

# Engagement Insights Report

Insights and recommendations for consideration in the preparation of a new Region of Niagara Official Plan.

---

**REGION OF NIAGARA**  
**DECEMBER 10, 2020**

**Overlap**  
**Associates**







Why do this work now?



A photograph of a modern building with large glass windows and a brick wall in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a blue tint. A green horizontal line is positioned above the text.

**What is outside the  
scope of this work?**





**Can the New Region of  
Niagara Official Plan address or  
resolve all of the issues we heard?**





**“We must look through many lenses ...  
the Pandemic has taught us how  
important that is.”**

**– ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANT**





# Engagement Insights

IN OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH REGIONAL COUNCILLORS, WE ASKED WHAT THE OFFICIAL PLAN MEANS TO REGIONAL COUNCILLORS AND THEIR CONSTITUENTS, HOW COUNCILLORS WOULD DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATE OF THE REGION OF NIAGARA, WHAT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES EXIST NOW AND IN THE NEXT 10-20 YEARS, AND HOW REGIONAL COUNCILLORS FEEL ABOUT THE OFFICIAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.



#### INSIGHT 1

Build a sustainable Official Plan, guided by a shared vision, to provide a road map for a strong future

#### INSIGHT 2

Provide clarity on Regional roles and support active municipal collaboration for managing balanced, thoughtful, and sustainable growth

#### INSIGHT 3

Build a more socially inclusive region by focusing more attention on matters like affordability, diversity, and equity

#### INSIGHT 4

Maintain the Region's quality of life, and make planning for vibrant, connected communities a priority

#### INSIGHT 5

Clearly relate the Region's assets to new and sustainable economic growth opportunities

#### INSIGHT 6

Ensure roles and relationships between the Region and the 12 area municipal governments, and outside the Official Plan, are well aligned

#### INSIGHT 7

Engage residents and stakeholders in an accessible and transparent process





# Recommendations

THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS ARE DERIVED FROM THE KEY INSIGHTS AND RESPOND DIRECTLY TO MANY OF THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES RAISED BY REGIONAL COUNCILLORS DURING ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS.



#### RECOMMENDATION 1

Convene a session with Regional Councillors to discuss a shared long term vision for the new Official Plan, using an approach that includes community and Local Municipal input

#### RECOMMENDATION 2

Hold additional public information or update sessions in all 12 municipalities, with the associated Regional Councillor(s) and local Municipal staff in attendance

#### RECOMMENDATION 3

Further collaboration with municipalities to discuss policy implementation and interpretation

#### RECOMMENDATION 4

Provide plain language information and status updates for Councillors and the public



#### RECOMMENDATION 5

Continue to dedicate time to building consensus across municipalities on growth areas

#### RECOMMENDATION 6

Allocate Council meeting time to discuss the key elements of good planning

#### RECOMMENDATION 7

Explore the ways in which a new Official Plan can support existing business and attract new investment

#### RECOMMENDATION 8

Explore ways to further community engagement through the Official Plan, particularly in the interests of diversity, equity, and inclusion



#### RECOMMENDATION 9

Use the findings of this engagement with Regional Councillors as a baseline against which the process used to create the new Official Plan and the content of the Plan can be measured in 2021

#### RECOMMENDATION 10

Establish a working group of Regional and local Municipal staff to consider future “housekeeping” amendments to the Official Plan





# Proposed Next Steps

- REGIONAL STAFF TO REPORT BACK ON IMPLEMENTATION (PER STAFF REPORT)
- IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT BY OVERLAP





**“Despite our differences, this Council works really well together, has respect for each other, and really cares about our region.”**

**– ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANT**