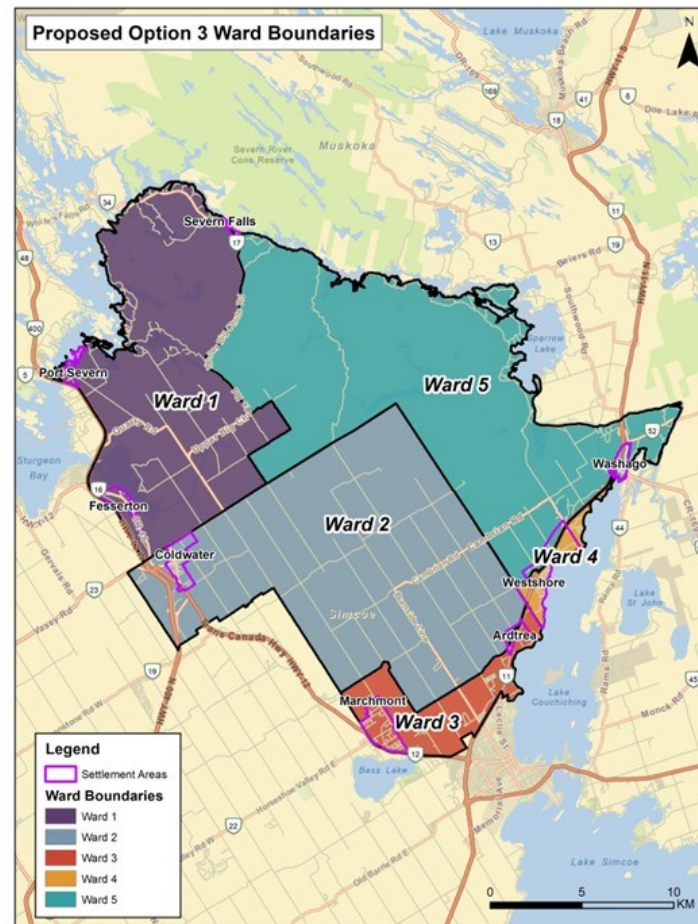
The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as:

- “Yes” (fully satisfied);
- “Largely Successful”;
- “Partially Successful”; or
- “No” (not satisfied)

Ward Number	2025 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	4,726	1.05	O	4,748	0.99	O
Ward 2	4,678	1.04	O	4,761	0.99	O
Ward 3	4,246	0.94	O-	4,786	0.99	O
Ward 4	4,055	0.90	O-	5,011	1.04	O
Ward 5	4,832	1.07	O+	4,797	1.00	O
Total	22,536	-	-	24,102	-	-
Average	4,507	-	-	4,820	-	-

* All numbers include projected growth and seasonal populations.

O	$\pm 5\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	$\pm 5\%$ - 25% of the Optimal (Average) Population
O+	$> +25\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population





Proposed Option 4 – Balanced

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Respective Principle?	
		Automatically saving your changes. It's okay to keep working while we save.
Representation by Population	Largely Successful	All wards are within the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation.
Population and Electoral Trends	Largely Successful	All wards are within the $\pm 25\%$ range of variation.
Geographical and Topographical features	Largely Successful	Most boundaries are clear and/or visible lines. The boundary between the proposed Wards 2 and 3 is novel.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Largely Successful	Three wards contain plausible groupings of settlements and/or neighbourhoods. Proposed Ward 2 has two historic population centres.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Strong population parity in 2025 and 2036 contribute to the achievement of effective representation.

