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**Subject:** Growth Management Survey Results

**Report to:** Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Report date:** Wednesday, December 9, 2020

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## **Recommendations**

1. That Report PDS 38-2020 **BE RECEIVED** for information; and
2. That a copy of Report PDS 38-2020 **BE CIRCULATED** to Local Municipal Planning Directors.

## **Key Facts**

- The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the results of the Growth Management survey.
- The survey was initiated to gather public input on the Region's growth management work program, including population distribution, housing, housing affordability, climate change and complete communities.
- The survey was live from mid-September to mid-October and received 217 responses and 102 comments.
- Survey results suggest the public is generally aligned with the Region's key growth management objectives and priorities.
- The feedback received on the Growth Management survey will inform the development of detailed policies for the new Official Plan.

## **Financial Considerations**

The costs associated with hosting MetroQuest surveys are accommodated within the Council approved project budget for the new Official Plan.

## Analysis

On September 14, 2020, Regional staff initiated a public survey to gather input on the Region's growth management work program. This Growth Management survey formed part of an extensive consultation strategy for the new Official Plan, as described in Report No. PDS 35-2020 (being advanced at this same December 9, 2020 PEDC meeting).

The survey was created using MetroQuest, an online public engagement tool geared towards urban and transportation planning. Using MetroQuest's unique features, the survey requested participant feedback through a three-step process:

1. Respondents were asked to rank key topic areas, including population distribution, housing options, housing affordability, climate change, and complete communities, in order of importance.
2. Respondents were asked to respond in agreement or disagreement with associated statements for their selected areas of interest.
3. Respondents were asked to select preferred options between various growth management scenarios.

Written comments could be provided at each step of the survey.

The survey was posted on the Region's website, and advertised on both the Region's Twitter and Facebook pages and during the Growth Management public webinar on October 7, 2020.

The survey was live for one month and closed on October 14, 2020 after receiving a total of 217 responses and 102 comments. The survey results are outlined in **Appendix 1** and comments received are outlined in **Appendix 2**.

The survey results demonstrate the following:

- Respondents showed a balanced level of interest between the topic areas of the growth management program.
- Responses aligned with the Region's proposed key growth management objectives and priorities, indicating that the Region should:
  - Direct new growth and development to strategic growth areas;

- Provide or facilitate the development of affordable housing options;
  - Utilize sustainability measures to mitigate the effects of climate change;
  - Utilize secondary plans and other detailed planning studies as an important tool for managing growth in local communities; and
  - Pursue the creation of complete communities, which include a mix of land uses, a range of housing types and densities, access to transportation options and open spaces, and consideration for placemaking and urban design.
- Responses were less supportive of growth when responding to survey questions posed at the household or neighbourhood level, rather than posed as broad objectives.

With input from the survey results, Regional staff will proceed with the development of detailed policies for the new Official Plan in line with the existing direction of the growth management work program.

Staff will continue to collaborate with Area Planners to ensure that Official Plan policies and related strategies can support municipalities in addressing concerns for growth within their local communities.

### **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

Consultation on the growth management work program and the new Niagara Official Plan is important to address Council's priority as a Sustainable Engaging Government.

The growth management work program will also address Council's other priorities, including: Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth; Healthy and Vibrant Community; and Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning.

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

PDS 35-2020 Niagara Official Plan-Report on Virtual Public Webinars

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*This report was prepared in consultation with David Heyworth, Official Plan Consultant and reviewed by Isaiah Banach, Acting Director of Community and Long Range Planning.*

**Appendices**

Appendix 1                      Growth Management Survey Results

Appendix 2                      Comments Received on the Growth Management Survey

# Growth Management Survey Results

Total Respondents: 217

## Survey Hosts:



## Survey Duration

**Start Date:** September 14, 2020

**End Date:** October 14, 2020

## Prepared by:

Planning and Development Services  
Community and Long Range Planning

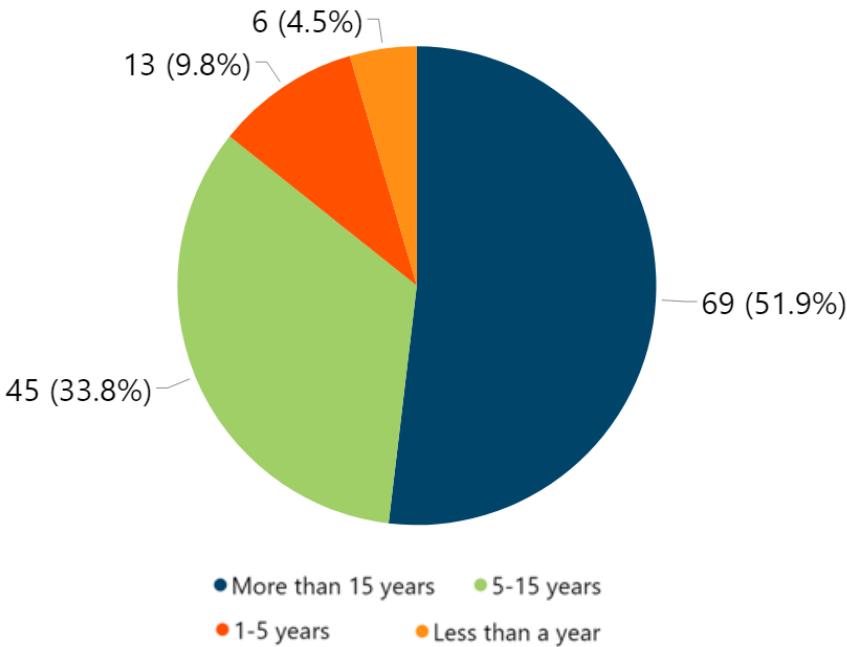
## Respondent Demographics

Total Respondents: 133

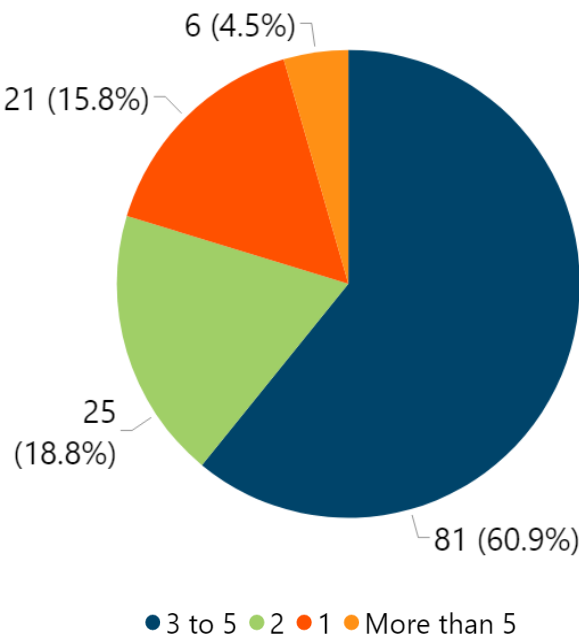
**Important Notes:**

- This was a voluntary and anonymous survey.
- Respondents could choose to answer all or some of the survey questions.

