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**Subject:** Niagara Official Plan: Land Needs Assessment and Settlement Area Boundary Review Update

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

**Report date:** Wednesday, August 11, 2021

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## Recommendations

1. That Council **ENDORSE**, in principle, the use of the Made-in-Niagara Forecast and the Revised Land Needs Assessment (Appendix 1 of Report PDS 33-2021), to advance the Niagara Official Plan, the Water and Wastewater Master Plan, the Transportation Master Plan, the Development Charge Background Study and By-law, and other Regional programs; and
2. That Report PDS 33-2021 **BE CIRCULATED** to local area municipalities, partner agencies and the Province.

## Key Facts

- This report recommends a “Made-in-Niagara” growth forecast to 2051. The Forecast is a land needs assessment (“LNA”) derived from the Provincial Land Needs Methodology. The Region must conform to the Provincial requirements, including this Methodology.
- The Made-in-Niagara Forecast provides a 2051 population of 694,000 people and 272,000 jobs.
- The Made-in-Niagara Forecast is similar to the previously-released forecast from May 2021, provided in the May Joint Report PDS 17-2021. Population forecasts have increased slightly in two municipalities to account for market demand and provide additional affordable housing options. Importantly, the updates since May are focussed exclusively in built-up areas – not greenfields – meaning that it does not result in additional residential land needed through urban boundary expansions.
- The Made-in-Niagara Forecasts and updated LNA result in a Region-wide net community area land need of 495 Ha and net employment area land need of 210 Ha. The Region-wide intensification rate is 60%, which is 10% greater than the minimum

required. Density is 50 people and jobs per Ha for greenfields and larger densities in the Region's Strategic Growth Areas.

- Feedback was carefully considered in making this recommendation. Staff have considered other key interests, like the Natural Environment System ("NES"), agricultural system, and affordability.
- The Forecasts need to be endorsed in principle at this time. These are used to make decisions about changes to urban and rural boundaries (called the Settlement Area Boundary Review or "SABR"). They are also used as part of the Niagara 2051 program to inform the Water/Wastewater Master Servicing Plan and Transportation Master Plan. The Region's infrastructure is paid for through Development Charges based on this information.
- Changes to municipal boundaries through the SABR can only occur as part of the Region's new Official Plan (with very limited exceptions). Staff need endorsement of the Made-in-Niagara Forecasts to move forward with the SABR. No decisions on SABR itself are requested now - that will be reported on further this Fall.
- The Forecasts and updated LNA are sought for endorsement in principle to allow the programs noted above to move forward. Adjustments to the forecasts are likely, prior to finalizing, to reflect any recommended employment conversions and other matters. This will be provided for consideration at a future Council meeting.

## **Financial Considerations**

There are no financial considerations directly related to this report. However, as described below, a decision on the Made-in-Niagara Forecast is critical to establishing the 2022 Development Change By-law where growth-related costs are recovered.

This report is prepared as part of the Niagara Official Plan ("NOP") program. Council approved the resources to complete the NOP over a 5 year period as part of the 2017 Budget Process.

The growth forecasts identified here will be used in the upcoming revisions to the Water and Wastewater Master Servicing Plan ("MSP"), Transportation Master Plan ("TMP") and Development Charges Study ("DCS"). Those studies identify projects to be built based on the growth forecasts.

The DCS sets out a calculation of how all or a portion of those costs can be recovered through development charges. The Development Charge By-law must be passed in advance of current by-law expiry in August 2022. The Made-in-Niagara Forecasts are needed at this time for the inputs to the Development Charges work so that program can be advanced in time for the August 2022 deadline.

## **Analysis**

On May 20, 2021, Regional Council received PDS 17-2021 Niagara Official Plan Consolidated Policy Report (the “May Joint Report”). The May Joint Report provided a comprehensive update on the NOP process and draft materials for consultation with local municipalities, stakeholders and public.

Staff asked for feedback by July 2, 2021 so it could be considered as part of this report, among other things. Feedback has been carefully considered and is described further below.

Two separate reports are advanced at this time. This report (PDS 33-2021) relates to the updated Made-in-Niagara forecasts and its relationship to SABR and Niagara 2051.