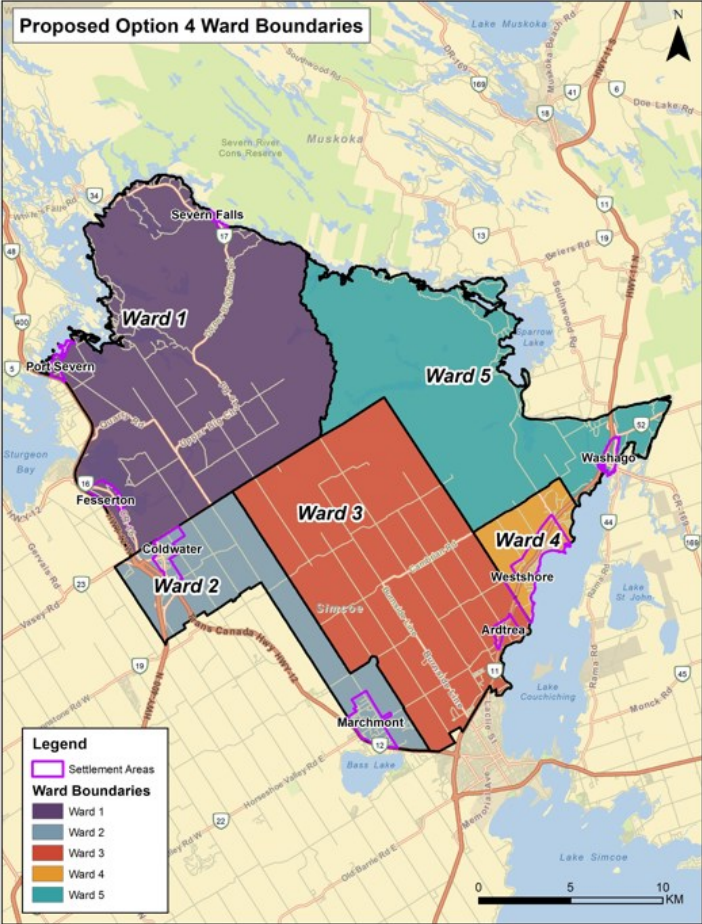
The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as:

- “Yes” (fully satisfied);
- “Largely Successful”;
- “Partially Successful”; or
- “No” (not satisfied)

Ward Number	2025 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2035 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	5,058	1.12	O+	5,084	1.05	O+
Ward 2	4,806	1.07	O+	5,046	1.05	O
Ward 3	4,117	0.91	O-	4,500	0.93	O-
Ward 4	4,576	1.02	O	5,514	1.14	O+
Ward 5	3,978	0.88	O-	3,958	0.82	O-
Total	22,536	-	-	24,102	-	-
Average	4,507	-	-	4,820	-	-

* All numbers include projected growth and seasonal populations.

O	$\pm 5\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	$\pm 5\%$ -25% of the Optimal (Average) Population
O+	$> \pm 25\%$ of the Optimal (Average) Population





Evaluation Summary

Preliminary Option	Representation by Population	Population and Electoral Trends	Geographical and Topographical features	Community or Diversity of Interests	Effective Representation
Existing System	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful
1A	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Yes
1B	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful
2	Largely Successful	Partially Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Partially Successful
3	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Yes
4	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	Largely Successful

Levels of evaluation for how the Guiding Principles are met

Yes	Largely successful	Partially Successful	No
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Higher Rating Lower Rating



QUESTIONS



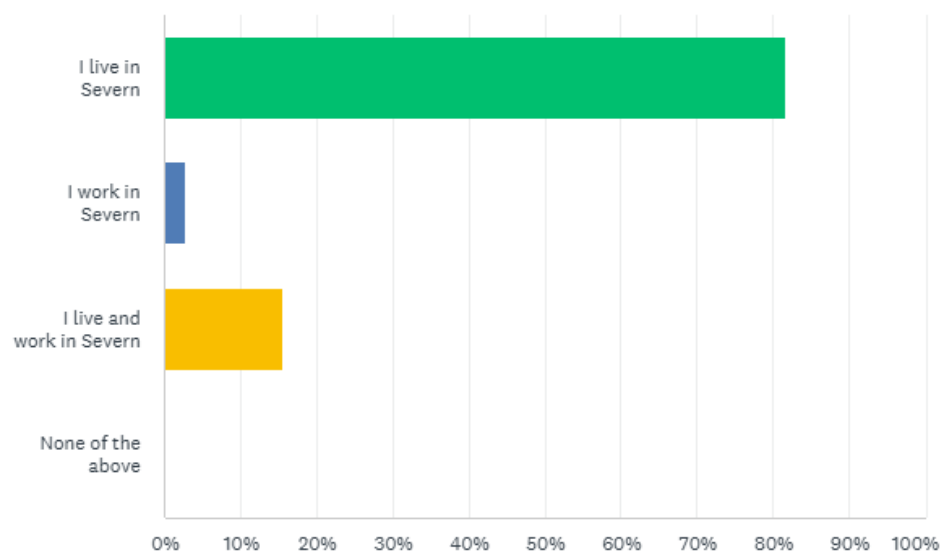
Appendix C

Survey Results (Phase 1)