**How long have you lived in Niagara?**



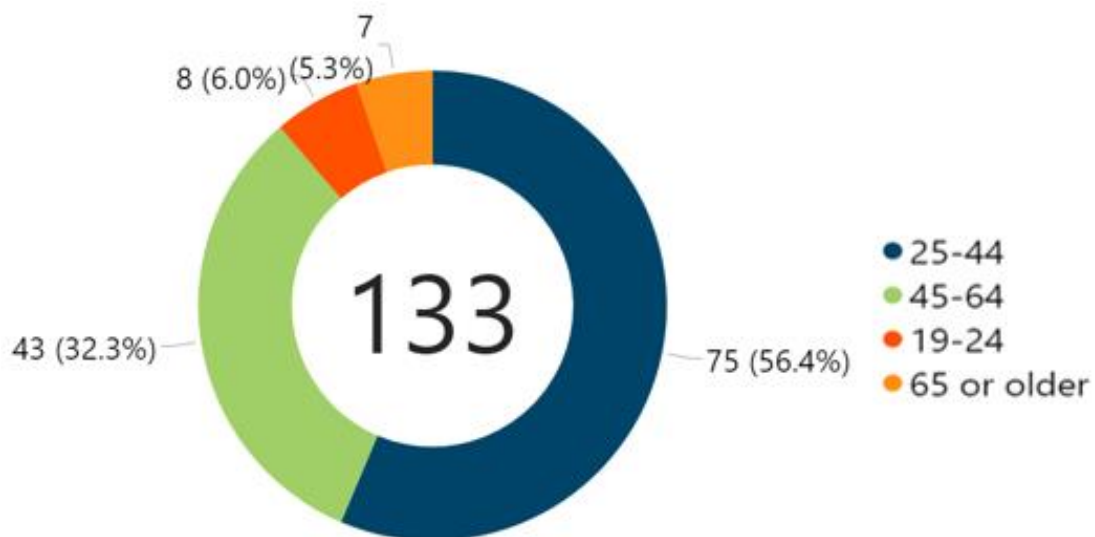
**How many people live in your household?**



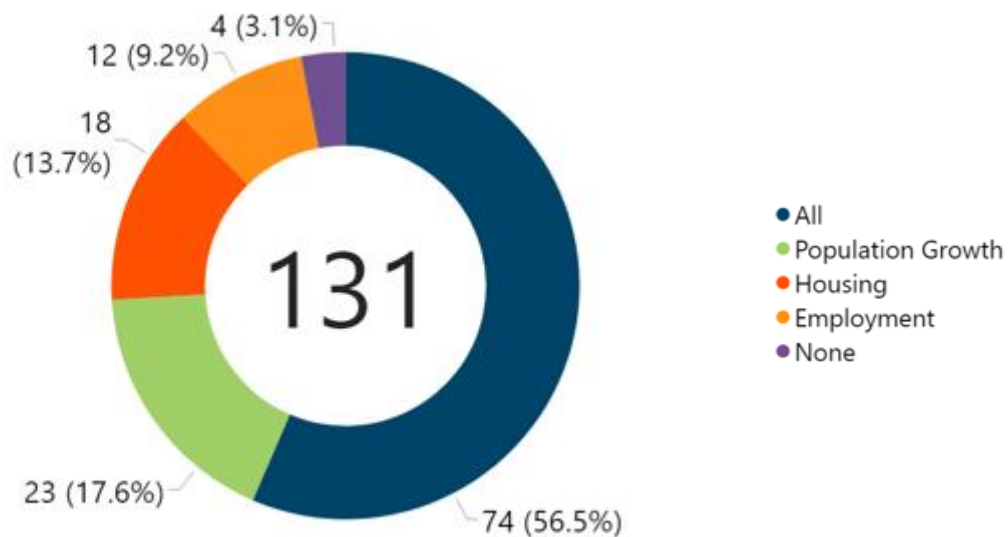
## Respondent Demographics

Total Respondents:

How old are you?



Which issues are you most interested in?

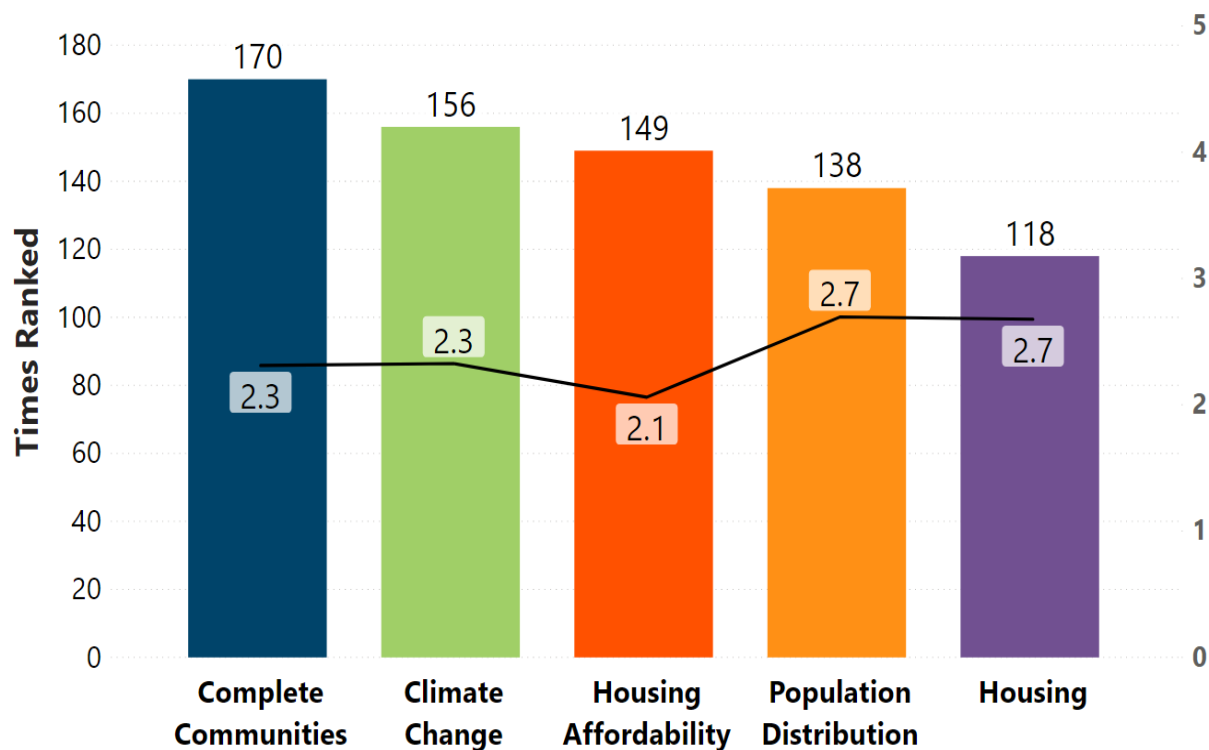


## Growth Management Topics Priority Ranking

**Important notes:**

- 5 growth management topics were provided for respondents to rank by perceived priority.
- Respondents could rank up to a maximum of 3 growth management topics.
- A rank of “1” indicates highest priority. A rank of “5” indicates lowest priority of those ranked.

