

Regional Council Workshop: Niagara Official Plan Review

Thursday, May 6, 2021
Committee-of-the-Whole Meeting

Isaiah Banach

Acting Director
Community & Long Range Planning

Sean Norman

Senior Planner
Community Planning

Doug Giles

Acting Commissioner
Planning & Development Services

David Heyworth

Official Plan Coordinator
Planning & Development Services

The Official Plan has not been comprehensively updated in **nearly 50 years**. A new Niagara Official Plan is needed to improve:



OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SYSTEM

Improved mapping of the Region's natural heritage features and water resources



OUR RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Prioritize climate change throughout the plan to achieve sustainable and resilient communities.



OUR HOUSING MIX

Support a diverse range of dwelling types to addresses affordability and market demand.



OUR ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Identified areas that are protected for long-term investment in employment uses.

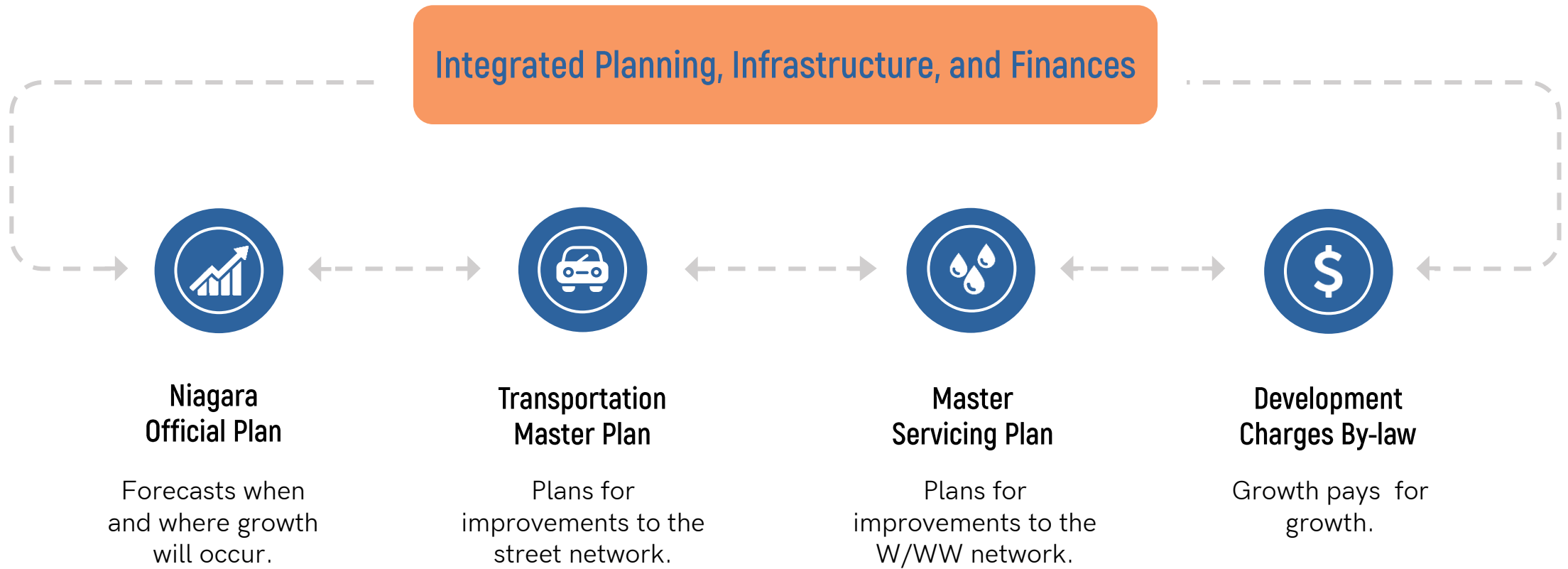


OUR PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Clearer policies for local implementation and coordination with Regional planning.



comprehensive review

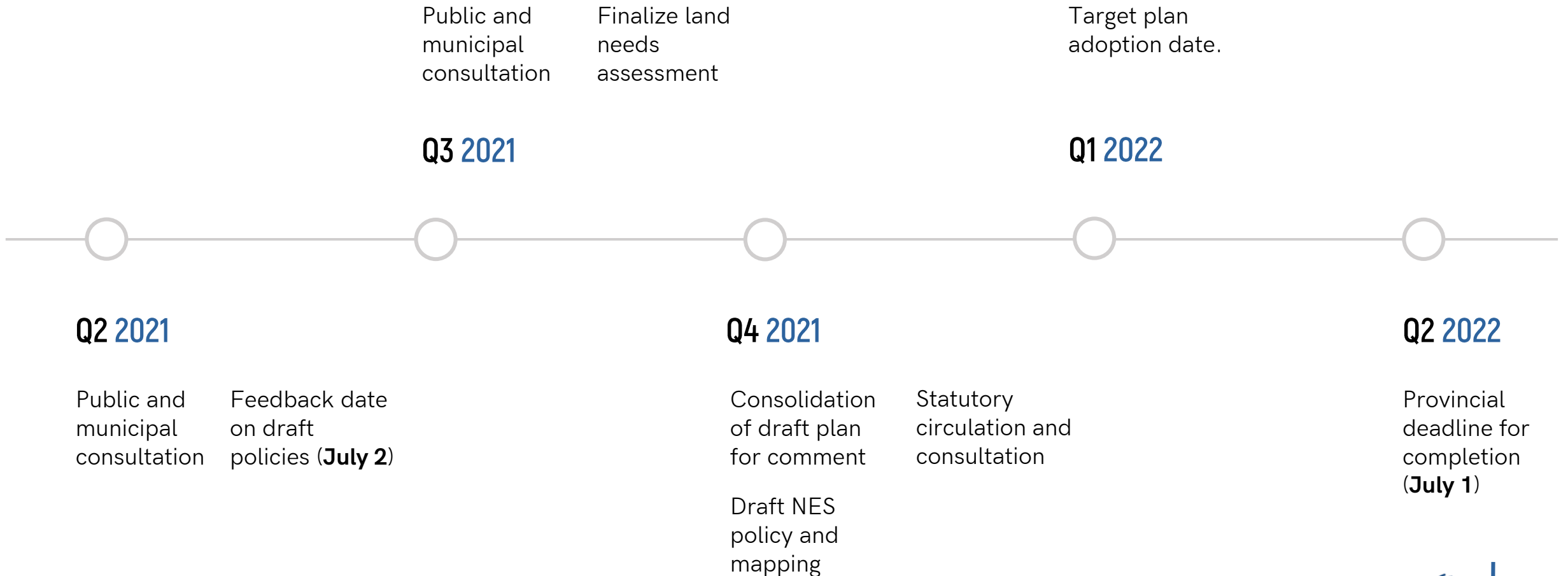


The Province is the final approval authority for the new Niagara Official Plan. The Provincial deadline for the Official Plan is **July 1, 2022**.

To move the Official Plan forward, a decision is needed on the Natural Environment System Option.



official plan timeline



natural environment systems options

01

OPTIONS MAPPING IS A VISUAL AID

Mapping of the options
assists in decision-making.

02

DETAILED MAPPING WILL BE CREATED

Detailed mapping will be
prepared after the option
is selected in consultation
with local municipalities
and the NPCA.

03

WE WILL CONSULT ON THE NES

There will be significant
opportunities for public and
stakeholders comments.





The new Official Plan **will balance the interests of current and future residents.**

Challenges such as housing affordability, the natural environment, climate change, economic development may not have consensus from all parties.

