

# Niagara's Natural Environment System

Niagara Regional Council

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# Where Are We Today?

- Natural Heritage Systems are well established critical infrastructure in Ontario municipalities for over a decade
- Niagara's natural heritage is fragmented and degraded
  - NPCA report cards show no improvement in past 10 years
- We are 10 years behind other municipalities
- Number of our municipalities are declaring climate emergencies and at the Region we have no climate change policies to support them
- Niagara has the second lowest amount of parkland per capita in the GTHA.
- Covid has exacerbated the demand for more greenspaces where people live
- Municipalities will have a critical role in meeting newly announced greenhouse gas emission reduction targets
- Today's decision will influence the next 50 years

# Regional Responsibility

## EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

### Chapter 2 – Section 2. REGIONAL STRUCTURE

#### SUMMARY

The Regional Structure is the basis for growth management in Niagara. It provides direction on critical factors needed to allocate population and employment forecasts within Urban Areas and Rural Settlements.

The Regional Structure will **coordinate** and support a range of land use considerations, including: investments in infrastructure and public service facilities; the protection of employment areas and agricultural lands; the creation of sustainable and resilient communities; and the **preservation of key natural heritage and water resource systems**.

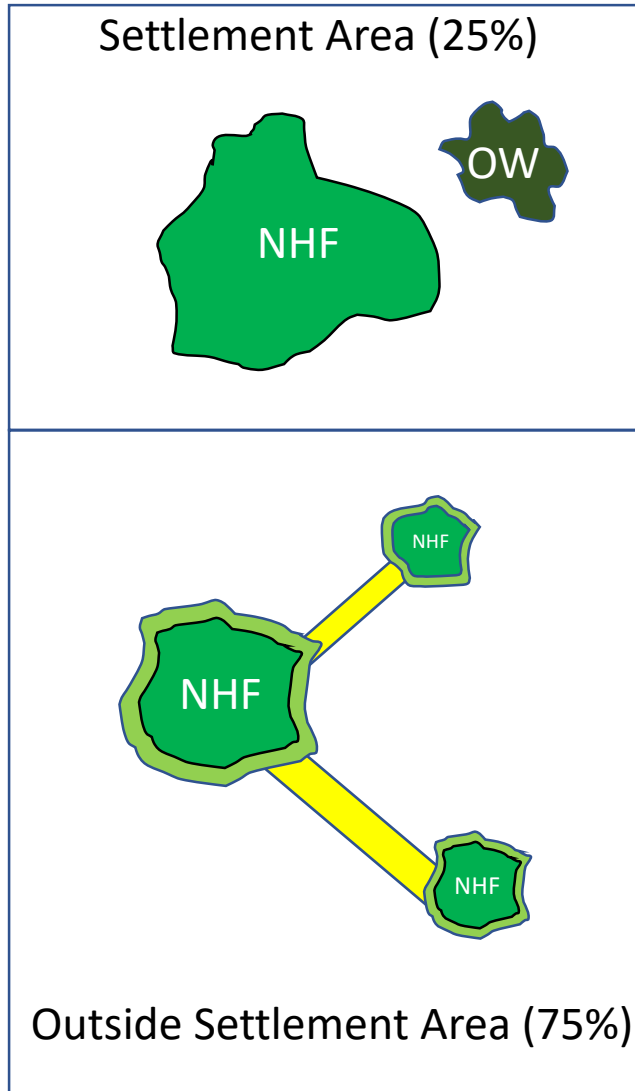
Schedule B identifies the land use components that comprise the Regional Structure, including Settlement Area boundaries. **The Regional Structure is used to determine where forecasted growth will and will not be directed.**

# Natural Heritage System

P.P.S. 2014	Growth Plan 2017	Greenbelt Plan 2017
<p>NHS means a system made up of natural heritage features and areas and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species, and ecosystems. These systems can include natural heritage features and areas, federal and provincial parks and conservation reserves, other natural heritage features, lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, areas that support hydrologic functions, and working landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue.</p>	<p>The system mapped and issued by the Province in accordance with this Plan, comprised of natural heritage features and areas, and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species, and ecosystems. The system can include key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features, federal and provincial parks and conservation reserves, other natural heritage features and areas, lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, associated areas that support hydrologic functions, and working landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue.</p>	<p>The Natural Heritage System includes core areas and linkage areas of the Protected Countryside with the highest concentration of the most sensitive and/or significant natural features and functions.</p>