Please rank three of the following growth management topics by order of importance.





## Growth Management Statement Rankings

### Important notes:

- After selecting and ranking topic priorities, respondents were asked to rank statements associated with their indicated areas of interest.
- A “1 Star” ranking indicates the respondent strongly disagreed with the statement, while a “5 Star” ranking indicates the respondent strongly agreed.

**3 Agreement Rating**

SCENARIO RATING

Housing Complete Communities Housing Affordability

More about this

1) 2) 3) 4)

Providing affordable housing, is an important part of a complete community.

**Agreement Rating**  
What to do

Let us know how strongly you agree with each of the following statements in your indicated areas of interest. (1 Star indicates you strongly disagree with the statement, 5 Stars indicates you strongly agree. Leave a comment to tell us what you think!)

1 2 3 4 5

Evaluate 5 items or more by rating each 1-5 stars

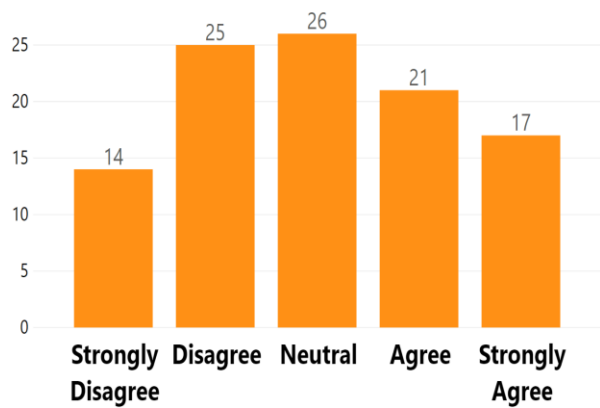
Optional Comment

Done More

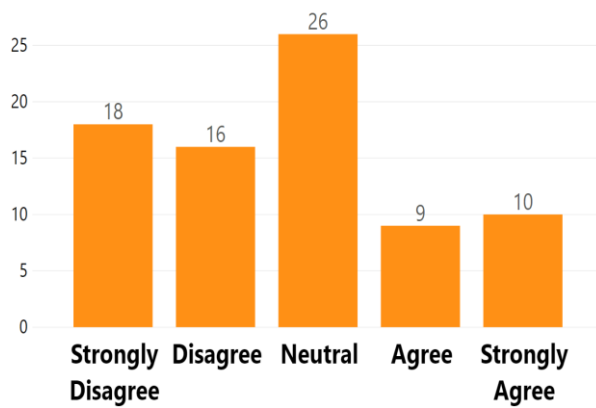
Previous Optional Comment Next

## “Population Distribution” Priority Responses

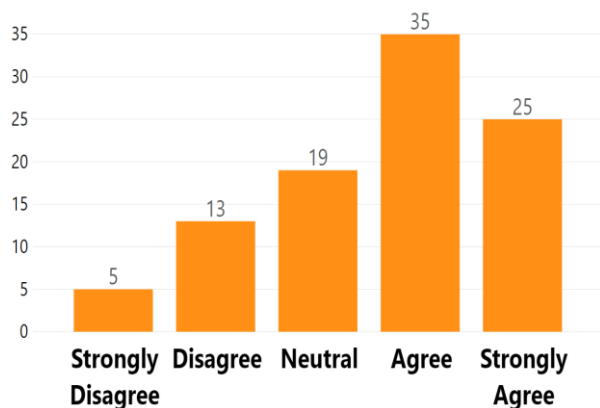
Population growth has a positive impact on the community.



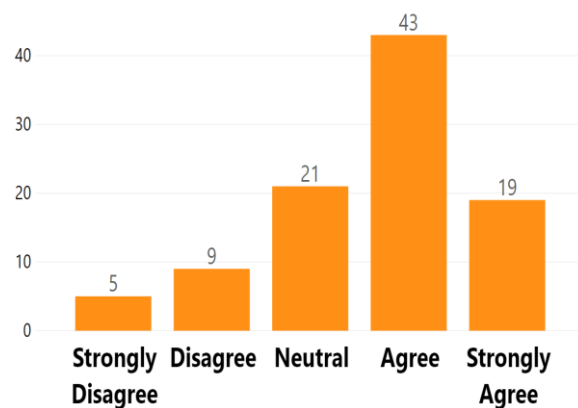
The Region should plan for municipalities to receive the same number of new housing units to accommodate its future population.



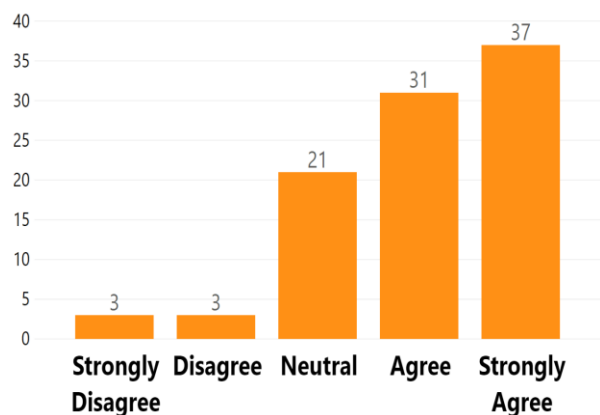
Population growth should be directed to areas that make better use of existing services and infrastructure.



Specific areas within municipalities should be identified to accommodate a majority of future population growth.

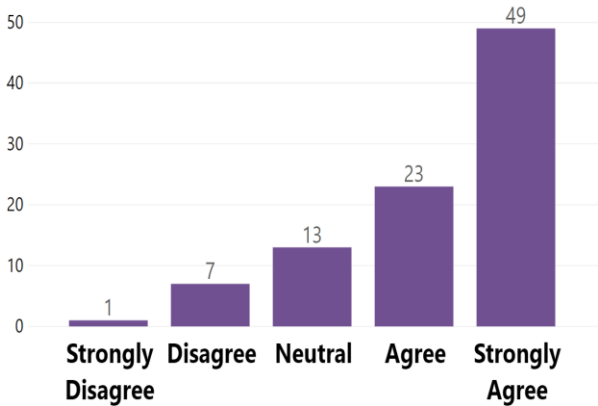


Detailed planning studies, such as secondary plans, should be undertaken to direct growth in the context of local priorities.