There are many ways to address these challenges. As long as Council's decision conforms with Provincial Policy, we can have a **made in Niagara solution.**



The Region will **proactively plan for growth.**

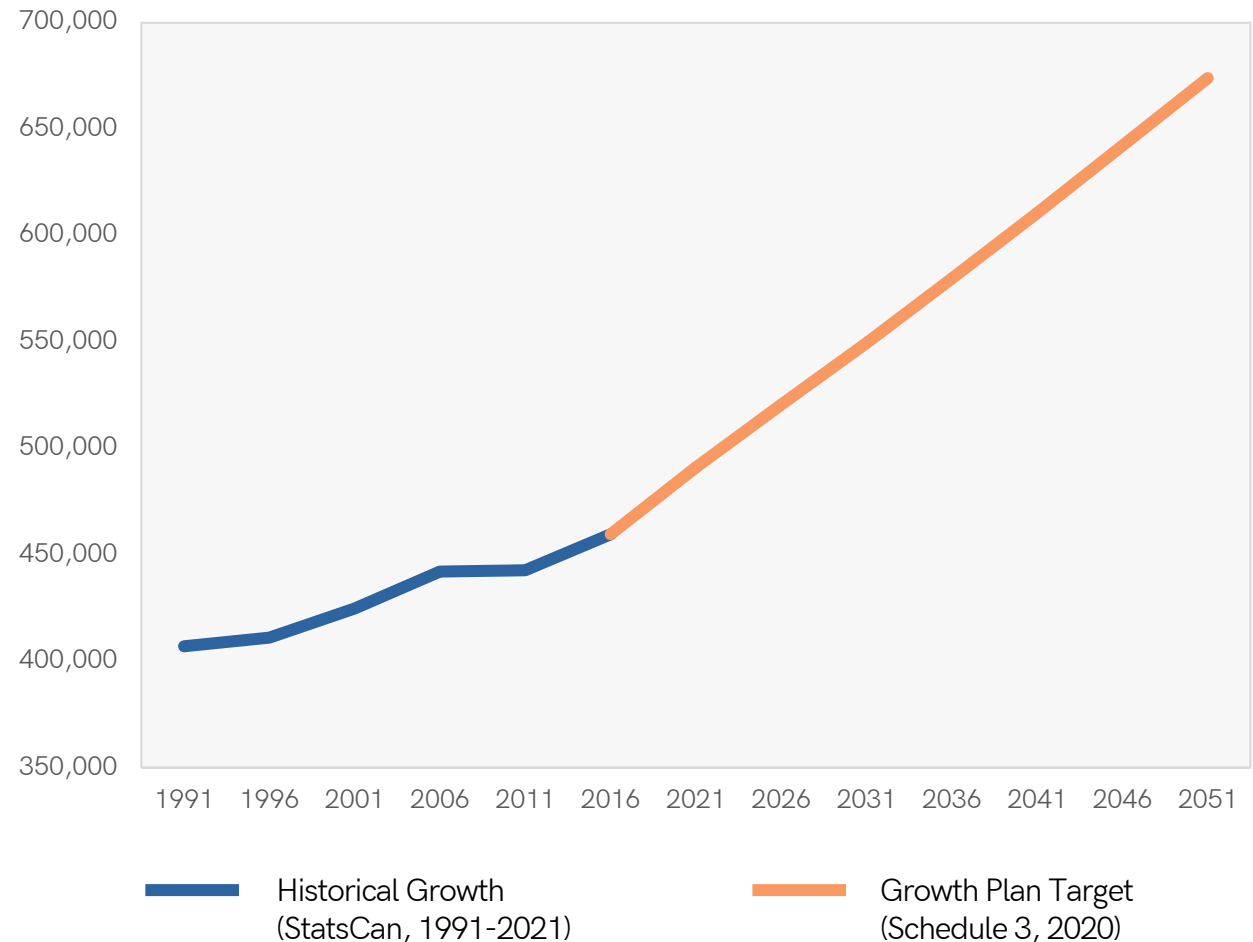
Growth is coming. By strategically directing growth we can create affordable, sustainable, and vibrant places that offer a range of housing options and amenities that will allow our residents to age-in-place.

growth trends

The Growth Plan expects that at least **674,000** people will live in the Niagara Region in the next 30 years.

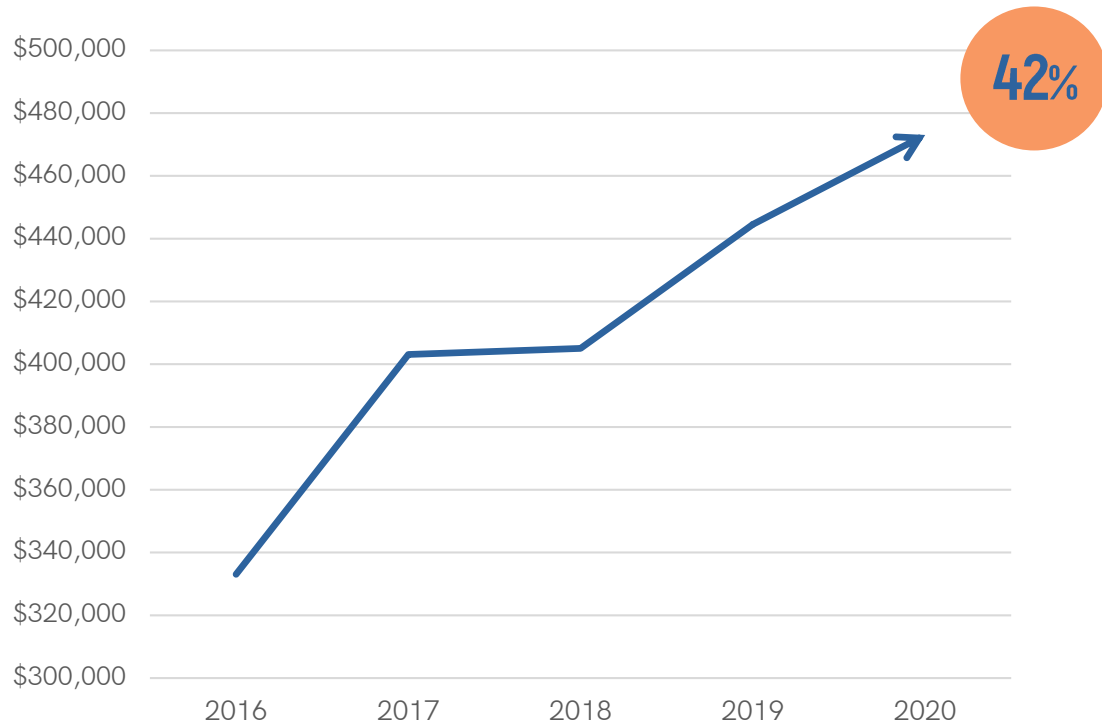
This represents an over **37%** increase between 2021 and 2051, or approximately **182,000** additional people.

Historic and Projected Population Growth in Niagara
from 1991 to 2051



housing trends

Average Market Prices in Niagara
from 2016 to 2020, CANCEA



Increased housing prices places further pressure on rates of **core housing need**. Core housing need refers to households that either:

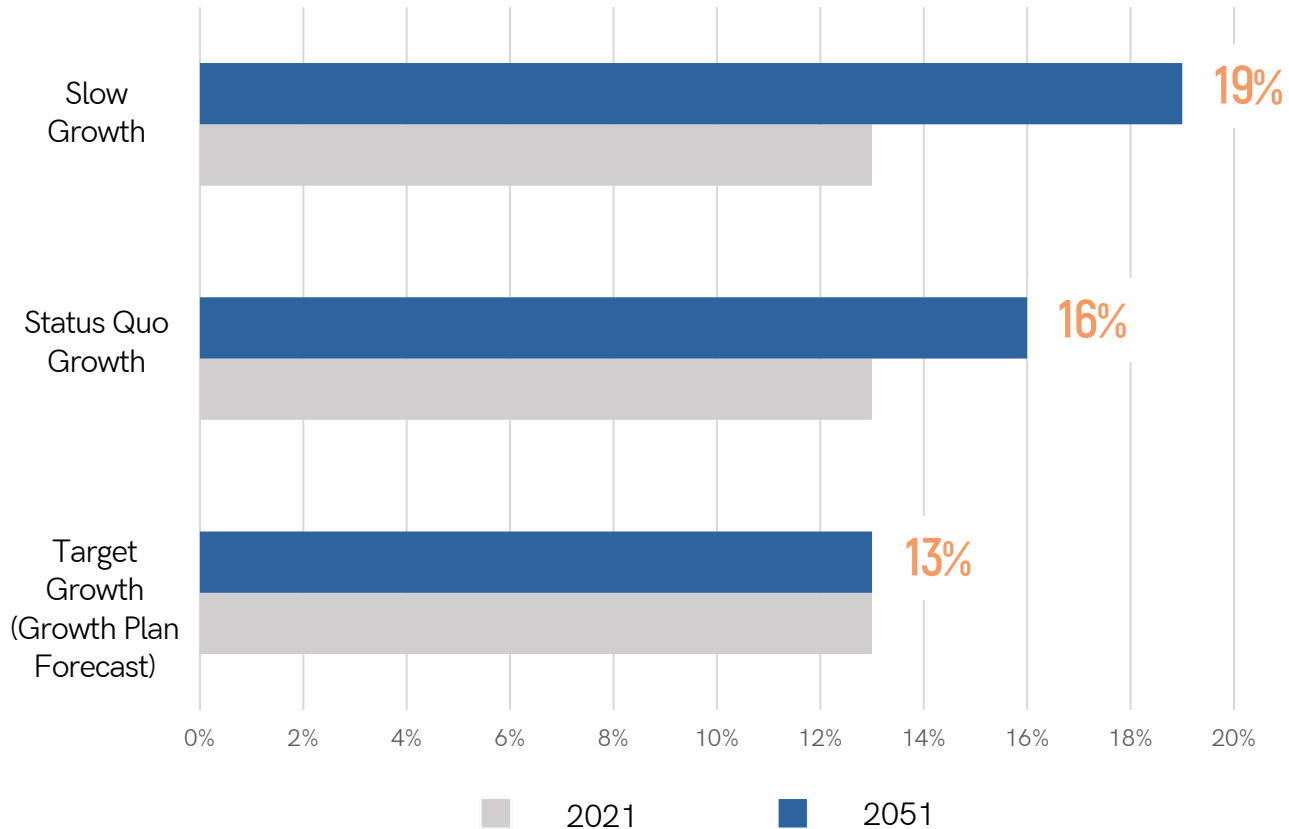
- 1 are in need of major repair
- 2 do not have enough bedrooms to house residents
- 3 costs more than 30% of annual household income

