

Memorandum

To	Township of Springwater, Jennifer Marshall
From	Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., Josh Valenti
Date	September 3, 2025
Re:	Ward Boundary Configurations

Fax Courier Mail Email

Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. (Watson) has been engaged to conduct further research on the Ward Boundary Review, specifically to explore potential six-ward configurations, that would be implemented as a transition from a five-ward system and triggered by population threshold related to future growth.

This evaluation included:

- A review of the proposed 5-ward configurations to determine a balanced configuration when looking at the current population;
- A review of growth and development to determine plausible 5-ward configurations ensuring balanced population for the existing community;
- Determination of a population trigger to implement an additional sixth ward; and
- Identify plausible 6-ward configurations that ensure balanced future population with the development of the Midhurst Secondary Plan.

This memo presents Springwater Council with the findings from the expanded scope of the 2024 Ward Boundary Review and recommends adopting an alternative six-ward configuration, to be considered once the Township surpasses a proposed population threshold.

Context

Springwater Council currently is comprised of seven members, A Mayor and Deputy Mayor elected at-large and 5 local Councillors each elected into a single ward.

The basic requirement for any electoral system in a representative democracy is to establish measures to determine the people who will constitute the governmental 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 Springwater.

The Township of Springwater is forecast to experience significant population growth over the next decade and beyond. For this reason, it is important that the Township consider both the existing and future population trends. A population and housing forecast for the Township for the 2024 to 2034 period, consistent with the Township of Springwater Growth Management Strategy (Draft) and the 2023 Development Charges Background Study, was determined.

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, the current ward system has four of the five wards within the acceptable range. Ward 4, which comprises the southwest corner of Springwater covering both Snow Valley and Centre Vespra, has the highest population of all the wards at 7,660, while Ward 2 covering the central portion of Springwater (Phelpston and Hillsdale), has the smallest population at 3,890, for a difference of over 3,700 between the smallest and largest wards. As growth around Midhurst is expected to continue, by 2034 each of the five wards are expected to be outside the acceptable $\pm 25\%$ threshold.