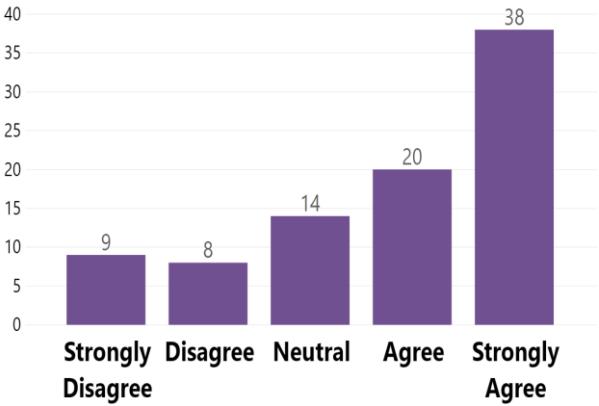


“Housing” Priority Responses

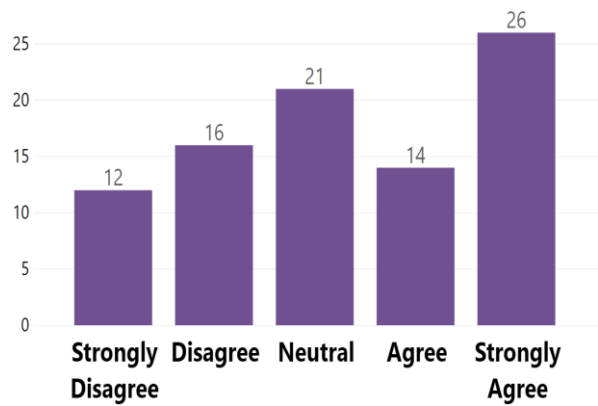
Neighbourhoods should contain housing for people at all stages of life and economic levels.



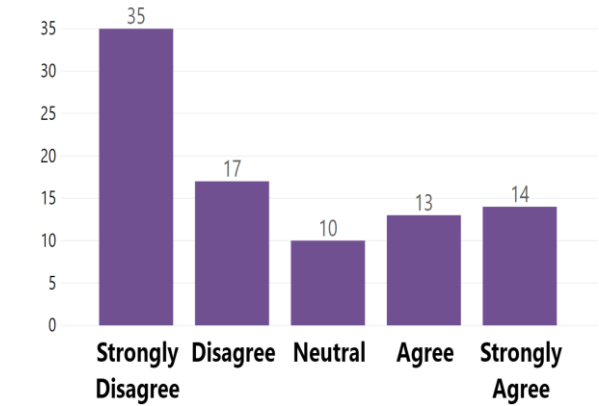
Neighbourhoods should contain a mix of housing types, including single-family detached dwellings, townhouses and apartments.



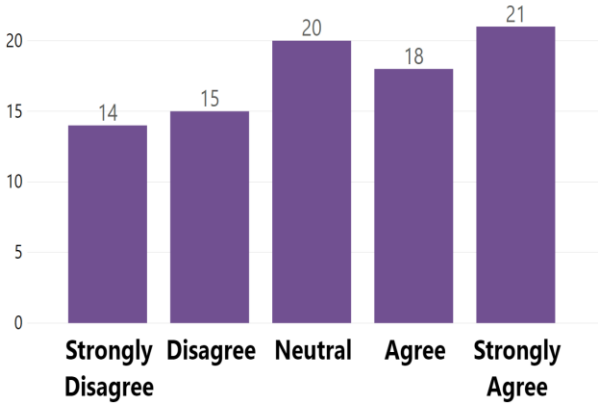
More dense forms of housing, such as multi-unit dwellings and apartments, is needed to house Niagara's future population.



My neighbourhood would benefit from the introduction of well-designed, denser forms of housing.

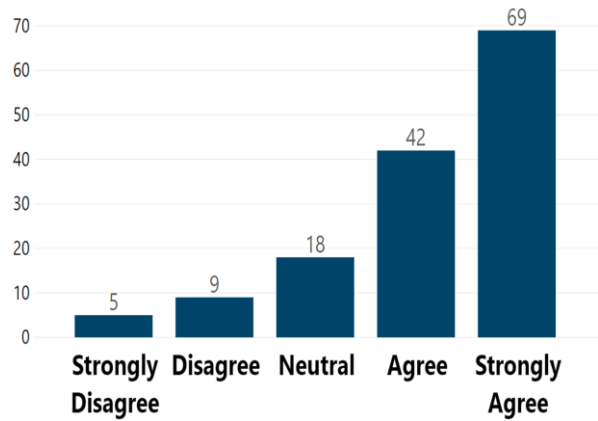


Adding new units to a basement, garage, or separate structure on an existing property is a good way to provide more housing options for the community.

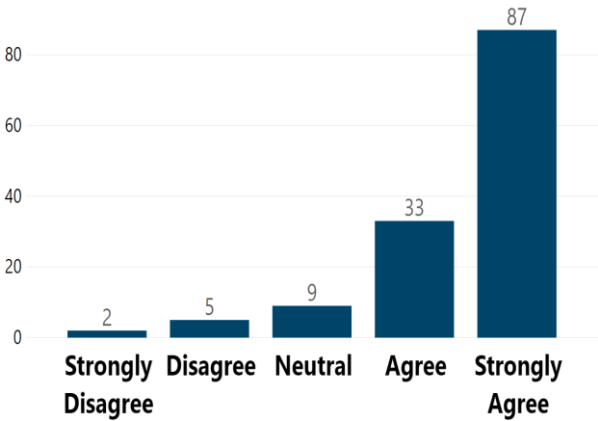


“Complete Communities” Priority Responses

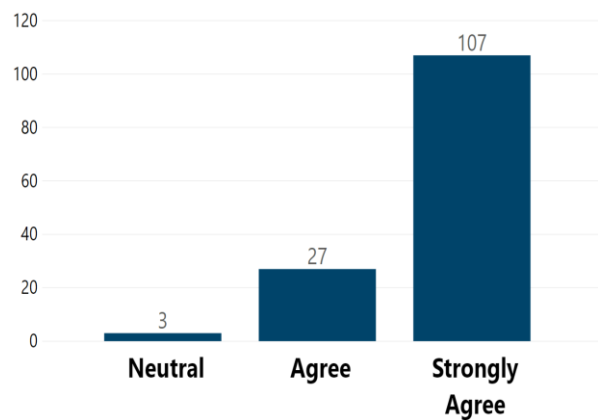
Providing a diverse mix of housing, including affordable housing, is an important component in achieving a complete community.



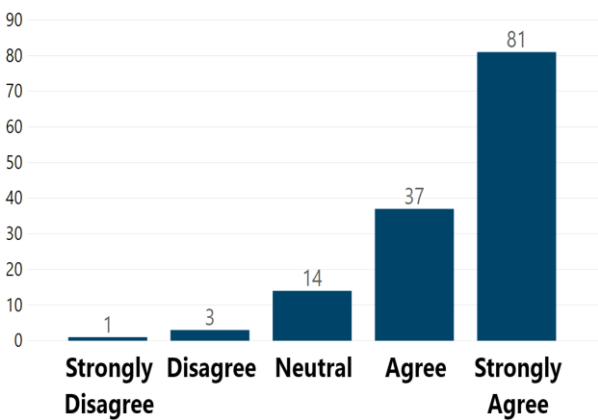
Providing a range of transportation options to reduce our reliance on cars is an important component in achieving a complete community.



Providing open space and recreational space is an important component in achieving a complete community.