In Niagara, core housing need is primarily driven by affordability. **As of 2016, the overall rate of core housing need in Niagara is 13%.**



housing affordability

Rates of Core Housing Need Under
Different Growth Scenarios, CANCEA



We need to build more housing or core housing need will get worse.

Achieving the Growth Plan's minimum forecasts will help to maintain the Region's rates of core housing need.



housing affordability



HOUSING DIVERSITY

Higher-density housing forms will provide more affordable options and age-in-place opportunities.



STRATEGIC GROWTH

Directing growth strategically will encourage intensification and more affordable housing options.



HOUSING COORDINATION

Targets and objectives can be implemented through the Niagara Official Plan and local intensification and housing strategies.

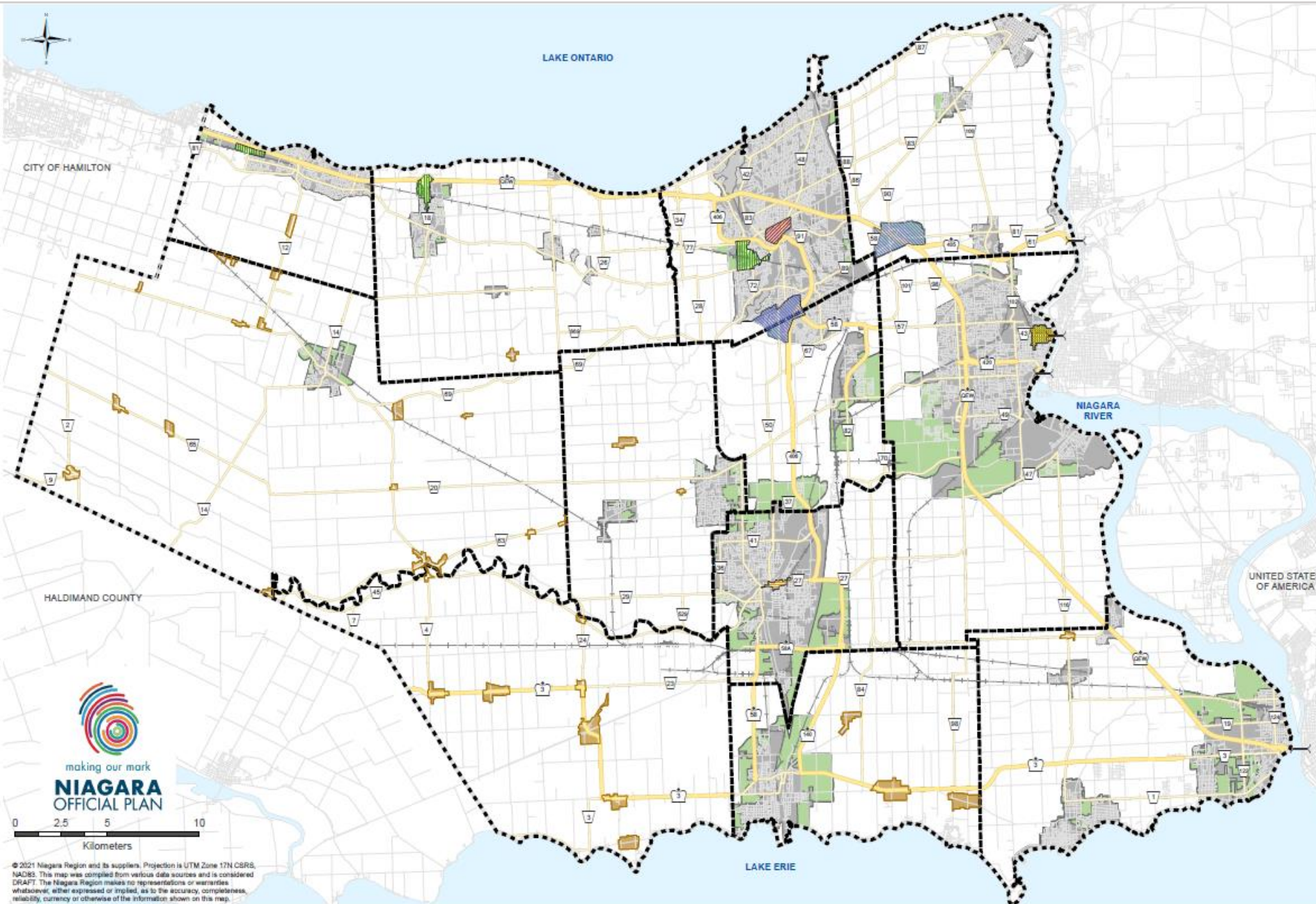












creating complete communities.

Proactive planning can allow for the creation of complete communities, which provide affordable, sustainable, and vibrant places to live, work, shop and access services in close proximity to one another.