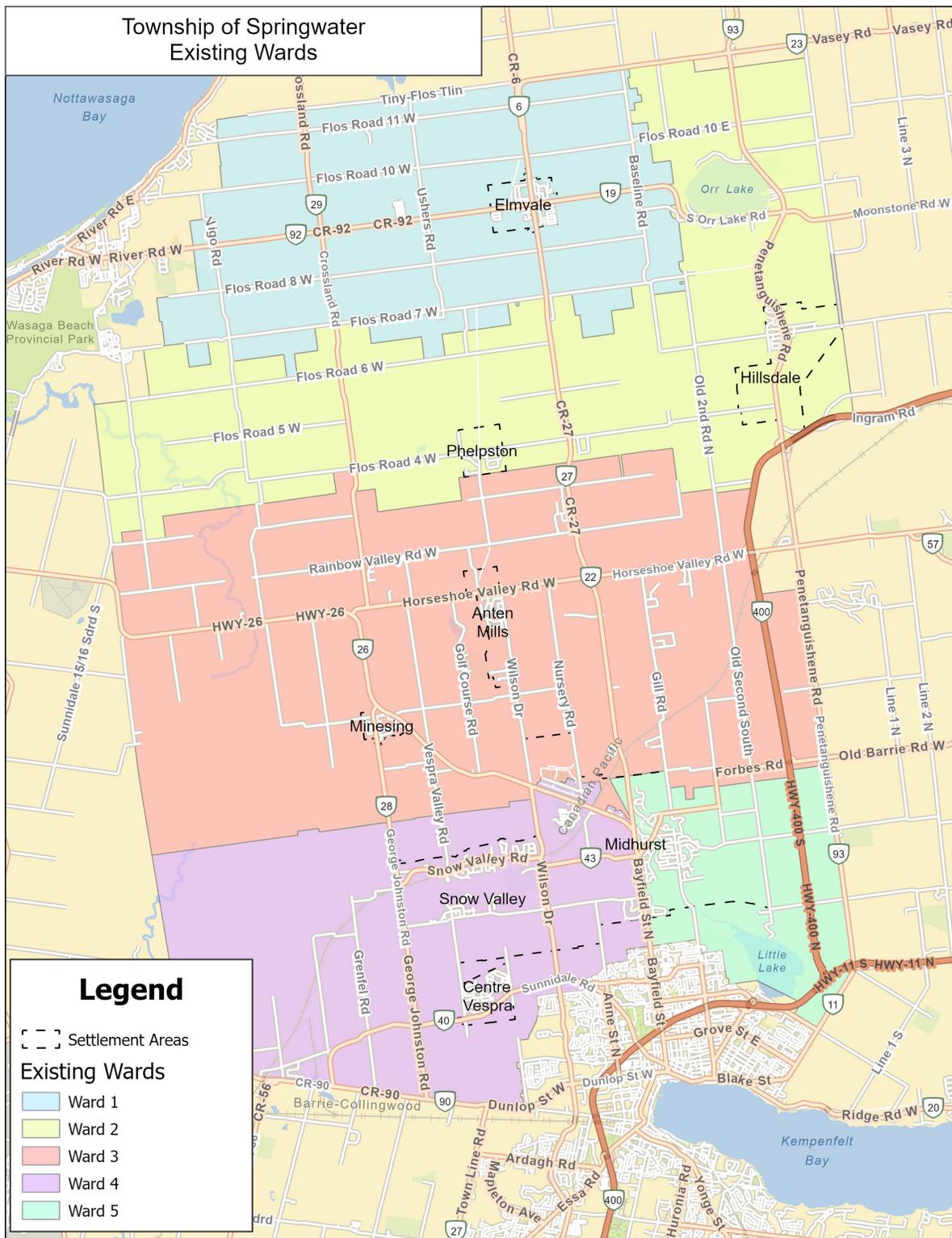
The Township is anticipated to grow by approximately 600 new housing units per year with 70% of that growth expected within the Midhurst area. As a result, the current Ward 4 and Ward 5 are expected to see significant growth, with both exceeding population projections of over 11,000 by 2034.

Table 1: Existing Ward Population Distribution

Ward Number	2024 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2034 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	3,990	0.82	O-	5,310	0.67	OR-
Ward 2	3,890	0.80	O-	5,580	0.70	OR-
Ward 3	4,750	0.98	O	4,480	0.56	OR-
Ward 4	7,660	1.58	OR+	12,820	1.62	OR+
Ward 5	4,010	0.83	O-	11,480	1.45	OR+
Total	24,300	-	-	39,680	-	-
Average	4,860	-	-	7,934	-	-



Figure 1: Existing Ward Configuration





In December of 2024, the Consultant Team proposed two five-ward configurations that addressed a mix of balancing the current and future population disparities between wards. The proposed five 5-Ward alternatives are presented within [the 2024 WBR Final Report](#), available on the project webpage - <https://www.springwater.ca/en/township-hall/ward-boundary-review.aspx>.

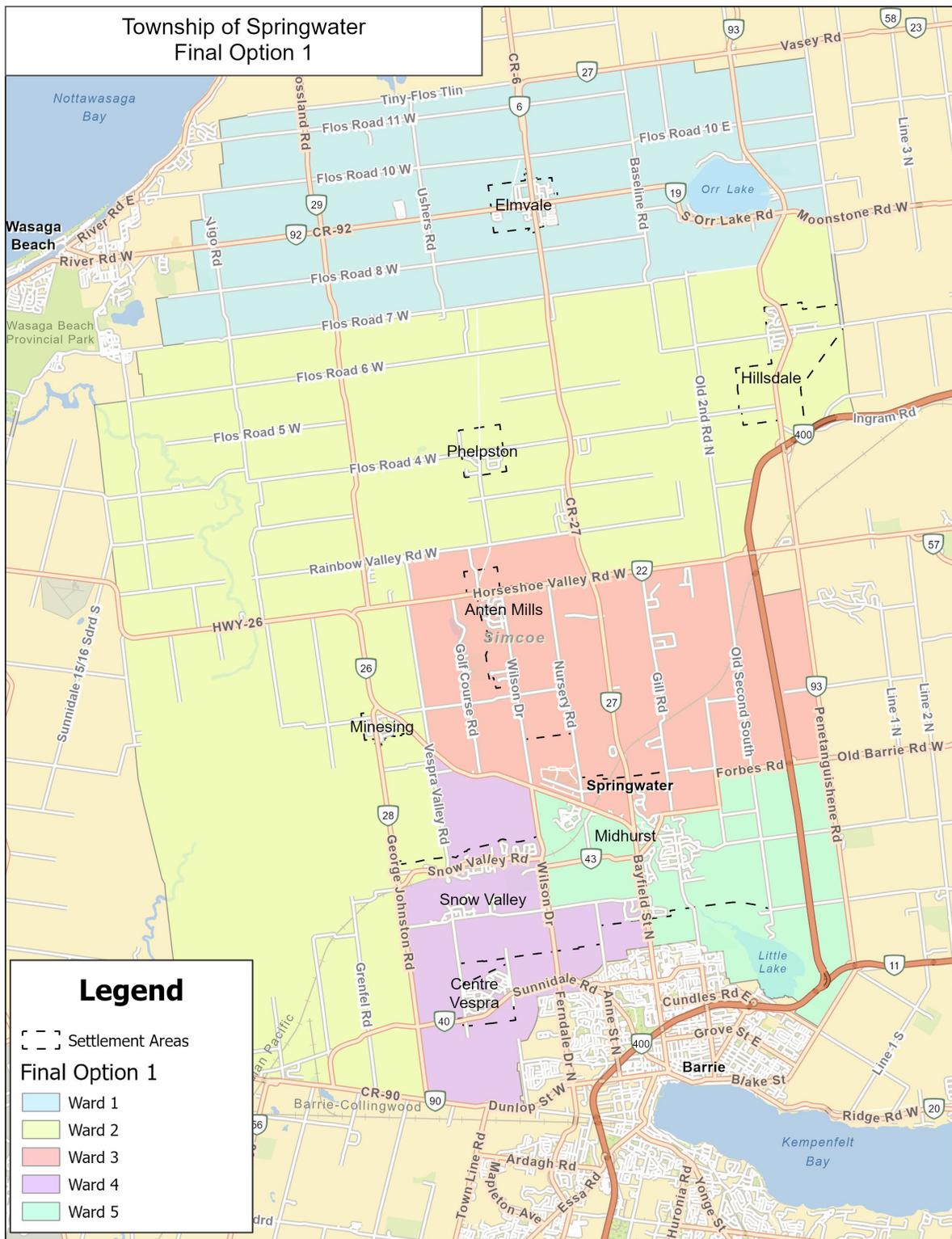
Final Recommendation 1 (Figure 2) looked to balance the existing population (2024) and that of the projected population (2034). With a five-ward system, and the scale of growth expected within the Midhurst area, Final Recommendation 1 balanced four of the five wards future population, while the proposed ward 5 grew well above the acceptable range with a population projection of nearly 11,000 by 2034 as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Final Recommendation 1 Population Distribution, 2024 to 2034

Ward Number	2024 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2034 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	4,970	1.02	O	6,180	0.78	O-
Ward 2	5,500	1.13	O+	7,010	0.88	O-
Ward 3	3,220	0.66	OR-	8,600	1.08	O+
Ward 4	5,580	1.15	O+	6,940	0.87	O-
Ward 5	5,040	1.04	O	10,940	1.38	OR+
Total	24,300	-	-	39,680	-	-
Average	4,860	-	-	7,936	-	-