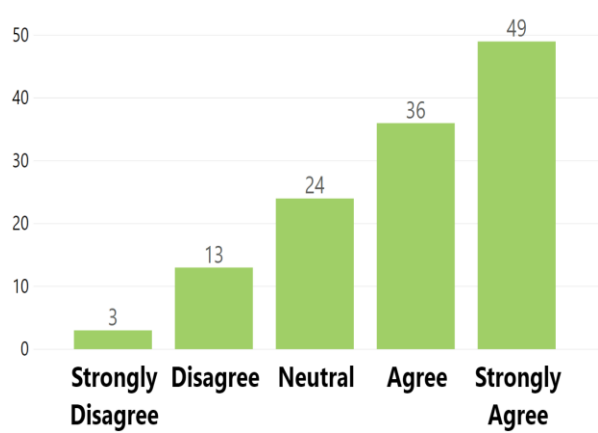


Having access to a variety of retail uses and public services and facilities is an important component in achieving a complete community.

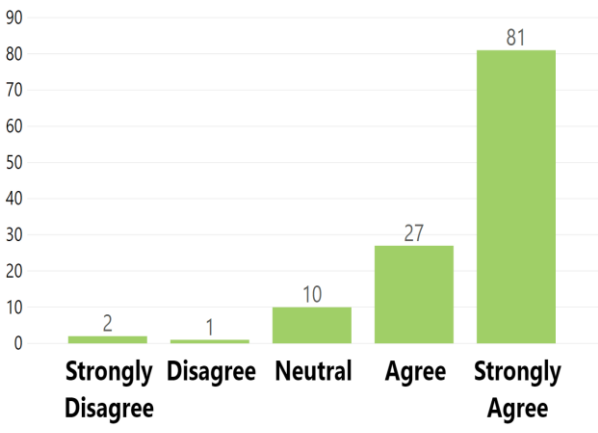


“Climate Change” Priority Responses

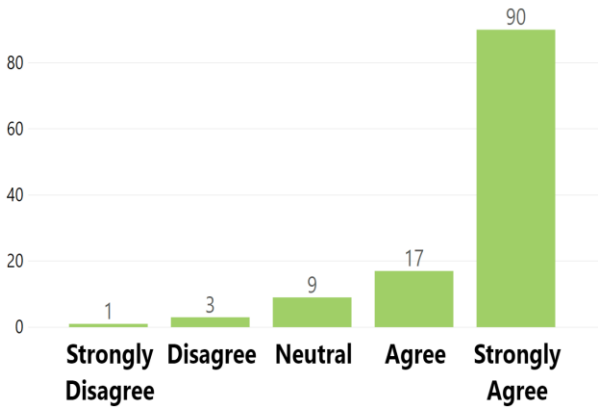
Population growth should be directed to built up areas to reduce the expansion of municipal infrastructure outside of urban areas.



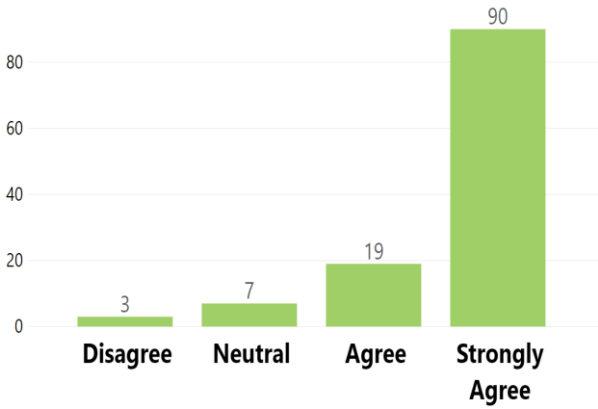
Communities should be planned with a mix of land uses and transportation options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Development should support the use of renewable energy systems in the community, such as geothermal, district heating, and solar power technology.

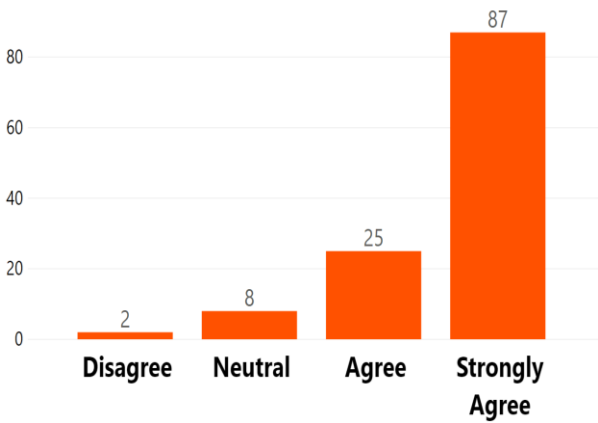


Development should utilize green infrastructure such as green roofs, permeable surfaces, natural channels, and increased tree cover, to reduce flooding.

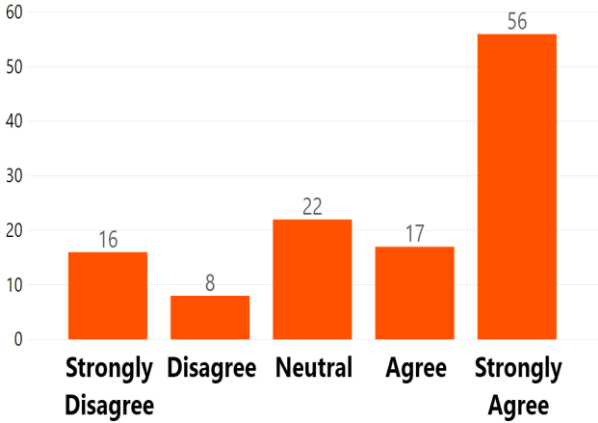


“Housing Affordability” Priority Responses

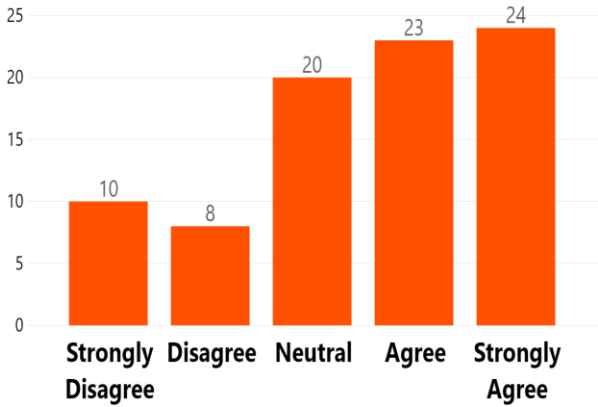
More affordable housing options are needed within my municipality.



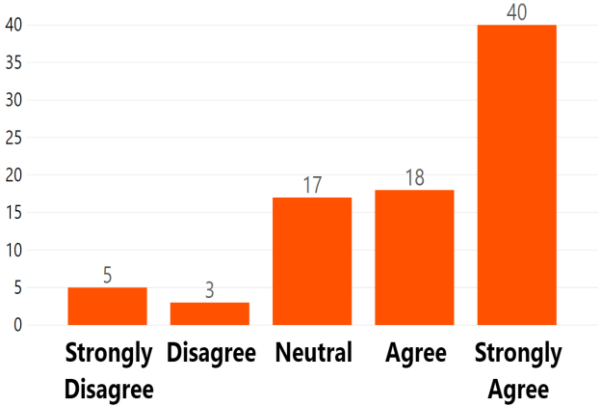
More rental housing options, such as multi-unit dwellings and apartments, are needed within my community.



