

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

CHAPTER 1 – Introduction

SUMMARY

The Introduction establishes the planning context for Niagara, challenges and opportunities, the two-tier planning framework, pillar statements and directives as well as legislative basis and structure of the Official Plan. The Introduction addresses the following:

- An overview of Niagara's past present and future. In this regard Niagara's geographical context is also established. The legislative basis for the Plan and rationale for a new Official Plan are explained.
- The Introduction explains how planning decisions must comply with the Plan and that local Official Plans must be brought into conformity with the Niagara Official Plan within one year of provincial approval.
- The purpose of the Niagara Official Plan (NOP) in achieving conformity, integrating with other engineering and financial plans to manage growth and policies to assist in addressing housing affordability, protect our natural environment, address climate change and assist in achieving economic prosperity are highlighted.
- Managing growth in a manner where housing affordability can be addressed, vibrant communities developed and the natural environment protected is the critical challenge and opportunity.
- The usage of the NOP by Regional council, the local municipalities, agencies, departments, industry and citizens is identified.
- The utilization of the Plan leads in to the importance of the NOP having clear policy direction and roles with a balanced approach that provides flexibility and certainty where warranted.
- The Pillar Statements and Key Directives for the NOP are outlined.
- The NOP's relationship with Provincial Plans, format. Planning horizon and how it is to be interpreted are all explained.
- The plans Chapter structure is then set out to conclude the Introduction.



Integration Guide for Sub-sections Reported in PDS 36-2021			
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SABR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Aggregates
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Natural Heritage incl.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Infrastructure	<input checked="" 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

This Overview does not address all the content in the Introduction Chapter but expands on some of the points identified above.

The importance of Indigenous history, the War of 1812 and the Underground Railroad in shaping Niagara's context is outlined. The current economic context of Niagara, the arrival of GO train service and Niagara being on the threshold of significant growth are highlighted.

With respect to Niagara's Indigenous history it is important to note that once an Indigenous Corporate Land Acknowledgement (LA) is endorsed by Regional Council, the LA will then be placed in the appropriate place in the Introduction to the NOP.

Pillar Statements and Key Directives establish the foundational principles the policies are developed upon. These were developed based on public input. The public and Regional council were surveyed on the draft Pillar Statements and Key Directives with positive results.

The following are the Pillar Statements:

EXCEPTIONAL *development* and communities - Well planned, high quality *development* in appropriate locations that improves our communities, while protecting what is valuable.

DIVERSE housing types, jobs and population - A wide mix of housing types and employment opportunities that attract diverse populations to Niagara across all ages, incomes and backgrounds.

THRIVING agriculture and tourism - A prosperous agricultural industry and world-class tourism opportunities that grow our economy and elevate the Niagara experience.

RESILIENT urban and natural areas - Areas rich in biodiversity that mitigate and adapt to *climate change* while strengthening Niagara's ability to recover from extreme weather events.

The following are the Key Directives:

Growing Region – Manage growth strategically and diversify the housing stock to accommodate all ages and incomes.

Vibrant Region – Elevate the livability and engaging qualities of communities, facilities and attractions.

Connected Region – Provide connections within and between communities and outside the region.

Competitive Region – Plan and manage growth to position Niagara for economic prosperity.

Sustainable Region – Enhance the sustainability and *resilience* of Niagara's built and natural environment.

The NOP will replace the Region's current Official Plan in its entirety. The NOP will incorporate the policy and regulatory framework established by the *Province*, as outlined in the Provincial Policy Statement (2020), the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019), the Niagara Escarpment Plan (2017), the Greenbelt Plan (2017), and other Provincial legislation. More importantly the NOP will:

- Integrate with and inform key engineering and finance programs to capture growth-related costs, so growth can pay for growth. Specifically, the Plan's timeline was aligned with the Development Charges update, Water and Wastewater Master Plan and Transportation Master Plan update.
- Substantially improve the natural environment system integrating the *natural heritage system* and the water resource system.
- Address *climate change* in order to achieve resiliency by directing for mitigation and adaptation.
- Create *complete communities* and identify where *intensification* and higher densities will be needed to achieve anticipated growth.
- Address critical housing affordability and market demand issues.

- Provide clearly defined *employment areas* to better direct *employment area* investment and restrict undesired conversion to non-employment uses.
- Guide *infrastructure* planning and strategic investment decisions to support and accommodate forecasted population and economic growth.