

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Chapter 6 – Section 2 – URBAN DESIGN

SUMMARY

Urban design is the practice of making places that are attractive, memorable, and functional. It involves the arrangement, appearance and relationship between buildings, outdoor spaces, transportation systems, services, and amenities.

Urban Design helps to create communities and streets that are vibrant. This strengthens Niagara's image and directly affects quality-of-life and the richness of our experiences.

- The Region's commitment to excellence in Urban Design will show leadership in guiding the design of the built environment and public realm towards more attractive, safe, diverse, and functional communities.
- Updates to the existing Regional Urban Design Guidelines (2005) will provide clarity and guidance to local municipalities and developers.
- Strong Urban Design policies ensure that new development will be of a high design quality, while ensuring careful consideration of the existing character of a community. Urban design promotes a context-sensitive approach that respects and celebrates Niagara's diverse communities and unique geography.
- Urban Design assists with climate change resilience through the provision of sustainable design best practices.
- Urban Design improves vibrancy and diversity of places, and helps to accommodate people of all ages and abilities. Strong Urban Design supports the creation of inviting places with well-designed buildings and streetscapes that attract people and investment to Niagara.
- Urban Design fosters a Complete Streets approach to the design of communities. A public realm that supports active transportation contributes to health and well-being.

A Draft Policy set is provided with this sub-section document.



Integration Guide for Sub-sections Reported in PDS 17-2021	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Archaeology
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land Needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SABR	<input type="checkbox"/> Aggregates
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural Heritage incl.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Systems Options
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District/Secondary Plans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watershed Planning
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Design	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate Change

OVERVIEW

Niagara is growing and changing; it is important that we have Urban Design policies that proactively address growth before places are built. Effective Urban Design can demonstrate how to accommodate growth that is compact, attractive, inviting, and safe.

Provincial plans, including the *Growth Plan*, set out policies for where and how Niagara will grow. The *Growth Plan* has policies that direct and support – through site design and Urban Design standards – the achievement of complete communities, high quality compact built form, and vibrant public realms.

To conform to the *Growth Plan*, Urban Design policies are included in the Official Plan to establish the context and direction for development and transportation systems. Urban design policies shape vibrant, attractive communities that address climate change through the design of compact built forms, mixed land uses and enhanced streetscapes.

The draft Urban Design policies include key objectives, which are summarized below.

Commit to excellence in urban design.

This commitment ensures that built environments enjoy lasting value through the creation of attractive and functional places. Urban design promotes a context-sensitive approach that respects Niagara's diverse communities and unique geography. Celebrating community identities contributes to authentic experiences.

Good Urban Design also contributes to the health and well-being of people in Niagara through design approaches that embrace accessible, vibrant and safe communities and streets. Additionally, sustainable design practices relating to the built environment can enhance the resiliency of Niagara's communities.

Enhance the public realm and promote active transportation.

The evolution of Regional roads and streetscapes will promote a balanced approach to road design, which is known as Complete Streets. This approach ensures that the needs of motorists, transit users, cyclists and pedestrians are considered in the design conversation. Examples of enhancements to Regional roads and streetscapes can include sustainable design features, street trees, street furniture, enhanced lighting, wayfinding and public art.

Enhanced public realms also promote transit-supportive community design through attractive and comfortable streetscapes, a mix of land uses, and high-quality buildings and landscapes.

Within Niagara's downtowns and community cores, public realm improvements foster vibrancy and celebrate community identity through design approaches that create enlivened streetscapes and placemaking elements.

Identify and establish tools for urban design implementation.

The Region's update to its Model Urban Design Guidelines will align with the Region's Complete Streets program. Both programs demonstrate leadership in design of the built environment. These tools will guide the design of higher quality developments, alongside other tools that reflect best practices to gain better design outcomes.

Foster an understanding of urban design and its role in creating meaningful places.

People choose attractive communities and meaningful places that create unique, authentic, and memorable experiences. The Region's Urban Design approaches will respect the character of a place and adopt a contextual approach to design. Urban Design features include a variety of placemaking elements that enhance accessibility, inclusivity, and vibrancy.

The Region offers a series of Urban Design programs that foster an understanding of Urban Design. For example, the Niagara Biennial Design Awards is a bi-annual design competition. It celebrates excellence in design of the built environment in design categories such as urban design, architecture, landscape architecture and outdoor art. Additionally, the Public Realm Investment Program (PRIP) is a matching grant initiative that collaborates with local municipalities to contribute to the enhancement of public realm projects along Regional roads.

Provide clear direction to area municipalities on urban design.

Niagara's local municipal partners will develop Urban Design tools and programs that implement the Region's Official Plan to best reflect the character of their respective communities. Local communities can commit to excellence in Urban Design through available tools, some of which are exclusive to the local municipality. These tools may include local official plan policies, secondary plan policies, zoning standards, urban design guidelines, manuals, and site plan control.

Local municipalities can also seek Urban Design assistance from the Region. This assistance can support the development of vibrant communities plus safe and inviting streets. This includes addressing resiliency through sustainable design principles.

Public consultation on Urban Design matters has been extensive. Details are included in **Appendix 1**.

Included as **Appendix 15.2** are Urban Design draft policies.