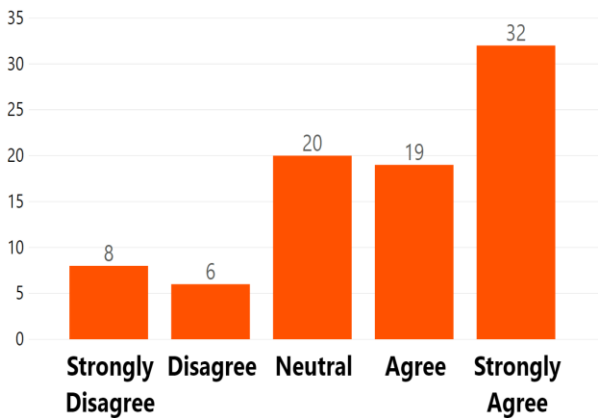
More dense forms of housing is required to enable seniors to live within my community.



A portion of all medium and high-density developments in my community should be dedicated to affordable housing.



Tax dollars should be used to develop or support the development of affordable housing.



## Trade-Off Scenario Rankings

### Important notes:

- The questions on the Trade-Off Scenario screen describe two opposing opinions on growth management planning.
- Respondents were asked to select the opinion they most agreed with. Selecting the arrow closest to the given scenario indicates strong agreement with that position.

**4 Preferences**

**TRADEOFFS**

Growth Density Distribution Housing Complete Communities

How should future growth be managed in the Niagara Region?  
Choose the option that best shows which tradeoff you prefer

Develop at the edge of cities; higher servicing costs per home; more urban sprawl

Redevelop built up areas; lower servicing costs per home; less urban sprawl

**Preferences**  
What to do

Indicate where you stand on each of the Tradeoff scenarios. Each image represents an opposing opinion in growth management planning.

Item 1 vs Item 2  
Choose the option that best shows which tradeoff you prefer

« < Neutral > » Show your position on each tradeoff.

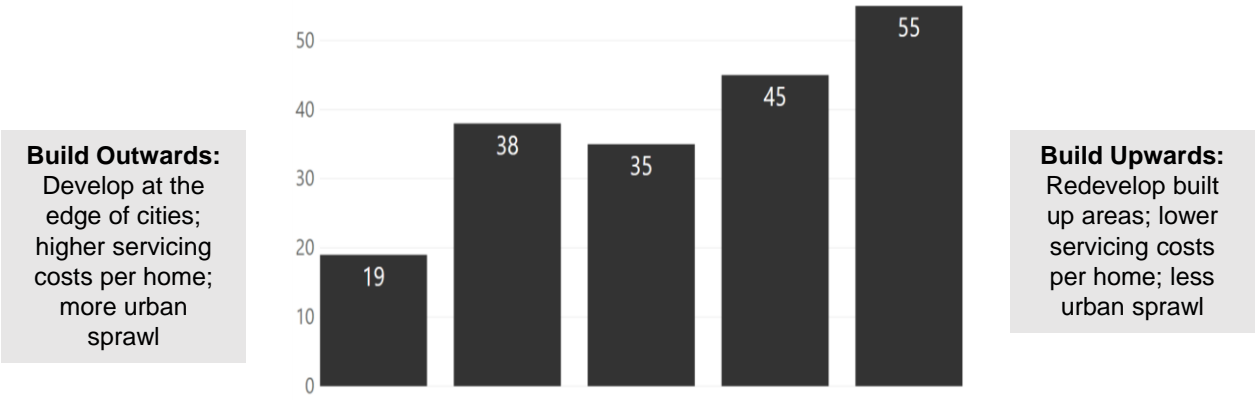
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Build Outwards Build Upwards

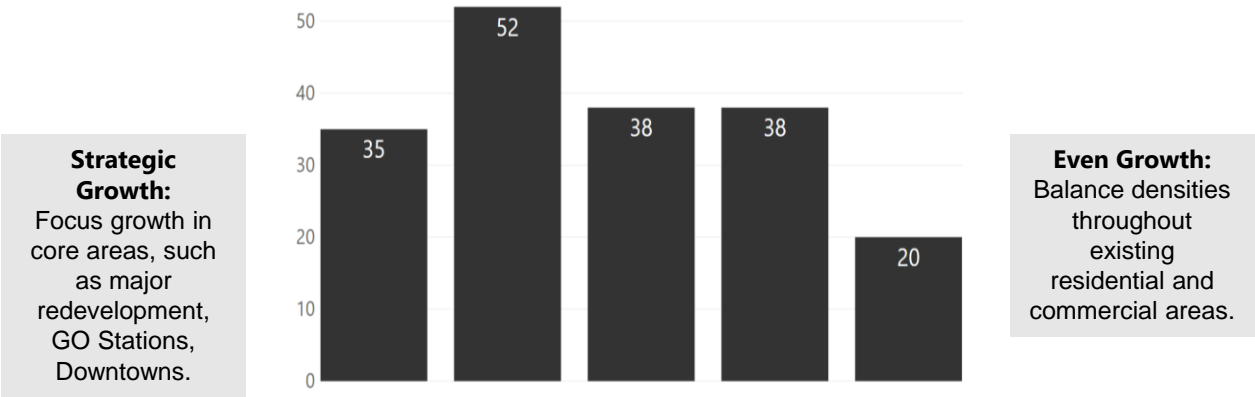
Previous Optional Comment Next Tradeoff

## Growth Management Trade-Off Scenarios

How should future growth be accommodated in Niagara Region?



Where should population growth be directed in Niagara?

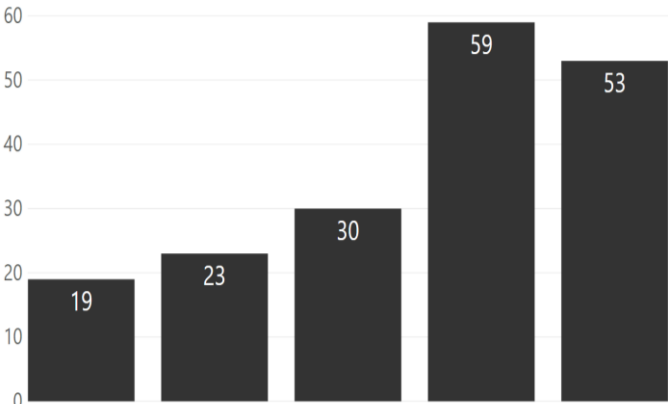




# Growth Management Trade-Off Scenarios

Should neighborhoods contain a variety of housing forms and options?