Figure 2: Final Recommendation 1 Ward Configuration





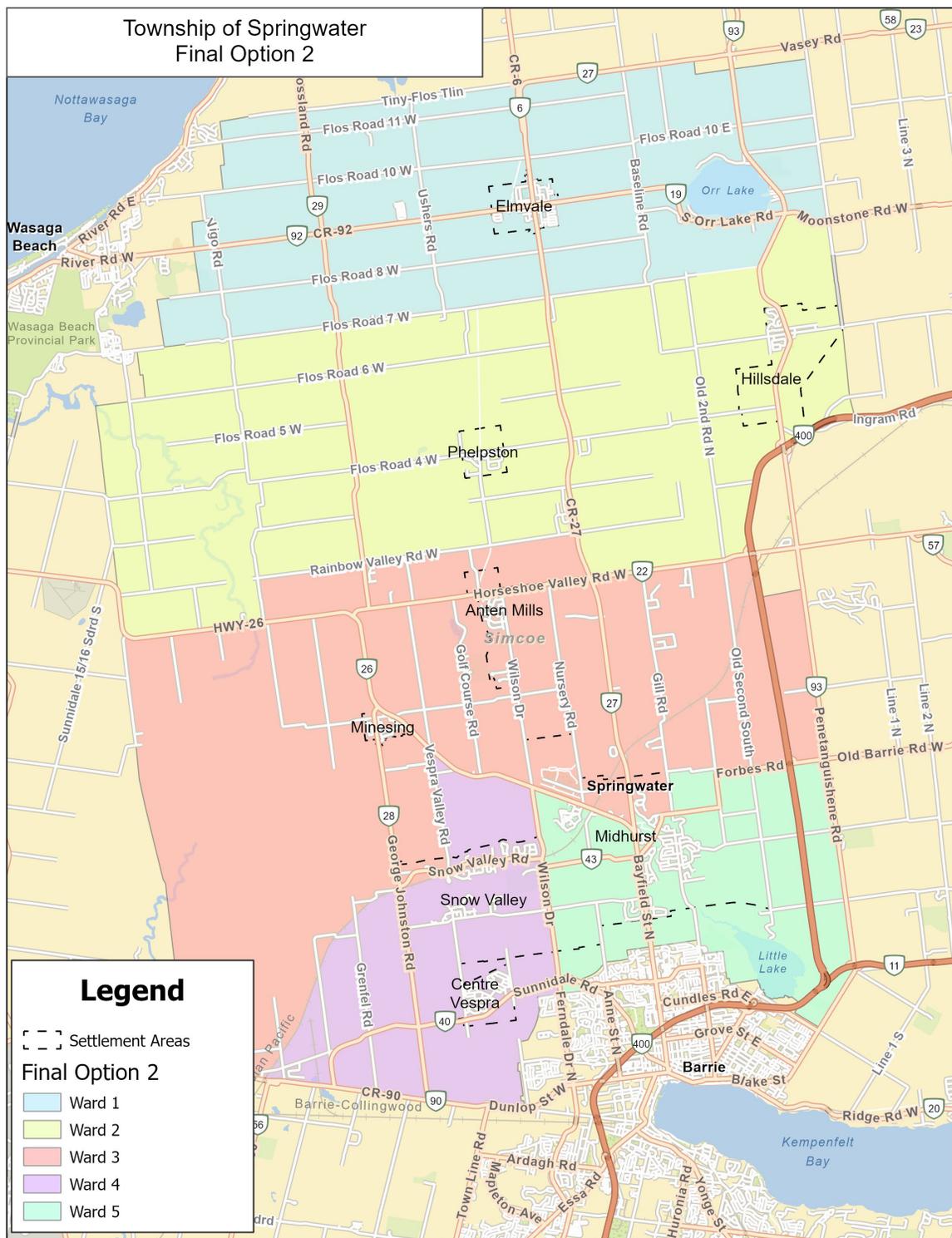
Final Recommendation 2 proposed an alternative ward configuration focused on the Midhurst area. This configuration placed greater emphasis on balancing the existing population—particularly in urban areas—compared to that presented within Final Recommendation 1. However, this configuration still presented some challenges. The configuration introduced an east-west division of Midhurst using Wilson Drive, as illustrated in Figure 3. While this approach provided strong representation for the current population base, it concentrated nearly all anticipated growth in Midhurst within a single ward (Ward 5). Consequently, significant future population imbalances are projected, with Ward 5 expected to reach nearly 18,000 residents by 2034, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Final Recommendation 2 Population Distribution, 2024 to 2034