A second, related report, is PDS 32-2021, provided at this same August 11, 2021 PEDC meeting. That report speaks to the additional work that has occurred relating to other Official Plan matters since the May Joint Report. Although these reports are under separate cover, they have been prepared comprehensively with continued consideration of integrated planning of the new NOP.

At this time, the Region seeks endorsement in principle of the Made-in-Niagara Forecast. This allows the SABR program to move forward, and advancement of the Niagara 2051 work, including the Development Charges By-law.

Adjustments to the forecast and LNA are likely to be proposed prior to finalizing these documents. As described further below, employment conversion requests have not yet been considered. Depending on the outcome of that review, the forecast and LNA may be revised for Council consideration.

Further, the Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology contemplates that final adjustments may be made, after all other steps are undertaken, to account for specific circumstances like vacancy rates, constrained land from infrastructure, lands that may not develop because of landowner choice, and other economic or demographic factors.

Revised forecasts and LNA will be provided to Council in a future report for consideration.

### **Growth Forecast Consultation**

A Place to Grow (2020) (“Growth Plan”) establishes a *minimum* population and employment forecasts for upper- and single-tier municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Region must plan for these minimum forecasts and assign the forecast to local municipalities.

The Region has done significant forecasting work over several years. Most recently, its forecasting work was set out as part of the May Joint Report, PDS 17-2021 [Appendix 3.3](https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-3-3.pdf) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-3-3.pdf>), Growth Allocation Update to 2051 (Hemson, 2021). This work aligned regional forecasts with the recently-released 2020 *Growth Plan* (the “May 2021 Forecast”).

The May 2021 Forecasts distributed the minimum Growth Plan Schedule 3 forecast of 674,000 people and 272,000 jobs throughout Niagara’s 12 municipalities. Forecasts were distributed based on the Preferred Growth Option, established through Niagara 2041 (Niagara 2041: Preferred Growth Option (Hemson, 2019), with revisions made based on the new 2051 planning horizon and emerging development trends. This was based on the 2020 Growth Plan and a newly released Provincial LNA Methodology.

The May 2021 forecasts provided information on housing mix within each municipality and areas within them. This work was done to show how the forecasts represent market-based housing demand and support affordable housing.

The May Joint Report also provided specific data on affordability. Appendix 5.2, Niagara Region Housing Affordability and Growth Plan 2051 (CANCEA, 2021) set out that achieving the minimum Growth Plan forecast of 674,000 people would keep the Region’s Core Housing need at 13%.

The CANCEA conclusion was clear: if the Region grew too slowly, affordability would worsen.

The Region also released its Regional Structure through the May Joint Report. The Regional Structure identified locations and density targets for Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs). SGAs will accommodate a significant amount of growth, support infrastructure investment and contribute to complete communities.

On many occasions before and after the May Joint Report release, the Region met individually with planning staff at each local municipality to discuss growth forecasts, SGAs, intensification rates, densities, and related matters.

Since May 2021, the Region held five public information centres (PICs) and held dozens of meetings with interested parties about these same growth-related matters.

Additionally, the Region progressed on the TMP, MSP, and DCS update. This process involves a Niagara 2051 working group of various staff across many departments and consultation events held in the spring 2021.

Almost all feedback was supportive of the Region's process. The Region received comments on specific aspects of its May 2021 forecasts, with some parties recommending adjustments or changes reflecting a variety of interests.

Importantly, there was general public support, and local planning staff support, of the Region's overall land needs program and the Regional Structure components.

A comment summary of the land needs-related comments is provided in **Appendix 3**. The full set of comments received can be viewed here: [Niagara Official Plan](https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>).

Additional comments, unrelated to land needs, are reported in PDS 32-2021.

Since the release of the May 2021 Forecasts, the Region carefully considered feedback received. Staff also conducted a further review of individual growth areas and existing and proposed development applications. Additional progress on the detailed work towards finalizing the NES has been made since May 2021.

On this basis, Staff recommend two categories of change be made to what was released in May 2021.

The first is additional intensification growth be allocated to Lincoln and Welland.

The second is including the most current information on the NES.

These topics are described in the following sections of this report.

## Summary of Changes to the Land Needs Assessment

The Growth Plan (2020) allows Niagara to use alternative growth forecasts beyond those identified in Growth Plan Schedule 3. The Made-in-Niagara Forecast is an alternative growth forecast.