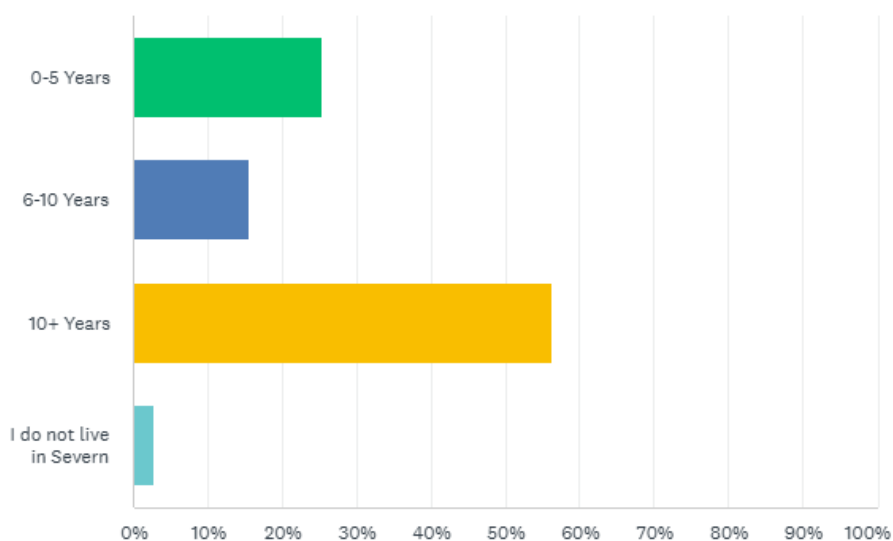
What best describes you?

Answered: 71 Skipped: 0



How long have you lived in Severn?