Ward Number	2024 Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2034 Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	4,970	1.02	O	6,180	0.78	O-
Ward 2	3,440	0.71	OR-	5,190	0.65	OR-
Ward 3	4,950	1.02	O	4,650	0.59	OR-
Ward 4	5,430	1.12	O+	5,690	0.72	OR-
Ward 5	5,510	1.13	O+	17,970	2.26	OR+
Total	24,300	-	-	39,680	-	-
Average	4,860	-	-	7,934	-	-



Figure 3: Final Recommendation 2 Ward Configuration





Six-Ward Alternatives

As noted above, both five-ward alternatives demonstrate strong population parity under current conditions. However, due to the significant scale of anticipated growth within the Midhurst Secondary Plan area, these five-ward systems are expected to lose parity over time. As growth becomes concentrated in a single ward, its population will exceed the acceptable range, creating long-term imbalances.

To address this concern, the Consultant Team has been directed to explore additional six-ward configurations that the Township could implement once a defined population threshold is reached.

Both six-ward configurations build upon the proposed five-ward configurations as the foundational model, incorporating an additional urban ward into the structure. Both Final Options offer a strong alignment with communities of interest across the rural wards (proposed Wards 1, 2, and 3), while two urban wards account for approximately 40% of the existing population. Transitioning the urban area (proposed Wards 4 and 5) into a three-ward system represents a relatively low-impact adjustment, allowing the rural ward boundaries to remain mostly intact.

6-Ward Alternative #1

The first 6-ward alternative closely resembles Final Recommendation Option 1, particularly in the configuration of Wards 1, 2 and 4. In both options, Ward 1 includes Elmvalle and Orr Lake, while Ward 2 groups together Phelpston, Hillsdale, and Minesing. Ward 4 captures both the Snow Valley and Centre Vespra communities. As presented in Figure 4, this 6-ward model captures Anten Mills alongside the northeastern corner of the Midhurst Secondary Plan area within Ward 3. While Ward 3 currently represents a predominantly rural community, it is projected to grow significantly—reaching a population of over 8,000 by 2034.

Meanwhile, the area designated as Ward 5 in Final Recommendation Option 1 is split into two separate wards. Anticipated growth across the Midhurst Secondary Plan is expected to balance these three urban wards, with projected populations ranging from 5,600 to 6,900 by 2034. One of these wards falls (Ward 4) within the optimal population range, while all wards remain within the acceptable range by 2034, as presented in Table 4.

The proposed 6-Ward Alternative #1 configuration effectively aligns with all guiding principles outlined in Table 5 considered through this W.B.R. This model is intended to be considered alongside a 5-ward system, which would remain in place until the population reaches a threshold that justifies transitioning to a 6-ward structure. At that point, the 6-ward configuration would offer a significantly improved balance in future voter parity.