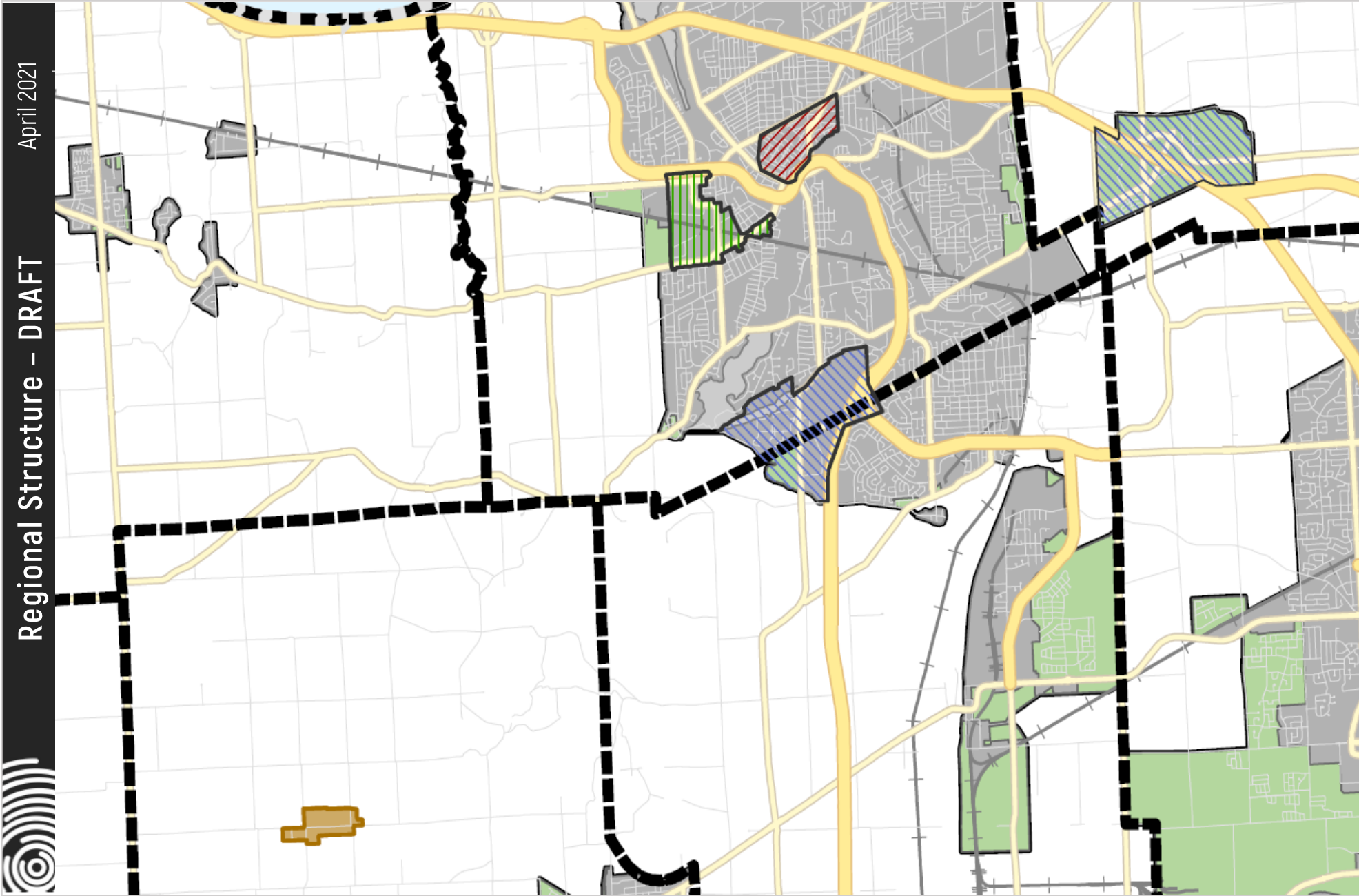




LEGEND

-  Built-Up Area
-  Designated Greenfield Area
-  Rural Settlements
-  Rural Area
- Strategic Growth Areas**
-  Regional Growth Centre
-  District Plan Area
-  Major Transit Station Area
-  Urban Growth Centre





LEGEND

-  Built-Up Area
-  Designated Greenfield Area
-  Rural Settlements
-  Rural Area

Strategic Growth Areas

-  Regional Growth Centre
-  District Plan Area
-  Major Transit Station Area
-  Urban Growth Centre





The majority of the Region's forecasted growth will be directed to the Urban Area, **with 56% directed to existing Built-Up Areas.**

This exceeds the current target of 40%. It also exceed the minimum of 50% required by the Growth Plan.

More intensification means less land is needed in the Designated Greenfield Area and for settlement area boundary expansions.



strategic growth areas

There are four kinds of Strategic Growth Areas (SGA) identified. Combined, these areas are anticipated to accommodate **approximately 30% of the Region's growth**.

MAJOR TRANSIT STATION AREAS

minimum density target
125 people and jobs/ha



REGIONAL GROWTH CENTRES

minimum density target
125 people and jobs/ha



DISTRICT PLAN AREAS

minimum density target
100 people and jobs/ha



URBAN GROWTH CENTRE

minimum density target
150 people and jobs/ha



implementation tools



District and Secondary Plans

Neighbourhood level plans that envision the types of land uses to be developed within a specified area, and the improvements needed to realize that vision.



Urban Design

Policies and/or guidelines that outline the scale, materials, and standards used for a community's built form, streetscape, and public realm.



Intensification Strategies

Policies that identify priority areas for development within a municipality in line with the Regional Structure and the corresponding intensification rate.



Monitoring and Indicators

Metrics that will measure the success of the Official Plan's intensification rates, density targets, and other objectives.



growth outcomes



Affordable housing opportunities.



Climate change adaptation and mitigation.



Efficient use of infrastructure.



Investments in public amenities.



Protection of natural and rural systems.



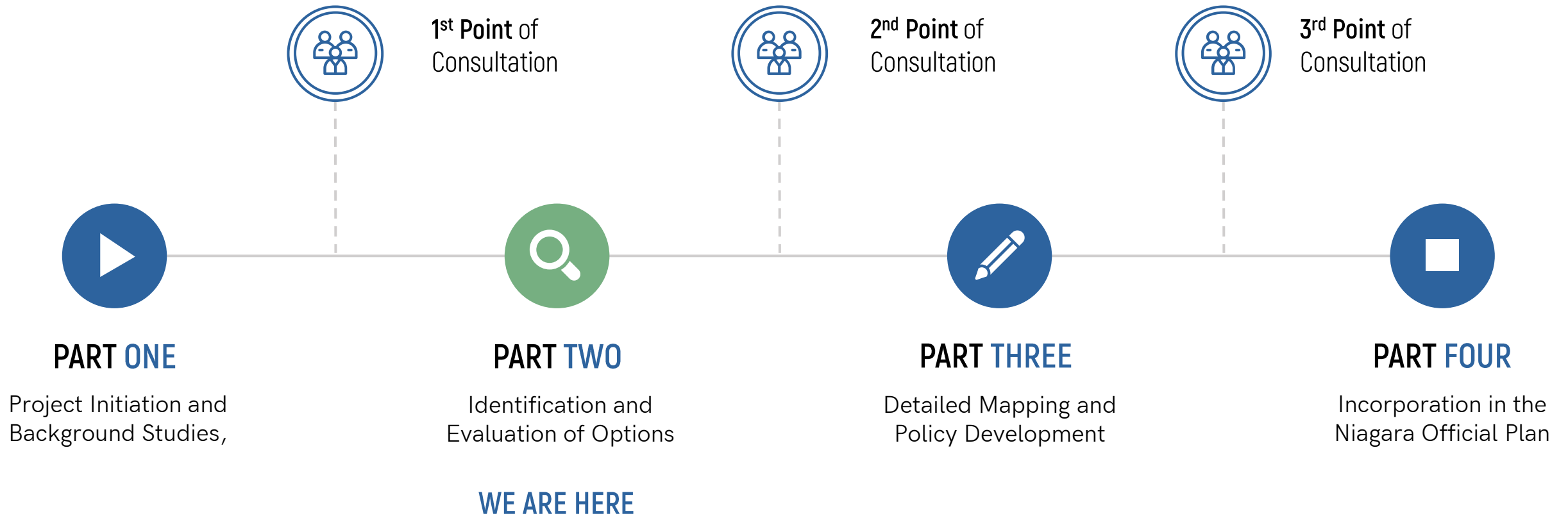
Support for economic development.



The Region will **maintain & enhance ecological health and biodiversity.**

Niagara is the most biodiverse region in Ontario. It is imperative that we protect our natural environment system for the overall health of our ecosystem, and to improve and maintain a high quality of life for our communities.

project overview



NES consultation breakdown



individual points of
engagement

8 public
information
centres

7 stakeholder
meetings
held

6 reports to
regional
council

plus several meetings and presentations to:

Local Councils and Local Staff

Indigenous Groups

Region's Planning Advisory
Committee (PAC)

Agricultural Policy and Action
Committee (APAC)

Niagara Parks Commission

Provincial Ministries

Niagara Escarpment Commission

NPCA Board, Staff and PAC



options development



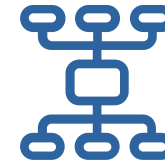
PROVINCIAL REQUIREMENTS

All options conform to Provincial requirements and could be implemented.



IMPROVE EXISTING SYSTEM

All options represent an increase as compared to the existing system in Niagara.



RANGE OF CONSIDERATIONS

Options reflect various factors, including interaction with the agricultural system.