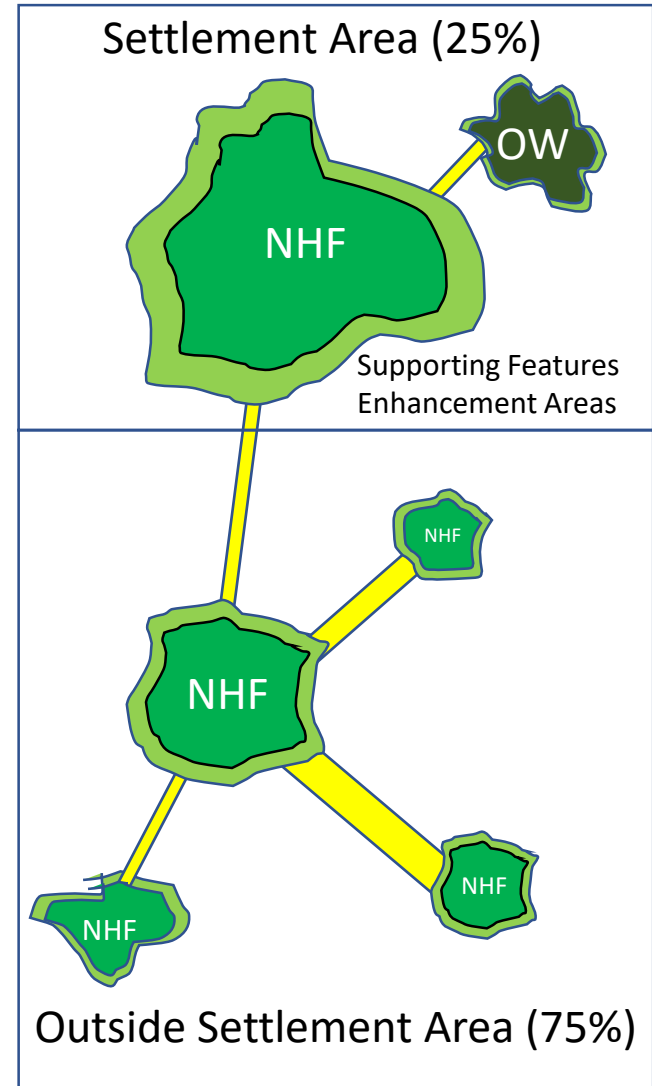
# Option 3B is not a Natural Heritage System