Table 4: 6-Ward Alternative #1 Population Distribution, 2034

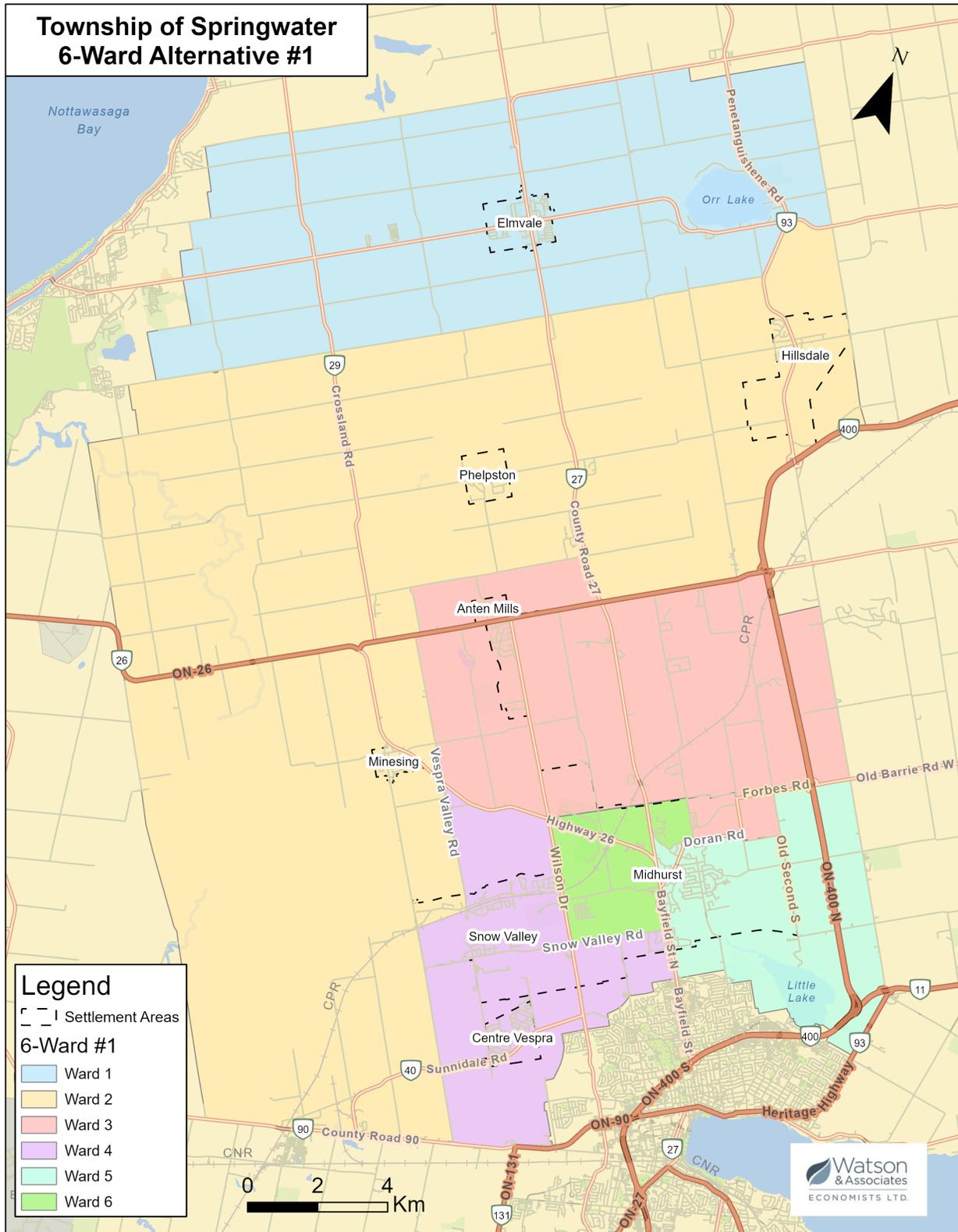
Ward	2034		
	Total Population	Population Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	6,180	0.93	O-
Ward 2	7,010	1.06	O+
Ward 3	8,120	1.23	O+
Ward 4	6,940	1.05	O
Ward 5	5,660	0.86	O-
Ward 6	5,760	0.87	O-
Total/Average	39,670	6,612	

Table 5: 6-Ward Alternative #1 Evaluation

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle? ^[1]	Comment
Representation by Population	N/A	The current population to be represented by a 5-ward configuration.
Population and Electoral Trends	Yes	Population growth will result in one of the six wards within the optimal population range, while all additional wards are within the acceptable range by 2034.
Means of Communication and Accessibility	Largely Successful	Wards are generally plausible groupings of communities.
Geographical and Topographical features	Yes	Boundaries are identifiable and follow visible lines.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Yes	Wards contain coherent communities of interest.