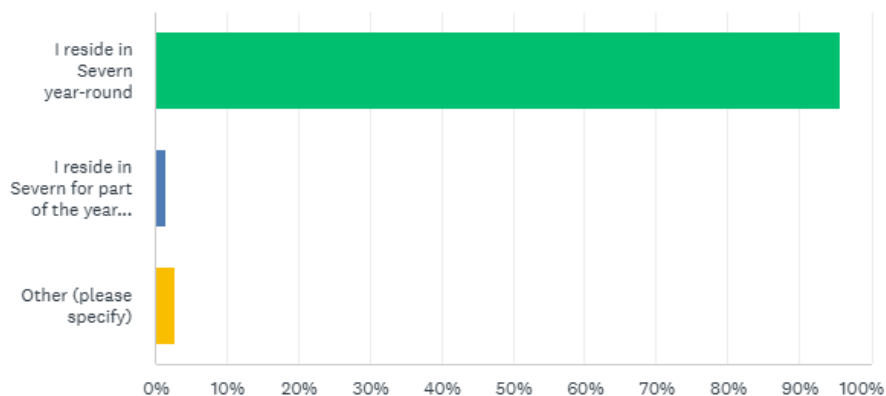
Answered: 71 Skipped: 0





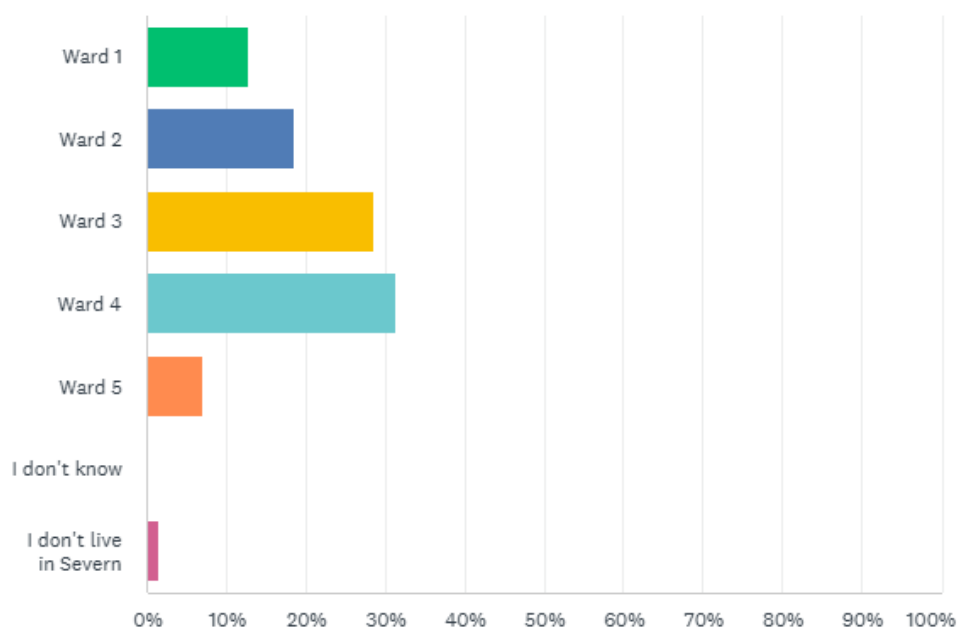
Do you reside in Severn year-round or for part of the year (seasonally)?

Answered: 71 Skipped: 0



Which ward do you live in?

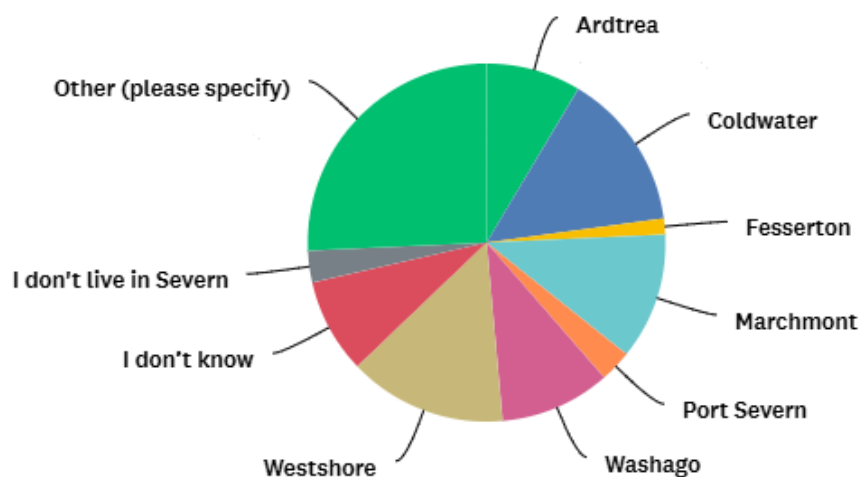
Answered: 70 Skipped: 1





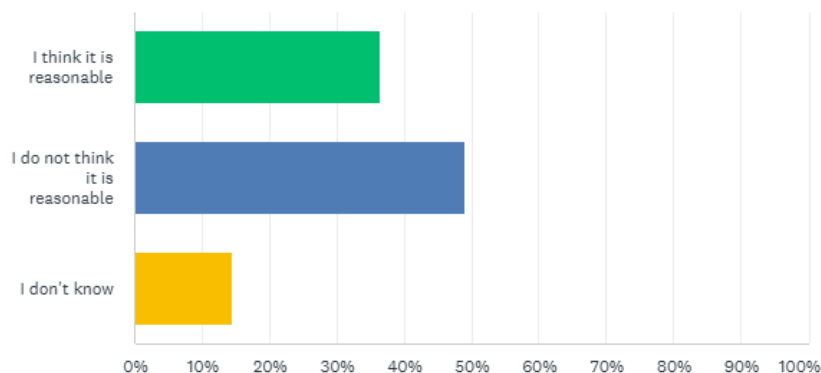
Which community in Severn do you live in?