FEEDBACK CONSIDERED

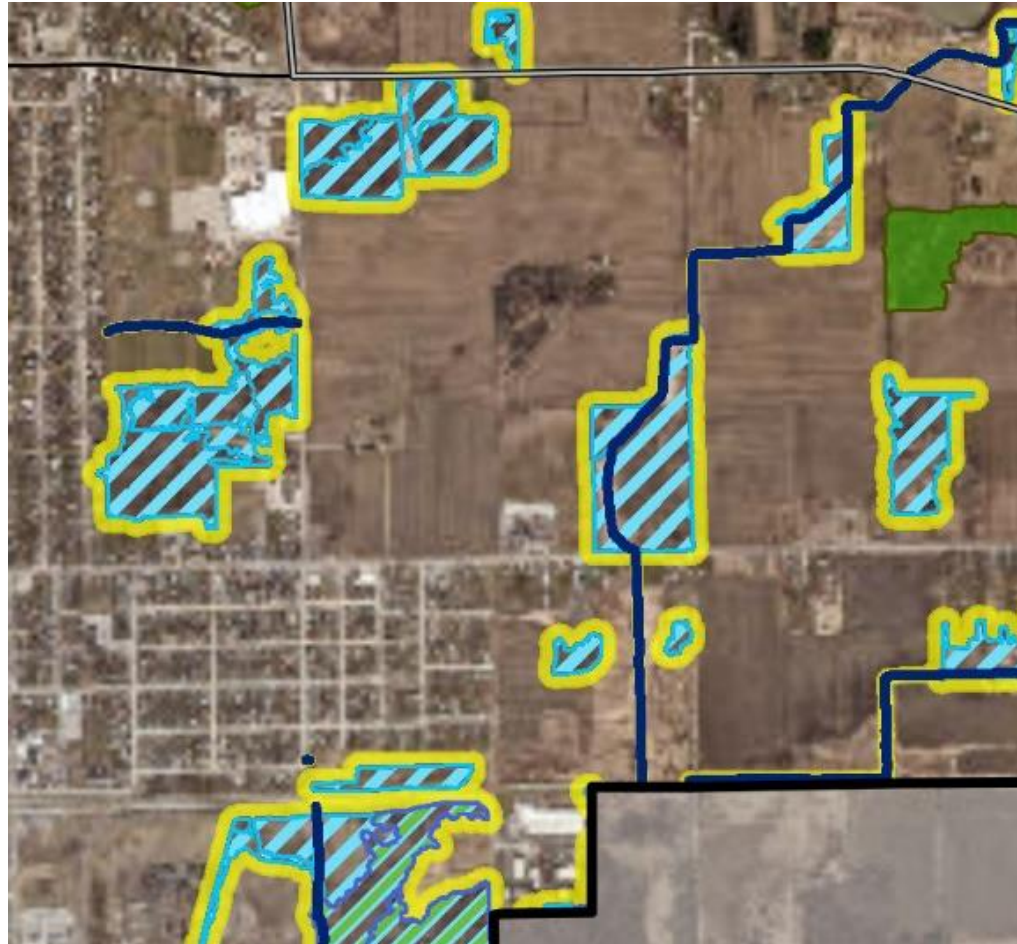
Options have been refined based on public and stakeholder feedback.



options breakdown

LEGEND

- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Other Wetlands
- Buffers
- Permanent and Intermittent Streams
- Other Woodlands
- Small Linkages
- Municipal Boundary



Option 1

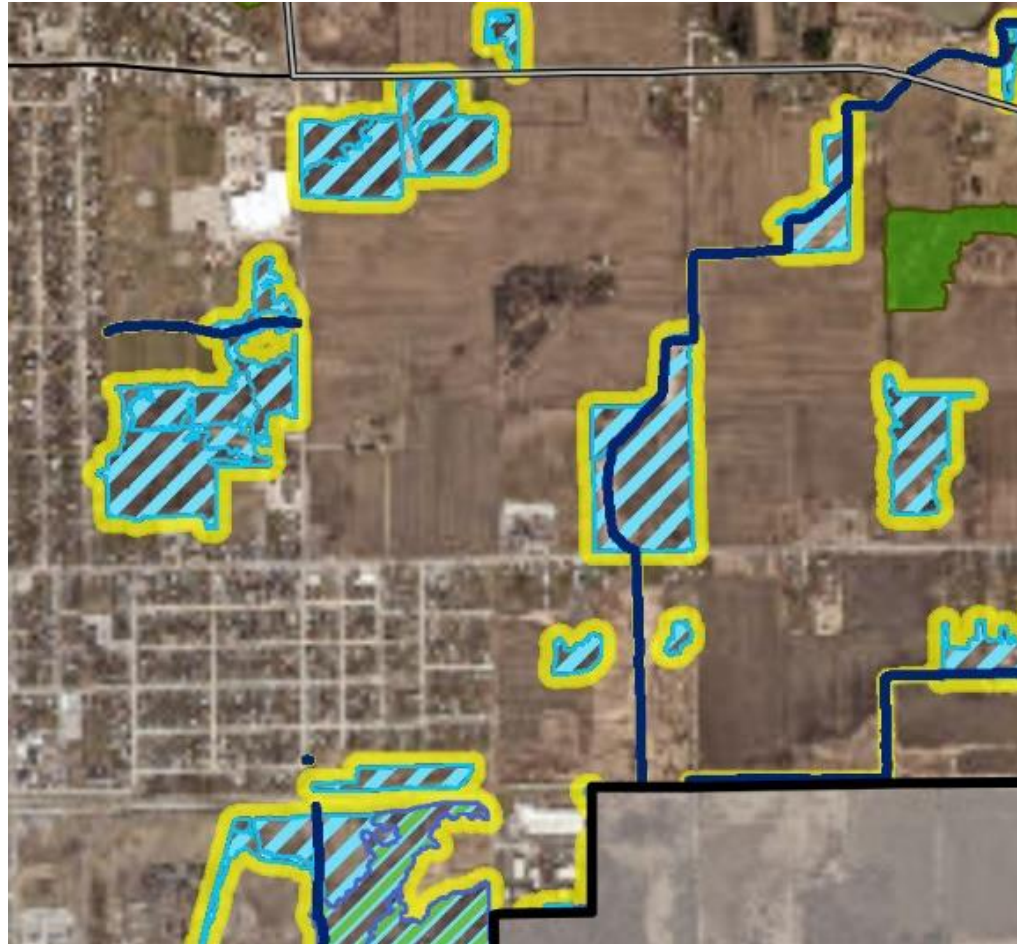
- ✓ Implements the required Provincial standards, including mapping of key features.
- ✓ Relies on the provincial NHS to fulfil the requirements for a 'system-based' approach.
- ✓ The entire system would be an overlay in the Niagara Official Plan schedules.



options breakdown

LEGEND

- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Other Wetlands
- Buffers
- Permanent and Intermittent Streams
- Other Woodlands
- Small Linkages
- Municipal Boundary



Option 2

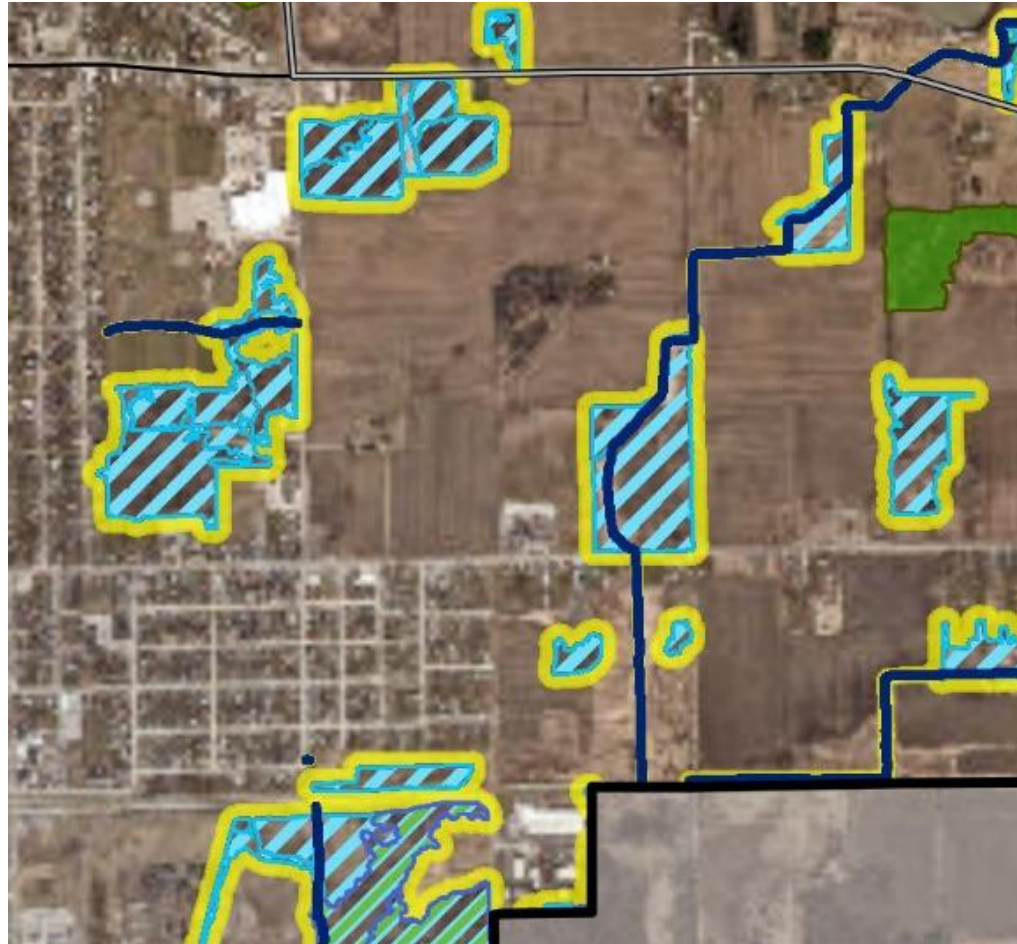
- ✓ Same as **Option 1** but key features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use in the Niagara Official Plan schedules.