Figure 4: 6-Ward Alternative #1 Ward Configuration





6-Ward Alternative #2

The second 6-Ward Alternative builds upon the first, with a focus on enhancing future population parity. As shown in Table 6, three of the six wards are projected to fall within the optimal population range ($\pm 5\%$ of the average) by 2034, while the remaining three are within 10% of the optimal size—placing all six within the acceptable range.

This configuration introduces more substantial changes compared to the proposed 5-ward models. To better balance populations, two of the six wards encompass the communities of Elmvale, Phelpston, Hillsdale, and Athen Mills. Notably, Athen Mills has typically been included as part of future growth within the Midhurst Secondary Plan in other configurations, making this approach distinct.

Additionally, this model allocates four of the six wards to urban areas, dividing the Midhurst community into four east-west segments. Each ward spans north to south and captures all urban growth within their boundaries, ensuring a clear urban focus.

The proposed 6-Ward Alternative #2 also meets all guiding principles outlined in Table 7 of the W.B.R. Like the first alternative, it is designed to be considered alongside a 5-ward system, which would remain in place until population growth supports a transition to six wards. At that point, this configuration would offer a significantly improved balance in population parity for the future.

Table 6: 6-Ward Alternative #2 Population Distribution, 2034

Ward	2034		
	Total Population	Population Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	6,350	0.96	O
Ward 2	7,010	1.06	O+
Ward 3	7,160	1.08	O+
Ward 4	6,740	1.02	O
Ward 5	5,940	0.90	O-
Ward 6	6,470	0.98	O
Total/Average	39,670	6,612	