This alternative growth forecast can be only be advanced by a Region or single-tier government.

Details of the Made-in-Niagara Forecast are provided in **Appendix 1**. This is a revised version of [Appendix 3.2](https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-3-2.pdf) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-3-2.pdf>) of the May Joint Report.

The Province provided three growth scenarios in its draft materials for the 2020 Growth Plan. One of those scenarios was a high growth forecast of 700,000 people for Niagara. At that time, Niagara Region staff supported the high scenario.

The proposed, Made-in-Niagara Forecast of 694,000 people is slightly below this high scenario identified by the Province.

The May 2021 Forecast identified a total population of 674,000 people. The additional 20,000 people above the May 2021 forecast have been allocated to Lincoln and Welland. Lincoln's 2051 population has been revised from 35,660 to 45,660 in the current forecast. Welland's 2051 population has been revised from 73,000 to 83,000.

Based on the analysis and consultation noted in the previous section, the Region proposes the following Preliminary Municipal Growth Allocations: 2021 and 2051 (i.e. the Made-in-Niagara Forecast):

**Table 1: Preliminary Municipal Growth Allocations: 2021 and 2051**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Population 2021</b>	<b>Population 2051</b>	<b>Households 2021</b>	<b>Households 2051</b>	<b>Employment 2021</b>	<b>Employment 2051</b>
Fort Erie	33,930	48,050	14,150	21,510	10,530	17,430
Grimsby	30,300	37,000	11,470	16,070	10,690	14,670
Lincoln	26,860	45,660	9,590	19,405	11,390	15,960
Niagara Falls	97,220	141,650	38,520	58,740	37,780	58,110
Niagara-on-the-Lake	19,970	28,900	7,910	12,500	11,800	16,960
Pelham	19,320	28,830	7,150	11,280	4,810	7,140
Port Colborne	19,250	23,230	8,210	10,500	5,910	7,550
St. Catharines	140,250	171,890	58,550	78,320	61,780	81,010
Thorold	24,440	39,690	9,230	15,660	8,530	12,080
Wainfleet	7,000	7,730	2,580	3,040	1,400	1,830
Welland	56,210	83,000	23,610	37,540	18,030	28,790
West Lincoln	16,370	38,370	5,330	14,060	4,460	10,480
<b>Niagara Region</b>	<b>491,120</b>	<b>694,000</b>	<b>196,300</b>	<b>298,645</b>	<b>187,110</b>	<b>272,000</b>

### **Revised Intensification Rates**

Through the comments received and additional analysis done by the Region, Staff determined that the draft May 2021 Forecasts for Lincoln and Welland were likely to be achieved earlier than set out. In our view, higher forecasts were required to ensure alignment with infrastructure investment and to better align with planned development.

In Lincoln and Welland, the additional growth proposed is within the existing urban, built up areas with development or redevelopment potential. Thus, this is considered “intensification” growth. This kind of development supports a broader, more affordable housing mix of more townhouses and apartment units.

These changes reflect the planned infrastructure to sustain the anticipated growth. The Region seeks to proactively plan to accommodate the growth to ensure communities are more sustainable, better connected, healthy and safe.

As note above, the additional forecasted growth to Lincoln and Welland are within the built-up areas as intensification. In other words, more development is proposed within the existing boundaries. There is no impact to Community Area (residential/mixed use) land need to accommodate this additional population and these changes do not result in need for additional land through boundary expansions.

The “intensification rate” is a measure of how much growth is going to built-up areas rather than new greenfield areas. In the updated Forecast, Lincoln’s intensification rate has increased from 80% to 90%, and Welland’s from 60% to 75%. When these changes are incorporated to a Region-wide average, the Region’s intensification rate increases from 56% to 60%.

Table 2 is the revised intensification rates by municipality and the overall Region rate.

**Table 2: Revised Intensification Rates to 2051**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Intensification Rate</b>
Fort Erie	50%
Grimsby	98%
Lincoln	90%
Niagara Falls	50%
Niagara-on-the-Lake	25%
Pelham	25%
Port Colborne	30%
St. Catharines	95%
Thorold	25%
Wainfleet	0%
Welland	75%
West Lincoln	13%
<b>Niagara Region</b>	<b>60%</b>

The above paragraphs describe the changes in terms of population and intensification rates – the Region also looks at this in terms of units. The number of additional units proposed is 10,500. These additional units are predominately medium- and high-density housing types, such as townhouses, apartments, and other multi-unit dwellings.

Increasing this unit type is key to help address core housing need, driven primarily by affordability.

The diversification of Niagara’s existing, low-density housing stock is supported by the Region’s recent housing analyses completed by CANCEA, included in Appendix 5 to the May Joint Report, and noted above. The CANCEA work concluded that more dense forms of housing is needed to support Provincial growth targets, and consequently, to address rates of core housing need over time.



In short, more dense forms of housing are needed to address affordability.

### **Updated Natural Environment Work**

Work on the Natural Environment program has been ongoing for many years.

Since May 2021, the Region has refined the analysis of Natural Environment developable area. The most current information suggests a need to remove non-developable lands from the land needs assessment calculation.

In other words, more land should be protected than identified in the May 2021 Forecast; in turn, less land is available for development. This results in a greater *overall need* for land (since less is available for development). This means a small increase of land needed for the Community Area (i.e. residential and mixed use) and a modest increase in land needed for Employment Areas (i.e. mostly industrial areas).

At the May 20, 2021 Regional Council meeting, Council directed Staff to prepare materials for Natural Environment System (NES) Options 3B and 3C, with a decision by Council on the preferred NES Option to be made at a later time.

Importantly, the land need difference between NES Option 3B and 3C is negligible. Regardless of which NES Option is selected at a later time, the land needs will be similar. For this reason, there is no need to await an Option selection to advance the land needs at this time. When an Option is selected, minor adjustments can be made to the land needs, if needed, before it is finalized..

### **Community Area Land Needs – Rural Settlement Areas**

As directed by the Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology, an additional assessment was undertaken for Rural Settlement Areas.

Niagara has a modest population and employment base outside of urban settlement areas. Growth is anticipated to continue within rural areas and rural settlement areas. Between 2021 and 2051, Hemson Consulting forecast an additional 900 housing units and 8,090 jobs will occur in the rural area.

The Rural Settlement Area assessment determines where the forecast growth will occur within the rural areas and if additional land is required within rural settlement areas primarily focussed in Wainfleet and West Lincoln.

Further details of the rural settlement area assessment is provided in **Appendix 1**.

### **August 2021 Preliminary Draft Land Needs Assessment**

As discussed above, the May 2021 Forecast was refined based on the alternative Made-in-Niagara Forecast, higher Regional intensification rate and recent NES work.

The detailed Forecast is provided in **Appendix 1**.

Table 3 below is a summary of the overall preliminary land needs by municipality.

**Table 3: August 2021 Preliminary Draft Land Needs Assessment**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Community Area Land Needs (ha)</b>	<b>Employment Area Land Needs (ha)</b>
Fort Erie	105	155
Grimsby	5	(5)
Lincoln	0	15
Niagara Falls	270	10
Niagara-on-the-Lake	5	(20)
Pelham	40	0
Port Colborne	(160)	(40)
St. Catharines	15	30
Thorold	(155)	(35)
Wainfleet	0	0
Welland	0	45
West Lincoln	370	45
<b>Niagara Region (net)</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>210</b>

In the May 2021 Forecast, the Region's net overall community land need was 460 Ha and net employment area land need was -20 Ha.

The net Community Area land need in the current Forecast and LNA is similar to the May 2021 Forecast. The net Employment Area land need is now 210 Ha compared to the previous surplus of 20 Ha.

Through consultation with the Province, the Region has also been advised that the LNA should result in a single number for land need; a blended number where Community Area land need and Employment Area land need are combined. This combined net land need is 705 hectares.

For the reasons noted elsewhere in this report, adjustments may be made to this preliminary forecast. Those adjustments will be provided to Council for consideration at a later time.

### **Employment Area Requests for Conversion**

The Region is considering Employment Land Employment Area conversions as part of its new Official Plan. The Provincial Land Needs Assessment Methodology implementation section contemplates that this should be considered for reducing the amount of settlement area expansion required for forecasted growth.

Employment land exists both within and outside of Employment Areas in almost all of Niagara's communities. Through the NOP, the Region is mapping Employment Areas, or clusters of employment uses, to define these boundaries. Employment Areas are of Regional interest as they relate to the provision and protection of employment land employment jobs, typically those within industrial areas and business parks.

The Growth Plan contains criteria for conversion of employment lands within an Employment Area and provides direction for when conversions can be considered as part of a Municipal Comprehensive Review. In Niagara's case, this is the NOP process.

Information on conversion criteria considerations was provided in the Employment Policy Paper PDS 17-2021 – [Appendix 10.2](https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-10-2.pdf) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-10-2.pdf>).

The Region received seven requests for Employment Areas conversions. These requests remain under consideration and will be reported further as part of the SABR review. The conversion requests are summarized in **Appendix 3**.

One of the tests for employment conversion is land need. Based on the current LNA presented with this report, the Region has a demand for 210 Ha more employment area. In other words, on a regional scale, there is a net land need demand for more employment area, not removal of employment area through conversions. However, individual conversion sites remain under review based on local considerations.

As indicated above, the review of conversion requests is part of the SABR review, with recommendations to be reported in the fall, including any associated adjustments to the forecast and land needs.

## Settlement Area Boundary Review

Only the Region can make settlement area boundary changes and the NOP is the time to do so.

In order to make SABR decisions, the Made-in-Niagara Forecast needs to be endorsed. If not, Staff will not know how much land is needed to review and adjust boundaries accordingly.

The SABR will review candidate land adjacent to the existing settlement area boundaries to determine the most appropriate location for settlement area expansion to be accommodated. Regional staff have developed criteria and an assessment process to consider both urban and rural settlement area boundary expansions.

The location of SABR expansion requests are mapped on **Appendix 2**.

## SABR Assessment Criteria and Process

The SABR assessment criteria was developed based on direction from the Provincial Policy Statement (2020), the Growth Plan, and Regional considerations. Staff consulted local area planners on many occasions, as a group and in individual meetings. Local planning staff support the criteria.

Additionally, the draft criteria was publically shared as part of the May Joint Report [Appendix 18.2](https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-18-2.pdf) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-18-2.pdf>) for urban areas and [Appendix 18.3](https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-18-3.pdf) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/pds-17-2021-appendix-18-3.pdf>) for rural settlement areas. Since that time, until July 2, 2021, the Region received comments on the criteria. With one small site-specific exception, no negative comments on the criteria were received. In fact, in many cases, the draft criteria are already under use by those making submissions to support a SABR request.

For these reasons, the Region will continue to use the criteria in its SABR review this summer and fall.

The criteria are divided into two parts. The first is an initial screening of the requests. Not all requests could be considered eligible for reasons related to Provincial Plan prohibitions. For example, the Greenbelt Plan prohibits expansion into the Specialty Crop Area and the Niagara Escarpment Plan also prohibits expansion of Minor Urban

Centres. The Region has no ability to make these changes, and therefore, these types of requests will not proceed.

As a result of this initial screening, 17 requests are being removed from further consideration.

If part one is satisfied, a request proceeds to the second part which contains more detailed criteria, including:

- Sanitary Servicing
- Municipal Water Supply
- Transit and Transportation
- Environmental Protection and Natural Resources
- Agricultural / Agri-food Network
- Aggregate Resources
- Growth Management

To undertake the second part of the SABR process, a review team comprised of regional staff across many disciplines has been assembled (including those relating to water, wastewater natural environment, transportation, aggregates, agriculture and growth management). The team may also draw on additional staff resources, if required, in relation to some topic areas where specific knowledge would assist. Local municipal staff will also participate within their respective areas.

For the SABR process, staff will rely on primary sources of study reference and technical data. The expectation is the same sources of information will be used for all sites being reviewed.

Additionally, any supplemental information provided by requestors will also be reviewed. Not all SABR requests received have supplemental information – it was not required. The supplemental information will be carefully considered; however, no additional weight is given to those requests that have supplemental information.

Some local municipalities have undertaken expansion-related study work or specific comments on expansions that will be carefully considered by the Region's review team.

Criteria for rural settlement area (Hamlet) review differs from the urban SABR. Rural settlement expansion focuses on maintaining rural character and supporting the

agricultural community and rural population needs. Rural settlement areas will continue to be serviced through private systems.

### **SABR Request Details**

The Region received about 87 private owner submissions related to the SABR process. These are specific to the existing Official Plan process; separate from comments made to the Province through the 2017 Coordinated Plan Review (CPR). CPR comments are not currently being processed by the Region (with three exceptions) since these matters are for Provincial review period only. The Region cannot make changes to Provincial Plans as part of the Niagara Official Plan process to accommodate expansion.

The three noted exceptions are sites in Lincoln (Albright Manor), Niagara Falls (Cotton Construction), and Niagara-on-the-Lake (Queenston Quarry) that were changed in the Niagara Escarpment Plan to Urban Area or Escarpment Recreation Area during the past review. Since these changes were made by the Province, the Region is processing these sites through its SABR.

In addition to the private owner requests for this Official Plan, the Region has received a number of local municipal requests for expansion consideration. The requests have been delivered through local Council resolution and will be reviewed along with all other requests made. Some local municipalities are still working on such recommendations, for circulation to the Region in the near future.

Local municipal requests comprise an additional 30 locations to date.

In addition to the private requests and municipal requests, noted above, the Region is reviewing additional candidate lands. The Region must consider what lands should be included – whether or not a request has been made – to ensure a holistic and objective review of Provincial policy in determining “the most appropriate location” for expansion.

As of writing, the total number of locations for expansions is approximately 147, including all categories described above.

A map of the SABR expansion areas is set out in **Appendix 2**.

### **SABR Consultation**

In preparing this report, careful consideration was given to comments provided on land needs, SABR requests and criteria, and employment conversions. All comments

received prior to July 15, 2021 were reviewed in preparing this report. Comments were requested by July 2, 2021.

The Region received over 20 comments related to the LNA. These submissions, as well as responses, are summarized in **Appendix 3**. Generally, the submissions are favourable and support the direction of the LNA. Some landowners made land need- or conversion- related suggestions specific to their interests.

As noted above, the Region also received a number of SABR and conversion requests. These requests have been acknowledged and remain under consideration. Recommendations will be made in the fall.

Prior to advancing SABR recommendations, staff will gather public input. The Region has created a public mapping tool that illustrates the requests for expansion and allows for comments. It is available at the following link: [Niagara Official Plan](https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/) (<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>).

In addition to the SABR website, additional public consultation is planned to receive input in the candidate locations. This is not intended to be a forum to have requests added or removed from consideration. It will be a dialogue to inform the process and received information on the assessment process and recommendations.

## **Policy Review**

The *Planning Act, 1990* requires all municipal Council decisions to be consistent with, conform to, or not conflict with the applicable Provincial policy. Regional and local planning staff must provide planning advice and make recommendations under the same requirements.

Below outlines relevant Provincial Policy for the LNA and SABR process. The Made-in-Niagara Forecast and updated LNA conforms to, is consistent with, and does not conflict with these documents, as applicable.

### *Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2020*

The PPS, 2020 provides direction on land use planning to promote sustainable, strong communities, a strong economy, and a clean and healthy environment.

Section 1.1 - Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development and Land Use Patterns supplies many of the referenced policies appearing in the SABR Assessment Criteria including:

*“1.1.1 Healthy, liveable and safe communities are sustained by:*

*a) promoting efficient development and land use patterns which sustain the financial well-being of the Province and municipalities over the long term;*

*c) avoiding development and land use patterns which may cause environmental or public health and safety concerns;*

*d) avoiding development and land use patterns that would prevent the efficient expansion of settlement areas in those areas which are adjacent or close to settlement areas;*

*e) promoting the integration of land use planning, growth management, transit-supportive development, intensification and infrastructure planning to achieve cost-effective development patterns, optimization of transit investments, and standards to minimize land consumption and servicing costs; ...*

*g) ensuring that necessary infrastructure and public service facilities are or will be available to meet current and projected needs;*

*h) promoting development and land use patterns that conserve biodiversity;”*

Respecting the policy context for use in the SABR assessment from a community building perspective, the consistent theme of healthy, livable, safe communities that are efficiently designed, cost effective, transit-supportive and integrated, underscores the direction expansion consideration should take while reminding and recognizing future expansion needs to be a consideration.

Section 1.1.3 – “Settlement Areas” includes direction for settlement area boundary expansions only at the time of an MCR and only after there has been demonstrated need. New to the 2020 PPS is a policy that refers to satisfying market demand.

Policies of Section 1.1.3 also direct that agricultural land and industry be held in regard of decisions being made concerning expansion. This too is reflected in the SABR Criteria to be used in expansion review.



Other policies of the PPS, such as Housing, Employment, Infrastructure, Transportation and Wise Use and Management of Resources, all provide important direction for the completion of the LNA and the criteria considerations for the SABR.

*A Place to Grow - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020)*

The Growth Plan provides a strategic, long-range growth management framework for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area. The Growth Plan supports Ontario's vision of building stronger, more efficient, prosperous communities through appropriate growth management.

Similar to the PPS, the guiding principles of the Growth Plan are focused on achieving complete communities, stimulating economic growth, prioritizing intensification and higher densities to optimize infrastructure investments, and mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change.

Policy 2.2.1.5 identifies the Province's Land Needs Assessment methodology to be used by the Region to assess the quantity of land required to accommodate forecasted growth to 2051.

Policy 2.2.8 of the Growth Plan speaks to Settlement Area Boundary Expansions.

Specifically, Policy 2.2.8.2 provides the direction for expansions to proceed through the MCR process based on the components and direction of the LNA. Further, Policy 2.2.8.3 requires any expansion be justified based on a comprehensive list of criteria. These policies were used to develop the Region's SABR criteria and have included consideration for transportation, infrastructure, NES, agricultural lands and operations, and the applicable requirements of other Provincial Plans.

The Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan were also reviewed. The policies of both provide direction for enhancement and protection of the natural and agricultural systems. Expansions into the Greenbelt and Niagara Escarpment areas are prohibited.

### **Next Steps**

The Region will continue to move forward with the NOP work program. Once the SABR and conversion review process is complete, Staff will prepare a report with recommendations in fall 2021.

The Made-in-Niagara Forecasts will be integrated into the Niagara 2051 strategies: the MSP, TMP and DCS and DC By-law. These strategies work together to ensure the planned growth is serviced and paid for.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

Alternative 1: Council could not endorse any land needs assessment at this time. This alternative is not recommended as any delay has consequences to the Niagara Official Plan, the MSP, TMP and DCS and DC By-law, for the reasons noted in this report. The Made-in-Niagara Forecasts set out in this Report have been developed to conform to Provincial Policy and are based on significant local planning and public consultation.

Alternative 2: Council could endorse a land need assessment that differs from the Made-in-Niagara Forecast set out in this Report. This option is not recommended as the detailed work undertaken led to adjustments to the intensification growth for Welland and Lincoln. Differing from the Made-in-Niagara Forecast could lead to a misalignment between how growth is planned, serviced and paid for through development charges.

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

The land needs assessment and Niagara Official Plan is important to address Council's priorities, being:

- Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth;
  - Through the identification and protection of employment areas.
- Healthy and Vibrant Community;
  - Through responsible management of growth by directing population and employment allocations as determined through the LNA.
  - The growth management work will also retain, protect and increase the supply of affordable housing stock to provide a broad range of housing to meet the needs of the community.
- Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning.

- Through coordinating growth with infrastructure investment to support existing and future growth in Niagara. The Made-in-Niagara Forecast will be integrated into Niagara 2051 strategies to ensure the Region is responsibly coordinating work related to growth.

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

Report      PDS 17-2021 – Niagara Official Plan Consolidated Policy Report (May Joint Report)

Report      PDS 32-2021 – Update on Niagara Official Plan-Further Draft Policy Development

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**Prepared by:**

Greg Bowie  
Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

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**Prepared by:**

Chris Millar, MCIP, RPP, CNU-A  
Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

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**Recommended by:**

Michelle Sergi, MCIP, RPP  
Commissioner  
Planning and Development Services

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**Submitted by:**

Ron Tripp, P. Eng.  
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Kirsten McCauley, Senior Planner Long Range Planning, and reviewed by Isaiah Banach, Manager of Long Range Planning and Doug Giles, Director of Community and Long Range Planning

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1    Niagara Official Plan: Revised Land Needs Assessment Summary (August 2021)

Appendix 2    Settlement Area Boundary Review: Request Mapping

Appendix 3 Summary of Comments Received Relating to Land Needs Assessment  
and Settlement Area Boundary Review

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