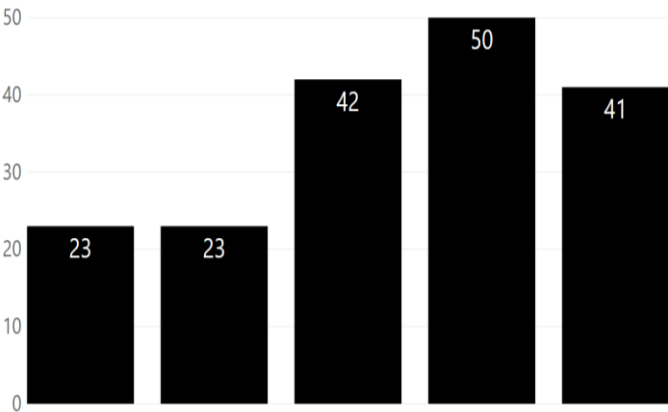
**Maintain Housing Character:**  
Maintain form of existing communities; provides less housing options for residents



**Increase Options:**  
Develop a variety of dwelling types; provides more housing options for residents

Should public funding be used to make our communities more attractive?

**Development Implemented Public Realm:**  
Duty placed on private developments to invest in the public realm



**Municipally Implemented Public Realm:**  
Duty placed on the Region and cities/towns to invest in the public realm

## Growth Management Survey Comments Received

Survey Screen: Priority Rankings	
Question	Comments
Suggest another priority.	Access to outdoor amenity space i.e. parkland, trails, etc.
	Animal Habitat Protection
	Better paying jobs
	Convenience and Accessibility
	Preserve our heritage and Greenbelt
Rank Population Distribution.	Niagara has the best farmland in the world. It must be protected at all costs in order to help with Canadian food security. Population growth should be southern tier, on more marginal lands and must be accompanied by job growth, not merely commuter growth.
	Population in Grimsby is now too dense. Traffic congestion is a daily problem. With restricted arteries running through Grimsby surely the population cannot be increased.
	Too much of the woodland areas are being destroyed in the Niagara region. Soon for those of us that hunt there will be next to nowhere left.
Rank Housing Affordability.	Affordable housing is a need.
	Affordable housing that include 2 and 3 bedroom units should be provided. New development should not restrict "affordable" units to those that are less than 50m <sup>2</sup> in size.
	Put a cap on the max amount big companies can charge for rent. Prices are astronomical right now based on a minimum wage salary. Even a 2 income at minimum wage is hard to afford these places.
	Take a look at California, housing is becoming unattainable by the average person and people are leaving in large numbers to places like Texas. We should be looking at how many policies and taxes have messed up California and how few policies and taxes are benefiting Texas as an example of what to do and what not to do.
Rank Housing.	No more town home subdivisions. No single car driveways. These all lead to parking on the street causing congestion and an unsafe community.
	The condo to be built in Main St is incomprehensible. Traffic is already congested. Too much traffic downtown deters people from going there.

Rank Complete Communities.	Complete communities will attract more people.
Rank Climate Change.	I don't know why this is such a strong point in politics these days... it's important that we take care of the environment around us, but everything has its up sides and down sides. Let the free market decide how we do things and let the individual home purchaser decide if they want to have green energy on their property, or a passive home.
	We should protect our parks, bench green space and waterfront. High density buildings such as the ones planned for Grimsby make sense in larger communities. I do not want to lose our waterfront, but do expect those areas to be developed. There needs to be a balance between housing, commercial, entertainment, green space and roads. The highway Toronto bound is backed up from Fruitland Road through Mississauga. What is the plan to expand the highway and Burlington Skyway? No one is interested in 4 hour commutes to and from.
	You can't have high density without affecting the environment. Increase carbon emissions, increase highway travel affecting bird migration, etc.
	You need infrastructure to support the growing population. Expand roads to accommodate cyclists and fix the crumbling main roads.

Survey Screen: Ranking Statements	
Question	Comments
Population growth has a positive impact on the community.	I love the diversity that growth will bring. But I am not going to sacrifice 10 years of traffic, congestion, bad roads, higher taxes, and so on. I moved to Grimsby in 1986 and we were just about. Today we are nearly doubled, but the area feels congested. How will adding more high density homes in a restricted area help? Developing the escarpment should not be an option. Mountain access is already slow and depending upon the season, dangerous.
	If additional taxes revenue used to fund an equivalent increase in infrastructure sure, happy to see the tax base increased. Must manage properly to ensure optimal use of funds.
	In the past perhaps, now, no! We are too full here, build somewhere else!
	It's too busy and congested. I moved away from the city to get away from dense populations.
	More people means more money to increase the quality of the town. Beamsville needs a facelift.
	Population growth can be positive if done correctly. What town council just approved in Grimsby at the Main and Elm development is an example of incorrectly. The traffic is already horrible on a good day. It's only going to get worse and there is no room to expand the street.
	This is true, as long as you aren't sticking large buildings anywhere you can fly them in order to house people. It has to be well thought out and run by the community for actual input (not just a formality, and ensuring there is adequate time for the community to respond). The community's feedback needs to be actually taken into account and not ignored or pushed aside to get projects completed quickly
	Too much takes away from small town feel and can negatively affect those already in these towns.
	We have too many people here. It is congested. Farm land is being removed to incorporate mass housing communities and subdivisions. We do not need more people here.
	While it can be good for the local economy, if done poorly without proper planning, using low end construction companies to save money we can do a lot of damage to our infrastructure

The Region should plan for municipalities to receive the same number of new housing units to accommodate its future population.	Optimization of existing housing and conversion of existing properties (condo or lofts from empty manufacturing or other facilities) should also be considered.
	The distribution of new expansion should be calculated by the town population divided by the regional population, and we all share the same identical percentage of growth. Not the same population growth
	This needs to be well thought out on a case by case basis, not just a numbers game!
Population growth should be directed to areas that make better use of existing services and infrastructure.	Where excess capacity exists.
Specific areas within municipalities should be identified to accommodate a majority of future population growth.	As long as public green spaces are included.
	Infill sprawl where possible.
	Niagara can't support more population growth. People are already unhappy and sick. Take care of what you have already first.
	Small communities should not be forced to grow. Cities should grow.
Detailed planning studies, such as secondary plans, should be undertaken to direct growth in the context of local priorities.	Community should have choice.
	Save the taxpayer some money and move some of this to proposed developments.
More rental housing options, such as multi-unit dwellings and apartments, are needed within my community.	It is better to make single family homes more affordable so people don't have to rent.
	The problem with rental housing is that the prices keep going up, to the point where it's arguably more expensive to rent than to own. If more rental housing options are made available, there'd need to be some form of pricing regulation to keep units affordable. Landlords in general seem to be buying up too much real estate and driving up prices of ownable homes as well. This is not sustainable. We need affordable rental housing AND affordable home ownership options.
	This area is crowded enough, please stop building apartments, where do you expect everyone to shop and park, its chaos here as it is with city people flocking here and rising the cost of living and rent! It's awful.
	Yes, please put more. However, none of the apartments that are going up in Grimsby by the lake are actually affordable rentals, especially for families.

