
Subject: New Official Plan Consultation Timeline Framework

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Recommendations

1. That Report PDS 9-2019, respecting the New Official Plan Consultation Timeline Framework, **BE RECEIVED**; and
2. That Report PDS 9-2019 **BE CIRCULATED** to the Local Area Municipalities and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA).

Key Facts

- In November 2017, Council approved a High Level Process Framework for the New Official Plan.
- In 2018 Council approved frameworks for priority Background Studies, developed through consultation with Area Planners, for Growth Management, namely; Urban Structure, Employment Lands Strategy, Housing Strategy and Land Needs Assessment, as well as Natural Environment and Rural Systems, namely; Natural Environment, Agriculture, Climate Change and Aggregates.
- In 2018, a presentation to Local Councils on the High Level Official Plan framework occurred and individual meetings held with Area Planners to gather planning input.
- On July 5, 2018, a Special Meeting of Council occurred under the Planning Act to hear public comments on the development of a New Official Plan. The Council passed a motion relative to consultation for the New Official Plan.
- The progression of Background Studies, which will inform the New Official Plan, has allowed staff to develop a more detailed Consultation Timeline Framework for the Official Plan.
- The Consultation Framework incorporates consultation during key steps of the Background Reports development, as well as the draft policy stage.

Financial Considerations

Council approved the resources to complete the New Official Plan over the next 5 years as part of the 2017 Budget Process. The completion of the necessary Background Studies and preparation of the New Official Plan will require the combination of significant staff and consulting resources over the next three years.

Analysis

Background

When the Regional Official Plan was approved in the mid 1970's, the Region's role and content of the Plan focused on protecting agricultural lands and establishing urban (settlement area) boundaries.

Over the years, amendments occurred to reflect the Region's increased planning functions under an evolving provincial planning system. In 2017, a budget was established to develop a contemporary and user friendly Official Plan that provides a consistent structure and reflects the current comprehensive planning framework.

Key Official Plan Objectives

The key objectives of the New Official Plan in terms of structure and content are to:

- promote and achieve great development outcomes;
- be more user friendly for the public, stakeholder groups, consultants, staff and Council;
- be more concise and provide clearer policy guidance where necessary and latitude where appropriate; and
- address Provincial requirements, Regional interests and provide guidance to the Local Area Municipalities.

Priority Background Studies

In 2018 Council approved frameworks for eight interrelated priority Background Studies, developed through consultation with Area Planners, for Growth Management, namely; Urban Structure, Employment Lands Strategy, Housing Strategy and Land Needs Assessment, as well as Natural Environment and Rural Systems, namely; Natural Environment, Agriculture, Climate Change and Aggregates (See **Appendix 1**). These Background studies are essential to inform the preparation of the new Official Plan.

Consultation

Several important consultation steps have taken place already to both inform and create awareness of the development of the New Official Plan.

Imagine Niagara was a consultation process initiated in 2013 to gather input for the updating of the Official Plan to 2031. It was a nine month process with over 4,000 surveys and 2,000 resident comments which identified important themes outlined in

Appendix 2. While provincial planning now requires planning policy to address growth to 2041, planning staff consider the themes generated from public input under Imagine Niagara to be current and relevant. In the proposed timeline there will be the opportunity for the public to comment in general on policy matters and objectives, as well as on more specific policy as it develops.

Regional Council approved a High Level Process Framework for the new regional Official Plan in November 2017. This framework was presented to Planning and Economic Development Committee in January 2019 by the Director of Community and Long Range Planning.

In 2018 meetings were held with Area Planners to develop the frameworks for the Background Studies, the frameworks were approved by Council and on July 5, 2018, a Special Meeting of Council occurred under the *Planning Act* to hear public comments on the development of a new Regional Official Plan. Throughout the second half of 2018, presentations to each Local Council regarding the Framework of the new Regional Official Plan took place.

Consultation Timeline Framework

The Consultation Timeline Framework, included in **Appendix 3**, provides for the following key aspects:

- the creation of a consolidated draft New Official Plan by end of 2020 for consultation, refinement and approval by end of 2021;
- opportunities for input at key stages of Background study formulation and draft policy stages;
- stakeholder and public input;
- keeping local Councils and Area Planners informed;
- a webpage and e-mail for the New Official Plan for comment;
- Public Information Centres (Public Open Houses) that will seek comments based on policy direction based on the results of background studies.