**Option 3B**



NHF – Natural Heritage Feature; OW – Other Woodlands

**Option 3C**

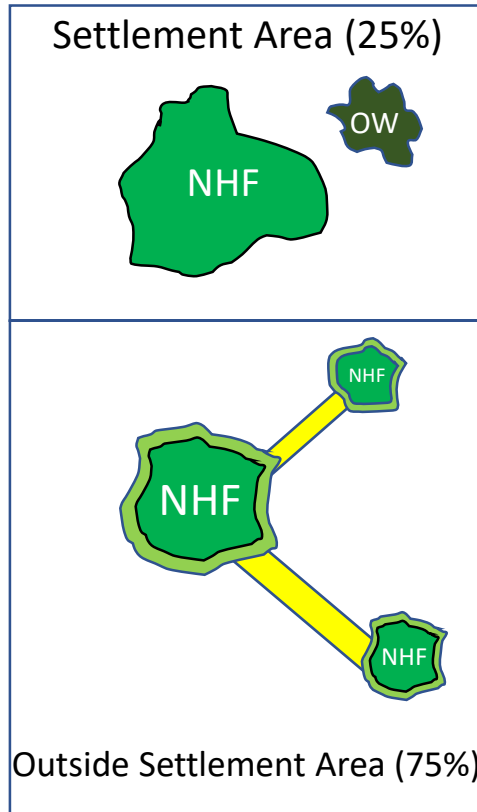


NHF – Natural Heritage Feature; OW – Other Woodlands

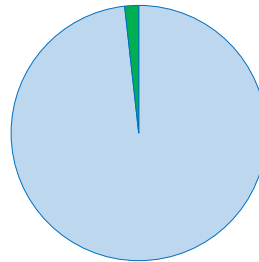


# What's Required to Implement Option 3C?

## Option 3B

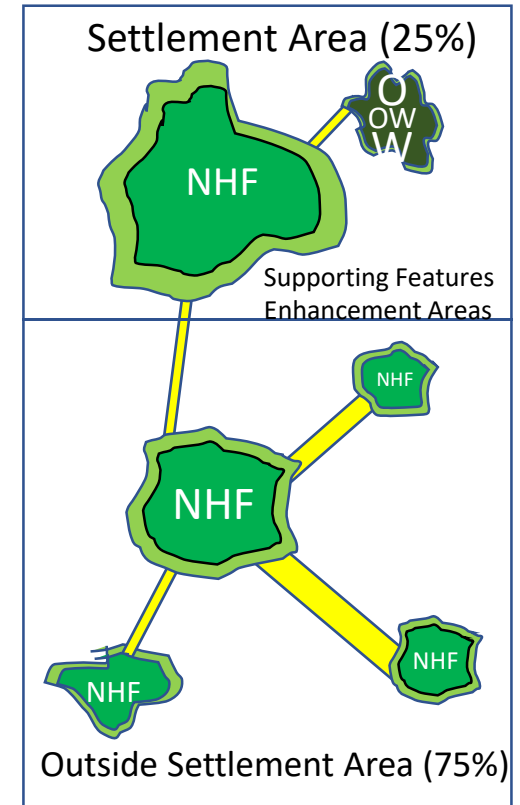


## Investment in Option 3C



517 Hectares or  
1.5% of Total  
Urban Area

## Option 3C



NHF – Natural Heritage Feature; OW – Other Woodlands

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# Public Participation

## Official Plans

While a municipal Official Plan must be consistent with provincial legislation and policies, it is fundamentally the creation of a community and expresses the values of that community with respect to land use and land use management.

## You asked for Public Input – Here it is

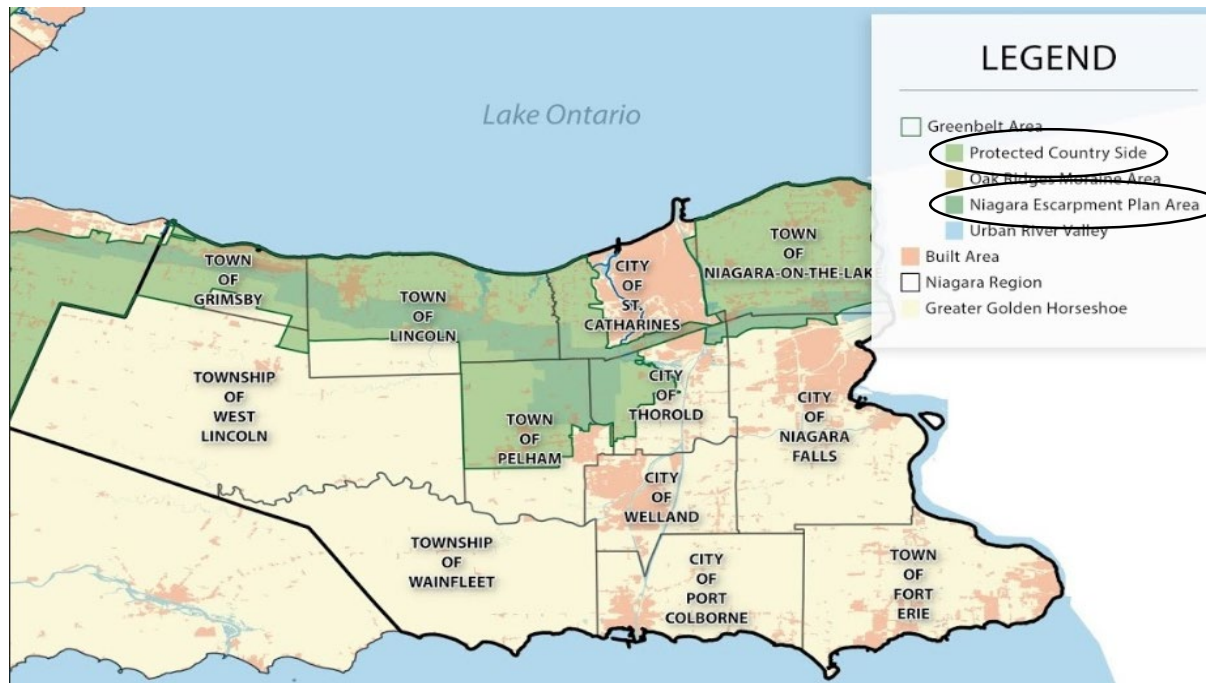
### Environmental Stakeholder Groups:

- Prefer an approach which prioritizes natural heritage and environmental protection in the Region.
- Prefer an approach where natural environment planning in the Region is primarily a science-based exercise.

### Public:

- Generally speaking, prefer an approach with the highest number of optional features and areas to be included in the NHS and WRS.
- Request for goals and objectives to be included as part of the final NHS and WRS.
- Biodiversity loss and climate change were identified as highly important issues.