More dense forms of housing is required to enable seniors to live within my community.	Just seniors? Density should be an option for all ages
	Yes, but can they be architecturally innovative. Have developers here ever been to another place? Beautiful dense affordable living is achievable. Not all buildings have to be brown and square.
A portion of all medium and high-density developments in my community should be dedicated to affordable housing.	They should all be affordable. There shouldn't be a stigma attached to a building as being "poor".
Tax dollars should be used to develop or support the development of affordable housing.	Taxes should not be raised to achieve this. Efficiencies should be found, and funds redirected for this initiative.
	The budget process should eliminate large tax increases and still allocate funds for affordable housing
	There should also be a tax on foreign and local owned empty rooms so we do not end up like with thousands of unaffordable empty units that could be used to house people.
	Yes, because tax dollars allow both municipalities and region to ensure "good planning". However, housing/retail/office developers should also "invest" in developing and supporting affordable housing. And, yes, the general public should be empowered to ensure that their tax dollars are working well.
Neighbourhoods should contain a mix of housing types, including single-family detached dwellings, townhouses and apartments.	Why would someone who currently owns a 3,400sq.ft. home want to be directly across the street from a semi or townhouse? You're negatively affecting them. Build net new neighborhoods with a good mix; that doesn't cause parking nightmares and clogged streets like Magnolia Drive in Grimsby as an example.
More dense forms of housing, such as multi-unit dwellings and apartments, are needed to house Niagara's future population.	Not in Grimsby.
	Only where appropriate!
	Rental apartments, yes. Neutral story or stacked townhomes NO.
My neighbourhood would benefit from the introduction of well-designed, denser forms of housing.	Creates too much chaos and congestion. A few rental apartments are needed but no condos, stacked townhomes etc. Niagara communities should be about land, large yards and staying away from the pollution of dense communities
	Nope!
	Well-designed is the key here.

Adding new units to a basement, garage, or separate structure on an existing property is a good way to provide more housing options for the community.	This is a great way to house people without building giant atrocities in low-level, old communities.
Providing a diverse mix of housing, including affordable housing, is an important component in achieving a complete community.	ALL housing should be affordable. No one deserves to be homeless. Low income/ affordable housing is often wen in a bad light and often can attract students and partyers. We need good housing and respectful neighbours on all sides of the economic spectrum.
	As long as it is zoned appropriately! A large building slapped in the middle of 10-year-old bungalows is ALWAYS a crappy idea!
	Historically, when Niagara has built low income housing, they've been grouped together creating low income areas in the community which wind up creating higher crime rates in specific areas and living in those areas by association you become labelled. I believe in blended complete communities not divided by rich and poor.
	Please stop allowing developers to say townhouses are affordable housing they are not for the average person anymore and way too expensive they are just a way for developers to get richer without actually using the space to help those who need rentals and community housing.
	We need more health care providers and a trauma centre in Niagara
Providing a range of transportation options to reduce our reliance on cars is an important component in achieving a complete community.	Investing in all kinds of alternate transportation is critical and these options should be robust such as dedicated safe bike lanes NETWORK, not just paint on the road. Because we want people to feel comfortable and use them.
	Make cats more affordable. If one prefers the mass transit route, make them cleaner and less crowded. Make them more efficient, faster, and direct.
	Number one priority. Less cars, close streets for biking and cycling. Learn from COVID
	Safety for pedestrians and cyclists priority..tougher speed limits
	Strongly agree! With older infrastructure on many of Niagara's roads, implementing very safe and organized bike lanes on busy corridors will reduce traffic and improve overall quality of life.

Providing open space and recreational space is an important component in achieving a complete community.	Beamsville needs more parks, park space, trails and paths, as well as park structures, splash pads and community spaces.
	Open spaces becomes green spaces that can increase tree cover, reduce water run-off, etc.
	Please make businesses put more tree coverage, the new storage place in Grimsby planted none from what I can see and the hideous new Pizza Hut so far hasn't planted any trees.
Having access to a variety of retail uses and public services and facilities is an important component in achieving a complete community.	Big box stores suck the life out of communities so just sticking a restaurant and a Costco in a treeless parking lot (sorry one dying bush) should not be considered a mixed use area for the community.
	Encouraging safe, car-free access to these retail locations is a must for community growth.
	Having access using bicycle or walking would be great as it will alleviate burden on roads.
	If it is done with good appearance in mind. Ontario Street in Beamsville needs an overhaul. It is quite ugly and there needs to be an injection of new buildings and facelifts to improve the quality and appearance.
	No big box stores. More mom and pop shops so we can support local.
Population growth should be directed to built up areas to reduce the expansion of municipal infrastructure outside of urban areas.	I'm all for development so long as it's not just selling off space to the highest bidder. Quality plans should be put in place and if an area is developed, there also needs to be a plan for quality community green spaces.
	It would be nice to space some of the growth out as St. Catharines is becoming very busy.
Communities should be planned with a mix of land uses and transportation options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	I moved to Grimsby in with the promise of a GO station being completed. I STILL have to commute to Toronto passing over the Skyway bridge, and a shovel hasn't even broken ground yet.
	With our booming population, we must have a reliable transit system, as well as walkable and bikeable corridors
	Yes! The recent NRT On Demand is an excellent example of this.



Development should utilize green infrastructure such as green roofs, permeable surfaces, natural channels, and increased tree cover, to reduce flooding.	I think Green infrastructure is extremely valuable as it reduces capital project cost such as storm sewers and also provides educational value to communities
	To a certain extend. Some green roof/ buildings take more energy to water, which out-weights the benefits of one.

Survey Screen: Trade-Off Scenarios	
Question	Comment
How should future growth be accommodated in Niagara Region? (Build Upward or Build Outward)	Agree (vs strongly agree) for 2 reasons: 1) because planning should always have flexibility and 2) because some undeveloped areas can be developed - but not at the expense of a natural-type (which helps towards mitigating climate change) nor at the expense of good, agricultural land. We also need self-sufficiency in growing our own food (i.e. local vs long-distance). Long-distance is often not so good at mitigating climate change
	Build upwards as long as shadow studies are completed. Building upwards has energy benefits for cost savings on heating and cooling when green energy is a key driving factor
	I'm a bit confused. I think it needs to be a mix of both building up and spreading it out
	Stop building!
Where should population growth be directed in Niagara? (Strategic Growth or Even Growth)	Agree (vs strongly agree). Again, a region/municipal plan needs to be flexible. I prefer a mix of all housing types "jumbled" together, but there also should be "work" and "play" mixed in it. The more-often-than not separating "live-work-play" has led to "dead zones" in many cities. Balanced mixture leads to healthier communities. And, yes, should include agricultural "work" areas as well.
	Don't make areas swarmed with people. Even them out more
Should neighborhoods contain a variety of housing forms and options? (Maintain Housing Character or Increase Options)	Character with different options, think outside the brown brick option
Should public funding be used make our communities more attractive? (Developer Implemented Public Realm or Municipally Implemented Public Realm)	Developers only seem to do the bare minimum in creating quality spaces. There needs to be much more emphasis on creating quality public spaces that also attract tourism, shopping, public money. Downtown Beamsville could use a big injection of investment to beautify, improve the look and quality.
	Funding should be shared - public, of course, is taxpayer dollars. However, developers should be engaged in this as well.
	Private development will not care what duty is placed upon them. They will do what they want.