options breakdown

LEGEND

- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Other Wetlands
- Buffers
- Permanent and Intermittent Streams
- Other Woodlands
- Small Linkages
- Municipal Boundary



Option 3A

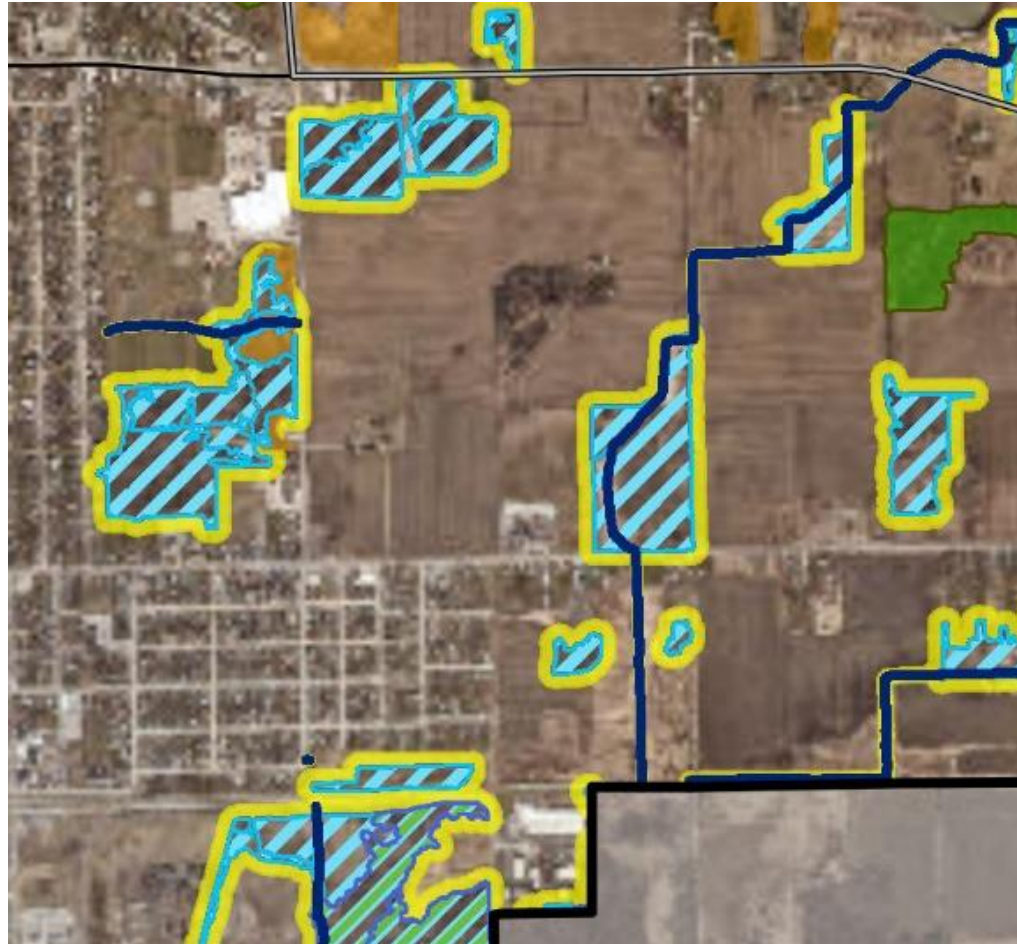
- ✓ Same as **Options 1 and 2** in Urban Areas.
- ✓ Additional features and areas added in rural areas only.



options breakdown

LEGEND

- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Other Wetlands
- Buffers
- Permanent and Intermittent Streams
- Other Woodlands
- Small Linkages
- Municipal Boundary



Option 3B

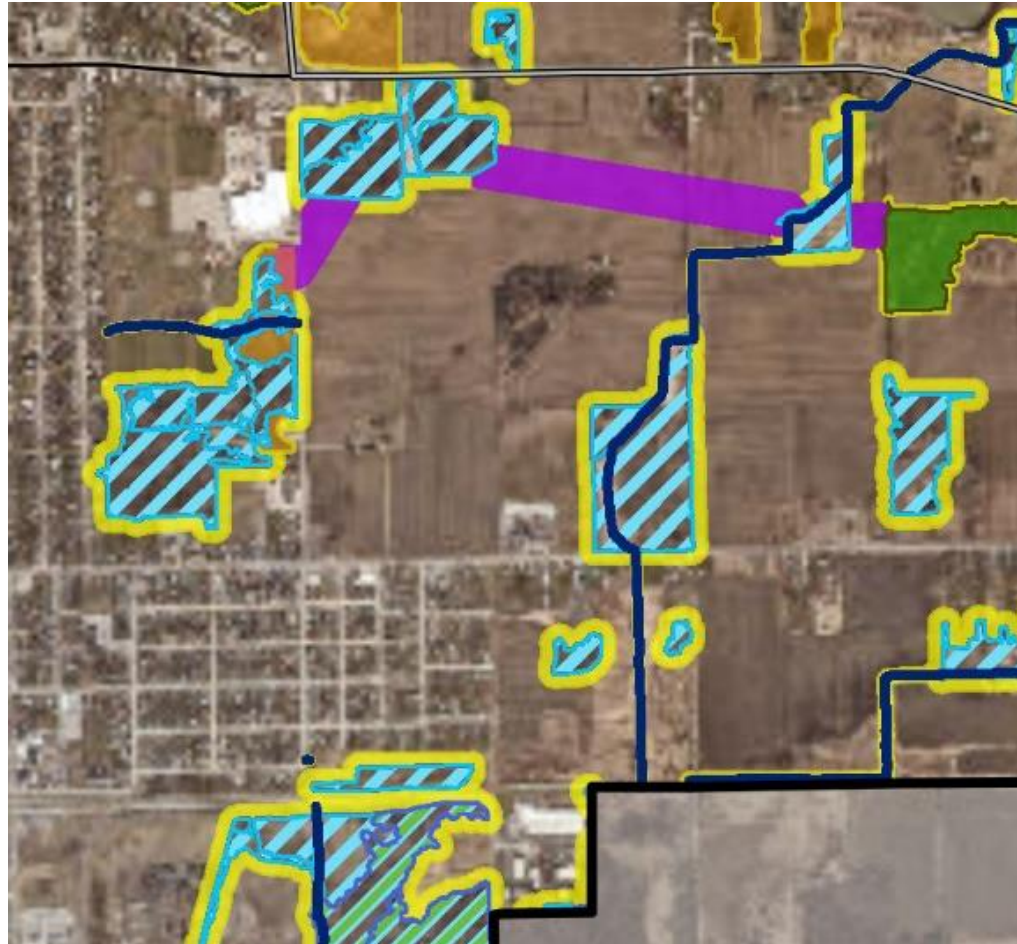
- ✓ Builds on **Options 3A**.
- ✓ Introduces Other Woodlands into Urban Areas.
- ✓ Additional optional features in rural areas.



options breakdown

LEGEND

- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Other Wetlands
- Buffers
- Permanent and Intermittent Streams
- Other Woodlands
- Small Linkages
- Municipal Boundary



Option 3C

- ✓ Builds on **Option 3B**.
- ✓ Introduces small linkages in Urban Areas.
- ✓ Introduces buffers on non-regulated features in Urban Areas.
- ✓ Introduces supporting features and areas (including enhancement areas) in Urban Areas.



REGIONAL OPTIONS COMPARISON – KEY NATURAL HERITAGE AND HYDROLOGIC FEATURES

	Options 1, 2, and 3A		Option 3B		Option 3C	
Feature	Hectares	% of Urban Area	Hectares	% of Urban Area	Hectares	% of Urban Area
Significant Woodlands	1592.6	4.6%	1592.6	4.6%	1592.6	4.6%
Significant Wetland	1486.2	4.3%	1486.2	4.3%	1486.2	4.3%
Life Science ANSI	28.4	0.1%	28.4	0.1%	28.4	0.1%
Earth Science ANSI	45.7	0.1%	45.7	0.1%	45.7	0.1%
Other Wetlands	1309.1	3.8%	1309.1	3.8%	1309.1	3.8%
Permanent and Intermittent Streams (Lines)	30.25	N/A	30.25	N/A	30.25	N/A
Permanent and Intermittent Streams (Polygons)	773.0	2.2%	773.0	2.2%	773.0	2.2%
Other Woodlands	N/A	N/A	548.2	1.6%	548.2	1.6%
Linkages	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	34.2	0.1%
Buffers	2192.2	6.3%	2101.3	6.1%	2587.0	7.5%
Total	7250.7	21.0%	7677.7	22.2%	8194.7	23.7%

Mapping was prepared for the purpose of comparing options. **This is not the final mapping.**

next steps

1

Decision on the Natural Environment System Option.

2

Work with local municipalities to map selected option.

3

Hold public and stakeholder consultation

4

Finalize detailed policies and mapping.





coordination with growth management.

The sooner the Natural Environment System is established, the sooner natural features and areas can be better managed and protected. That will help determine where growth can be accommodated outside of those areas.



recommended NES Option 3B

1

Exceeds the
required provincial
standards.

2

Allows local
municipalities to
plan based on
local context.

3

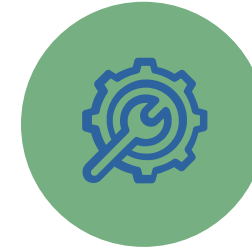
Balances feedback
received through
engagement.





There will be changes to environmental planning in the Region based on Provincial policy, including:

- ✓ The need for a systems based approach to natural environment planning.
- ✓ The need for a comprehensive water resource system.
- ✓ The identification of the Growth Plan Natural Heritage System.



Regardless of the options selected the following improvements should also be anticipated:

- ✓ Significantly improved mapping of the natural environment system.
- ✓ Modernized definitions, criteria, and methodology for the identification of environmental features
- ✓ Better alignment with the regulations and land use policies of the NPCA.
- ✓ Improved and more understandable policy.

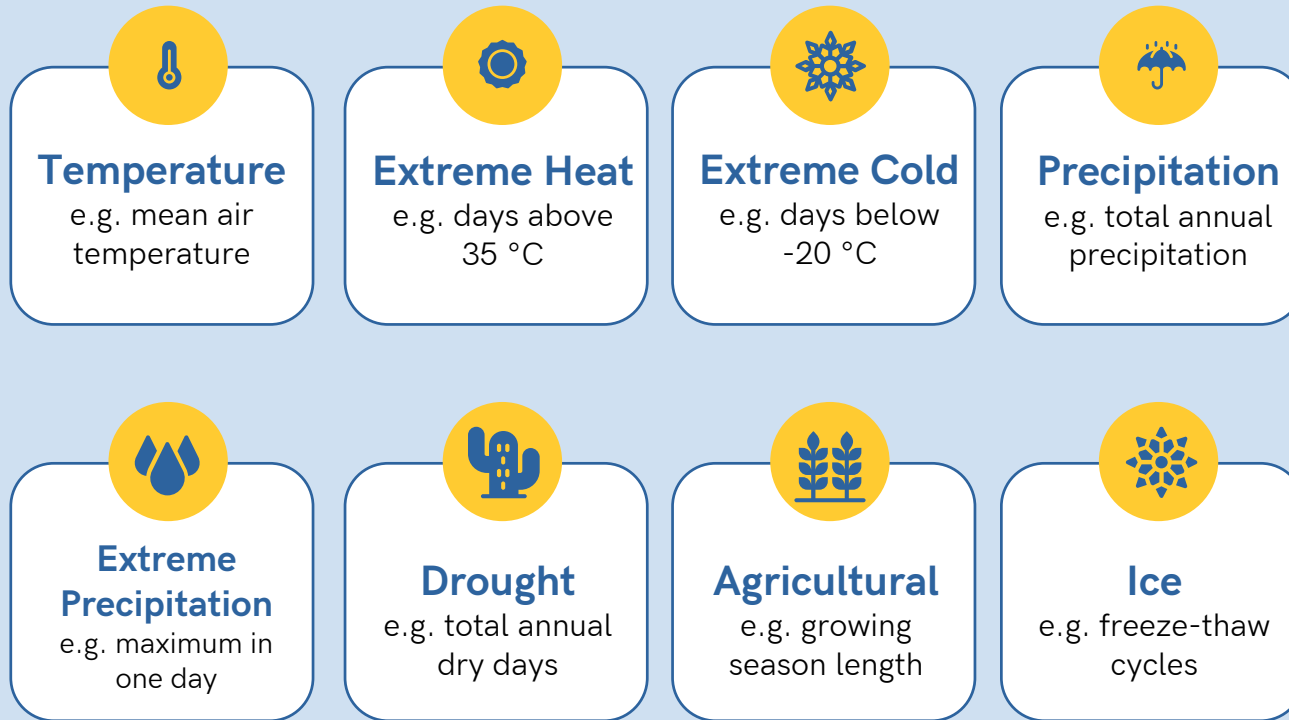


The Region will **create resiliency for our changing climate.**

Climate change will result in increasingly unpredictable and extreme weather events. We need to consider how we can manage and mitigate their impacts in order to secure long-term health and well-being for our communities, and to protect investments in the region's infrastructure and built form.



climate change modelling



Q2 to Q3

1

Milestone: Produce climate analyses.

2

Milestone: Produce guidance document.

Q3 to Q4

3

Milestone: Knowledge transfer session.

Q4

4

Final: Prepare final report and climate data.



climate change policies

The policies of the Official Plan and associated strategies will identify ways in which we adapt to and mitigate the impacts of a changing climate.

- ✔ Integrating low impact development and green infrastructure into new development.
- ✔ Providing opportunities for the use of public transit and active transportation.
- ✔ Enhancing natural features that help to store greenhouse gas emissions.
- ✔ Building flood defences and planning for higher temperatures.



greening initiative

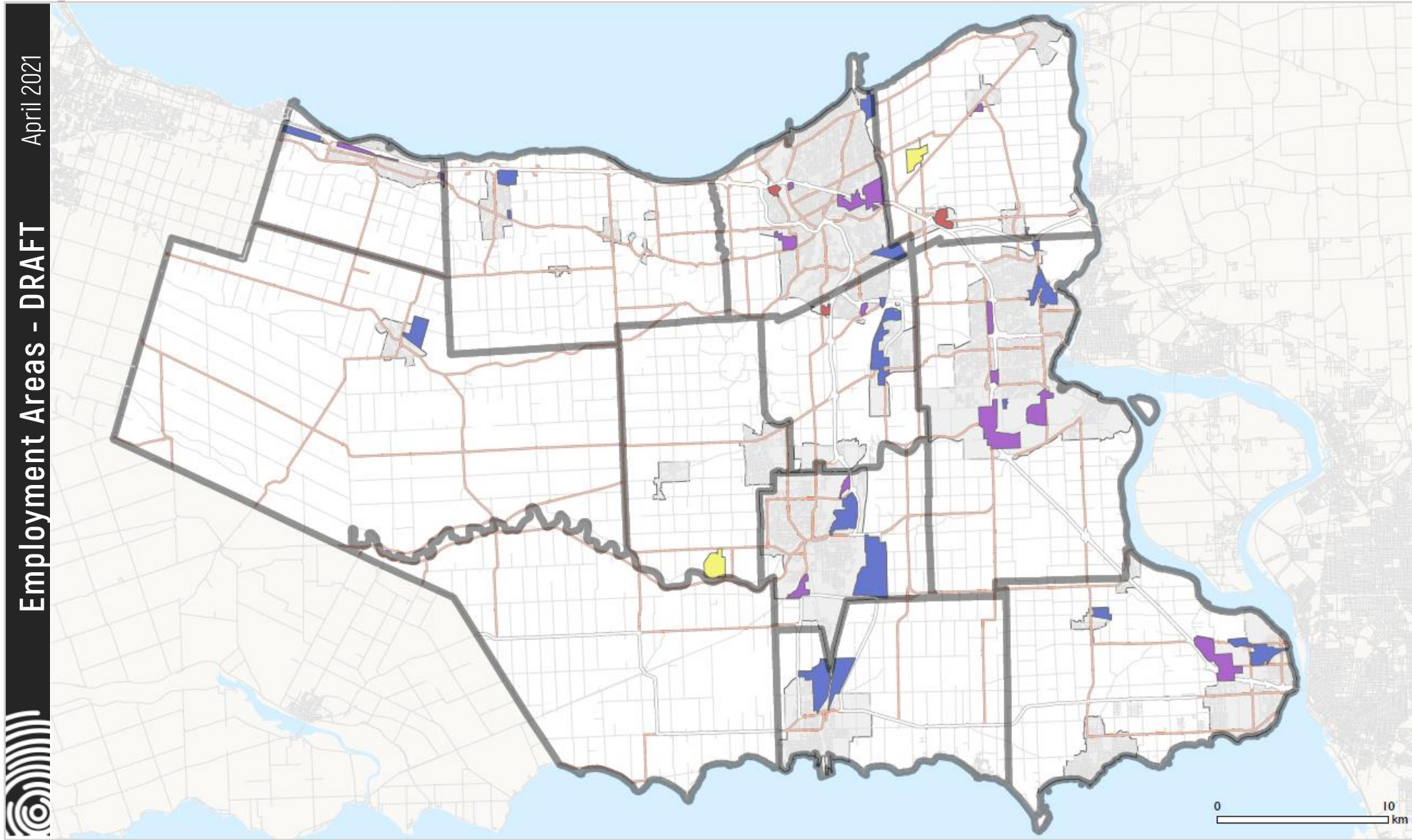
- Interest expressed by members of the public and Council.
- Initiative will extend beyond the timeline for the Niagara Official Plan.
- Researching program options to increase tree coverage across Niagara.
- Working with NPCA to identify publically owned restoration sites to prioritize.
- Working group formed to assist with research and development of options.