# Maintain & Enhance Ecological Health and Biodiversity



Already have two systems-based approaches to natural heritage planning at a Regional level

Adding Option 3C will provide an opportunity to protect this environment

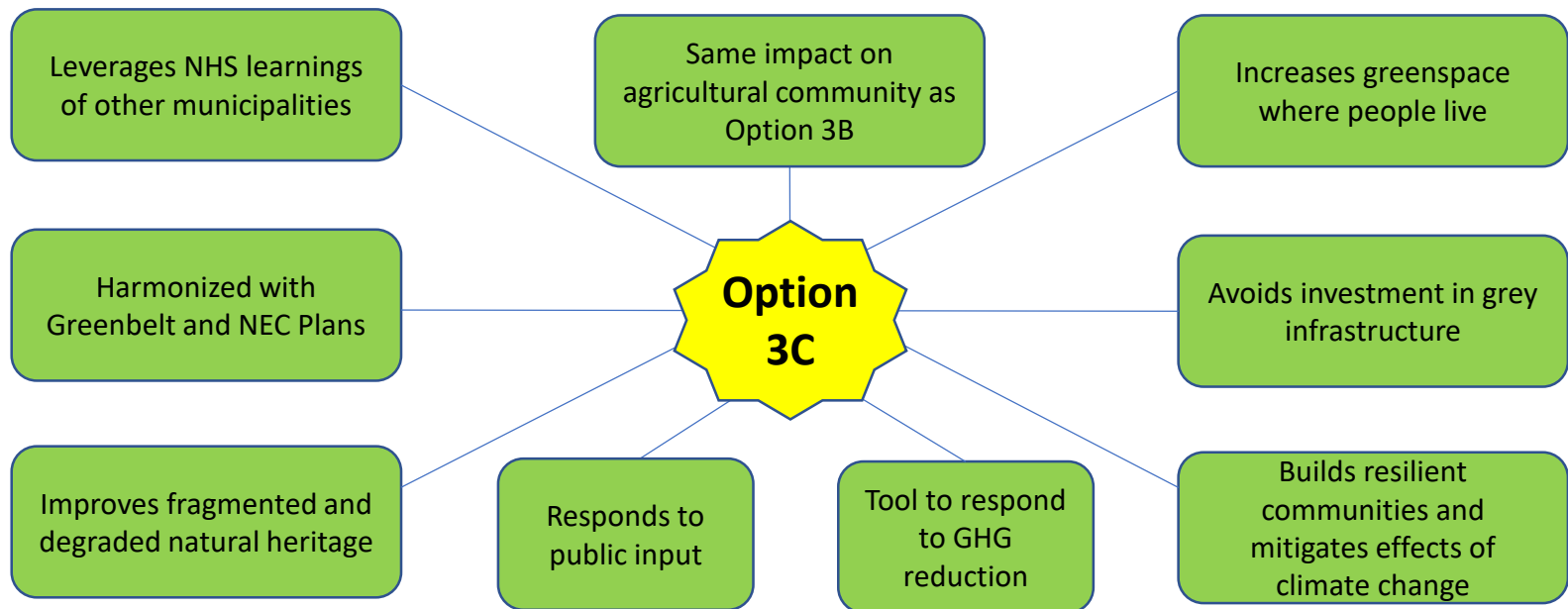
Niagara is the **most biodiverse region in Ontario**. It is imperative that we protect our natural environment system for the overall health of our ecosystem, and to improve and maintain a high quality of life for our communities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CL 11-2021 Thursday, May 20, 2021 6.1. Regional Official Plan Consolidated Policy Report (Minute Item 5.1, Minutes PEDC 5-2021 (Agenda Item 9.6)) Niagara Official Plan Review Presentation Side 20 (page 72 of overall package)



# Conclusions

Option 3C best represents a forward-thinking systems approach since it includes additional linkages and features. Staff identified this as the **best option in Achieving the Vision, Goals and Objectives** of the new N.O.P., with consideration of Regional Council's strategic priorities.<sup>1</sup>



Staff identified **Option 3C** as the best option for ensuring the protection of a region-wide N.H.S, including within settlement areas.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> NEW NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN Natural Environment Work Program: Technical Report #2: Identification and Evaluation of Options for Regional Natural Environment System(s) Options for Regional Natural Environment System – June 2020 page 47



An aerial photograph of a suburban landscape. A river flows from the top center towards the bottom center. To the left of the river, a road runs parallel to it, with houses and trees on either side. To the right of the river, there are more trees and some open fields. The overall scene is lush and green, with many trees and some houses visible.

# Please Select Option 3C

## Thank You