Answered: 70 Skipped: 1



Three of the Township's five wards are outside the acceptable range of population variance with one ward having almost 2.5 times the population of another ward. Do you think it's reasonable to have wards with such differences?

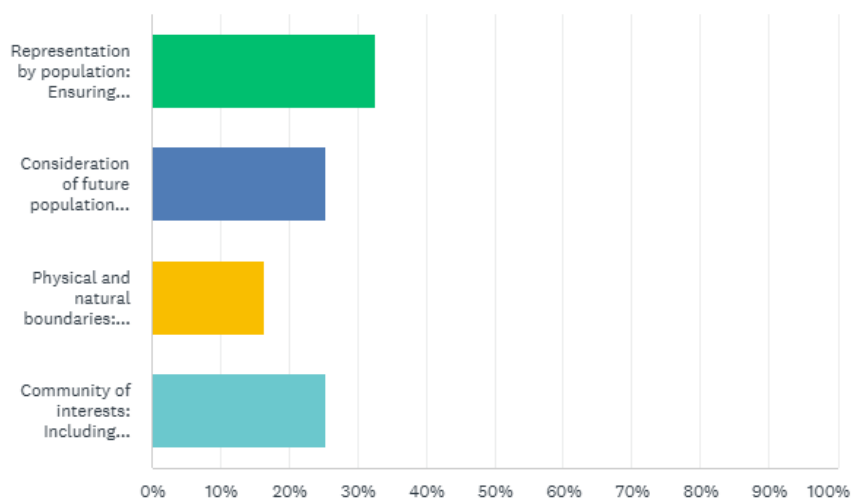
Answered: 55 Skipped: 16





Please indicate the ONE guiding principle that should be given the highest priority to ensure effective representation:

Answered: 55 Skipped: 16





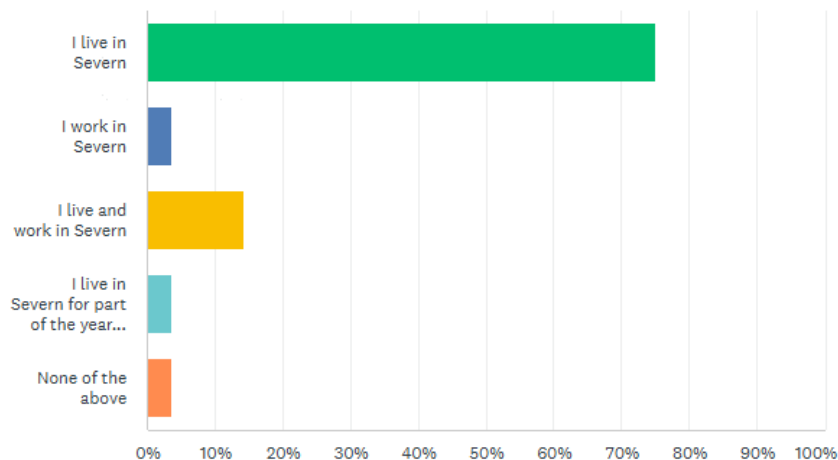
Appendix D

Survey Results (Phase 2)



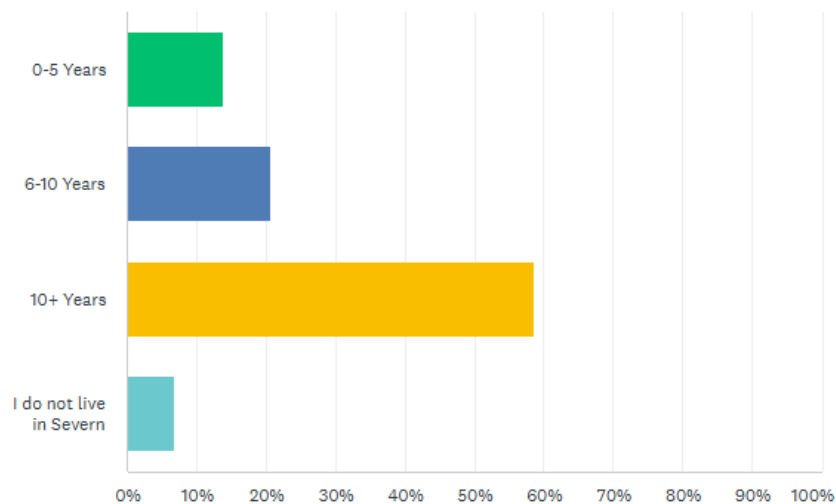
What best describes you?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 1



How long have you lived in Severn?

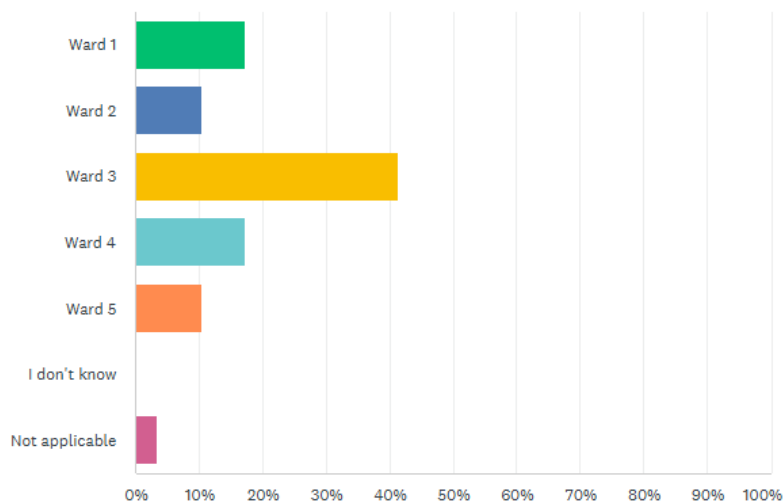
Answered: 29 Skipped: 0





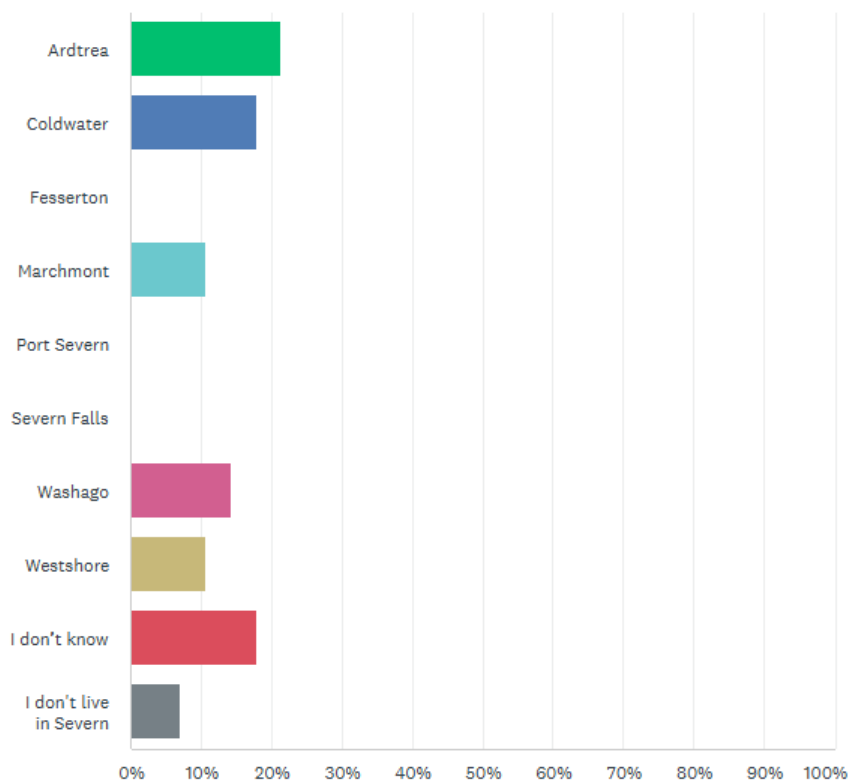
Which ward do you live in?

Answered: 29 Skipped: 0



Which community in Severn do you live in?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 1





Which of the preliminary options do you prefer?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 14