The Region will **support economic competitiveness & diversity.**

Economic development is a key driver of regional prosperity. We must consider the needs of key economic sectors in the Region, including agriculture and manufacturing, and how land use tools can be used to attract and retain these industries.





LEGEND

-  Core Employment Areas
-  Dynamic Employment Areas
-  Knowledge & Innovation Employment Areas
-  Airport Lands



aggregates policy direction

MARKET ACCESS

Aggregates shall be made available as close to markets as possible



DEMONSTRATED NEED

No requirement to demonstrate 'need' when considering an mineral aggregate operation.



ADVERSE IMPACTS

Extraction must minimize social, economic, and environmental impacts



LAND USE PROTECTION

Need to protect existing operations from incompatible land uses



DEPOSIT PROTECTION

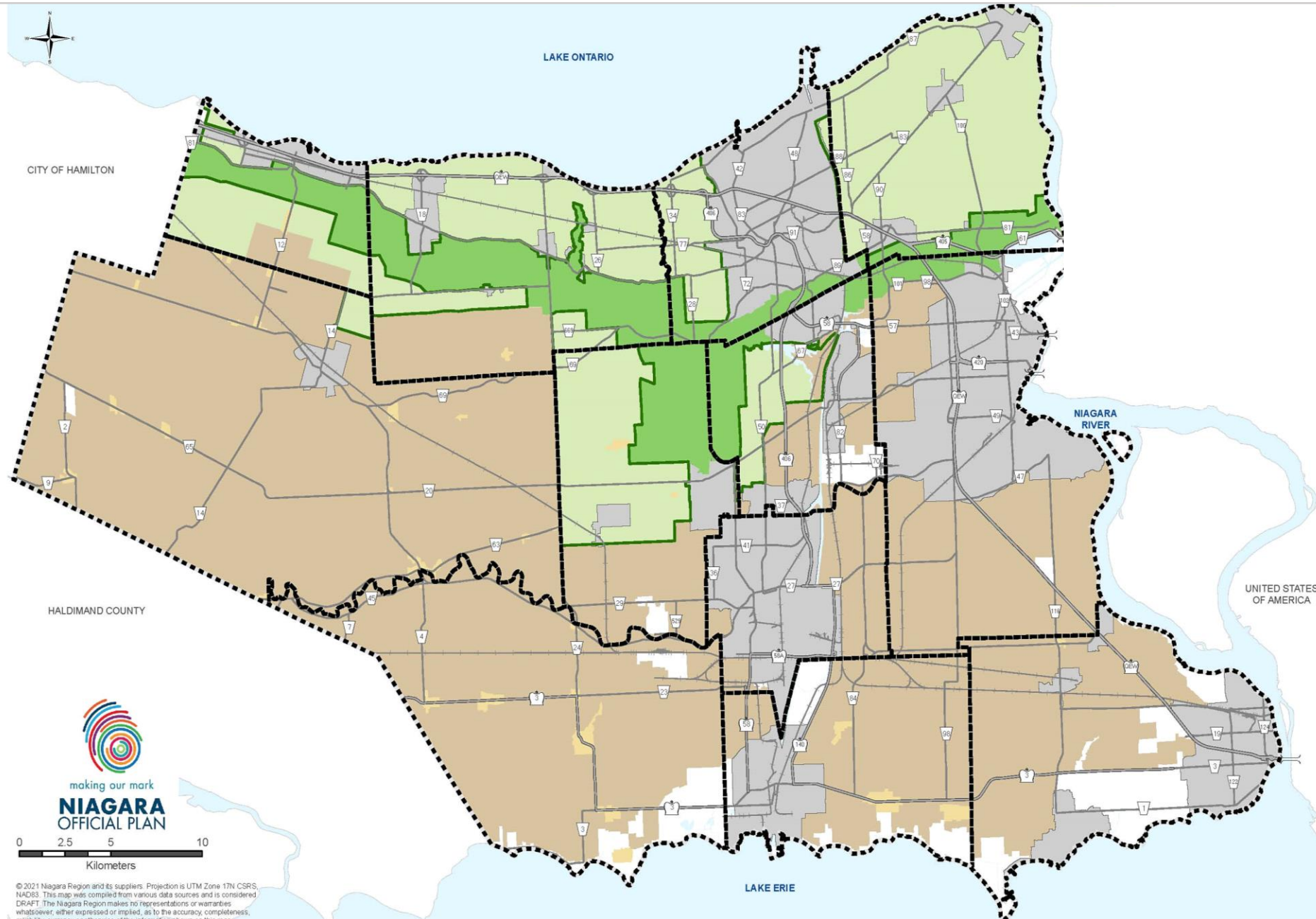
Need to protect known deposits of mineral aggregates for long-term use



REHABILITATION PLANNING

Importance of rehabilitation planning, including progressive and comprehensive rehabilitation





LEGEND

- Greenbelt Plan
- NEP Area Agricultural Land Base
- Specialty Crop Area
- Prime Agricultural Area
- Rural Area
- Urban Area
- Rural Settlement



making our mark
NIAGARA
OFFICIAL PLAN

0 2.5 5 10
Kilometers

© 2021 Niagara Region and its suppliers. Projection is UTM Zone 17N CSRS, NAD83. This map was compiled from various data sources and is considered DRAFT. The Niagara Region makes no representations or warranties whatsoever, either expressed or implied, as to the accuracy, completeness, availability, or suitability of this information for any purpose.



land needs assessment



We must follow a Land Needs Methodology released by the Province, including focus on market demand.



The Land Needs Assessment is informed by data from specific background studies.



It determines how much land is needed to house and employ our future population.

The outputs of the Land Needs Assessment are based on the recommendations of various strategies.

- ✓ Population Forecasts
- ✓ Housing Forecasts
- ✓ Employment Forecasts
- ✓ Intensification Rates
- ✓ Density Targets
- ✓ Employment Area Boundaries
- ✓ Employment Area Supply
- ✓ Non-Development Natural Heritage Areas
- ✓ Vacant Employment Area (ha)
- ✓ Vacant Community Area (ha)



draft results land need

An addition of **460 hectares** of Community Area
and a surplus of **20 hectares** of Employment Land.

	Existing Area (ha)	Existing % of Total*	Potential Addition (ha)	Change in Total Area (%)
Settlement Area	35,962	19%	+460	1%
Growth Plan Prime Agricultural Area	95,481	52%	+3,300	4%
Greenbelt Protected Countryside	43,542	24%	+1,393 (set)	3%

Also an addition
of 38,000+ ha of
Provincial Natural
Heritage System

*other designations represent approximately 5% of total



settlement area expansions

- Draft processes and criteria are included.
- The criteria considers the NES in determining where expansions can occur.
- Expansions are not permitted in the Greenbelt Plan area.
- Draft results suggest potential needs in Niagara Falls, West Lincoln, and Fort Erie.
- Recommendations on the Land Needs and Settlement Area Boundary Review will be made in **Summer and Fall 2021**.





The Official Plan is outdated.

Updates are needed to secure future prosperity and address modern challenges.



Increase housing supply.

The Region has a significant affordability problem. More housing is needed, particularly higher-density housing.



A balanced approach.

The Official Plan balances feedback received with best practices and Provincial policy.



A decision on the NES is needed.

Staff require direction on the NES to proceed with detailed policy & mapping development.



Everything is still draft.

Draft policies on various parts of the Official Plan are available for review and comment.



Consultation is a key component.

To date, staff have undertaken significant consultation. More consultation is planned for Summer and Fall 2021.