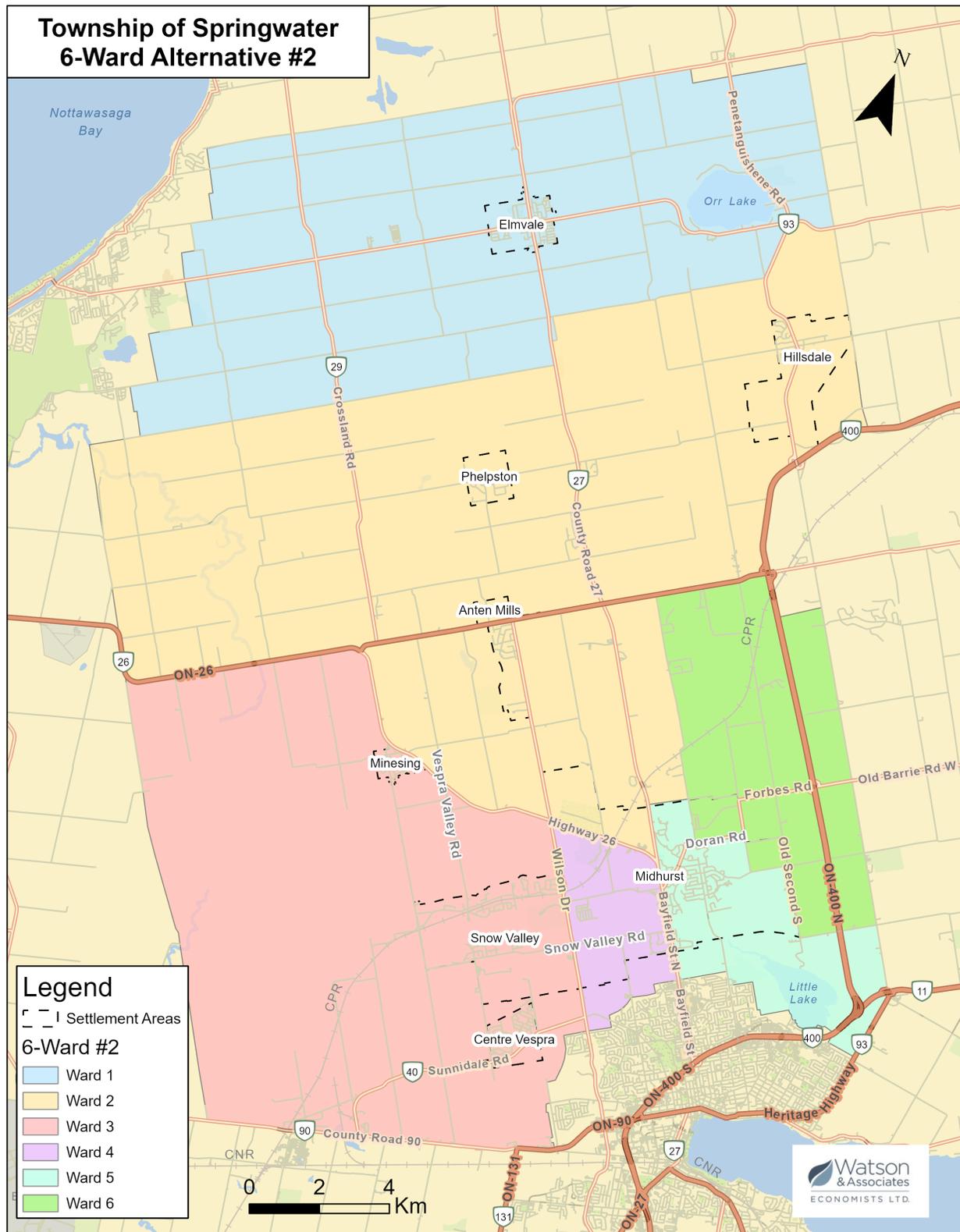


Table 7: 6-Ward Alternative #2 Evaluation

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle? ^[1]	Comment
Representation by Population	N/A	The current population to be represented by a 5-ward configuration.
Population and Electoral Trends	Yes	Population growth will result in three of the six wards within the optimal population range, while all additional wards are within 10% of the optimal population target by 2034.
Means of Communication and Accessibility	Largely Successful	Wards are generally plausible groupings of communities.
Geographical and Topographical features	Yes	Boundaries are identifiable and follow visible lines.
Community or Diversity of Interests	Yes	Wards contain coherent communities of interest.



Figure 5: 6-Ward Alternative #2 Ward Configuration





Population Trigger

To ensure fair and effective representation across the Township, it is essential to maintain relatively equal population distributions among wards. As communities expand and demographic patterns evolve, population imbalances can emerge, resulting in unequal voter parity and diminished representation.

To proactively manage these changes, a clearly defined population threshold should be established to trigger a transition in the ward structure—such as moving from a 5-ward to a 6-ward system. This threshold would serve as a benchmark, signaling when the current configuration no longer supports equitable representation. Upon reaching this point, the adoption of a 6-ward model would help restore balance, accommodate future growth, and uphold the core principles of effective representation, including population parity, community of interest, and accessibility.

The two proposed 6-ward configurations are designed with the understanding that a 5-ward system would be implemented for the 2026 municipal election and potentially remain in place longer, depending on the rate of growth within the Township. Alongside the status quo, the two proposed 5-ward models offer viable alternatives for the 2026 election.

By planning for this transition in advance, the Township can ensure its ward boundaries remain responsive to population changes and continue to reflect the evolving needs of its residents.

To quantify a population target, the Consultant looked at location and timing of future growth areas as well as an analysis of the status quo system. It was determined that when the population of the Township exceeds 32,000 (optimal ward population of 6,400) the current five-ward system or either of the proposed alternatives would see significant population disparity between the urban and rural wards and would be an ideal time to review and implement a six-ward system.

Next Steps

This memo outlines two alternative six-ward configurations that could be considered by council for future implementation when a population threshold exceeds 32,000 – where a five-ward system would remain in place for the 2026 municipal election. Alternative #1 offers a minimal change outlook from that of the proposed Final Option 1 (five-ward alternative) while Alternative #2 focus's on enhancing future population parity across all wards, resulting in anticipated parity all within 10% of the optimal range by 2034.

If Council's decision is to endorse one of the Final five-ward options or six-ward alternatives presented through this study, 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 them that may be different than those included within this W.B.R study.