The Consultation Timeline Framework identifies major points of public and stakeholder consultation and target timelines, recognizing that flexibility is required to adapt to evolving provincial direction, new issues and shifting priorities. Council will be advised of any major changes to the consultation framework.

While not depicted in the Consultation Timeline Framework, each phase will include inter-departmental collaboration, engagement with working groups established for

various work programs, and input from the Planning Advisory Committee. The public and Indigenous communities will also be engaged throughout the process.

“Phase 1 – Project Initiation” of the Consultation Timelines Framework in Appendix 3 has been completed. The following is a summary of the upcoming public and stakeholder consultation activities identified in Appendix 3.

Phase 2 – Background and Options

A number of background reports and discussion papers will be prepared to help inform the development of policy options for the New Official Plan. The reports and discussion papers will be brought to Committee and Council for endorsement before being released for consultations. It is anticipated that the endorsed documents will be posted on the Official Plan website for information and feedback. In addition, stakeholder consultations will be held on background and options, leveraging opportunities to group topics of interest to various stakeholder groups. This phase will conclude with four Public Open Houses, spread geographically across the region to provide easy access for residents in central, north-east, north-west and southern Niagara.

Phase 3 – Recommendations

The consultations at the background and options phase will help to inform the development of recommendations for the New Official Plan. It is anticipated that additional consultations will be held with stakeholders, as needed, to further refine the options and develop a recommended approach. A report summarizing the consultation feedback to date and recommended direction for the New Official Plan will be brought to Committee and Council for endorsement.

Phase 4 – Draft Policies and Schedules

Once the policy direction has been established for the new Official Plan, policies and schedules will be drafted for further consultation. Policy sets and applicable schedules for each topic area will be posted on the Official Plan website for information and input. Additional stakeholder consultations will be held on draft policies and schedules. The public will also have opportunities to provide input through Public Open Houses and Public Meetings at Committee. This phase will conclude with a report to Committee and Council seeking endorsement of the draft consolidated Official Plan in principle.

Phase 5 & 6 – Draft Official Plan

The draft consolidated Official Plan will be posted on the Official Plan website for information and input. During this phase, the statutory Public Open House and statutory Public Meeting will also be held on the draft Official Plan, as required under the *Planning Act*. This input will inform the development of the final Official Plan to be brought to Committee and Council for adoption and the Province for approval (Phase 6).

Alternatives Reviewed

On July 5, 2018, a Special Meeting of Council occurred under the *Planning Act* to hear public comments on the development of a New Official Plan. The Council passed a motion relative to consultation for the New Official Plan, being: That Regional Council **AUTHORIZE** the preparation of a comprehensive New Official Plan in accordance with the requirements of the *Planning Act* involving the area municipalities including open houses in each municipality.

The scenario of holding an Open House in every municipality was discussed with Area Planners and it was felt the process would likely result in comments on local issues that would not relate to Regional planning responsibilities. A significant level of input was gathered through Imagine Niagara, which was considered in the structure of background reports, and this Consultation Framework will provide the opportunity for public comment on substantive planning/policy content.

The New Official Plan has many components – the sections addressed by the priority Background Studies, as well as servicing, transportation and cultural heritage. There will be public and stakeholder input at various stages of these studies. The co-ordination and gathering of input requires the grouping of topics and locations for input.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The new Regional Official Plan will assist in implementing Council's Strategic Priority of Innovation, Investment, & Entrepreneurship.

Other Pertinent Reports

- PDS 40-2016 – Regional Official Plan Update
- PDS 41-2017 – New Official Plan Structure and Framework
- PDS 3-2018 – New Official Plan Update
- PDS 6-2018 – Natural Environment Project Initiation Report
- PDS 18-2018 – Natural Environment – Project Framework
- PDS-21-2018 – Municipal Comprehensive Review Update-New Regional Official Plan and Growth Management Program

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Appendices

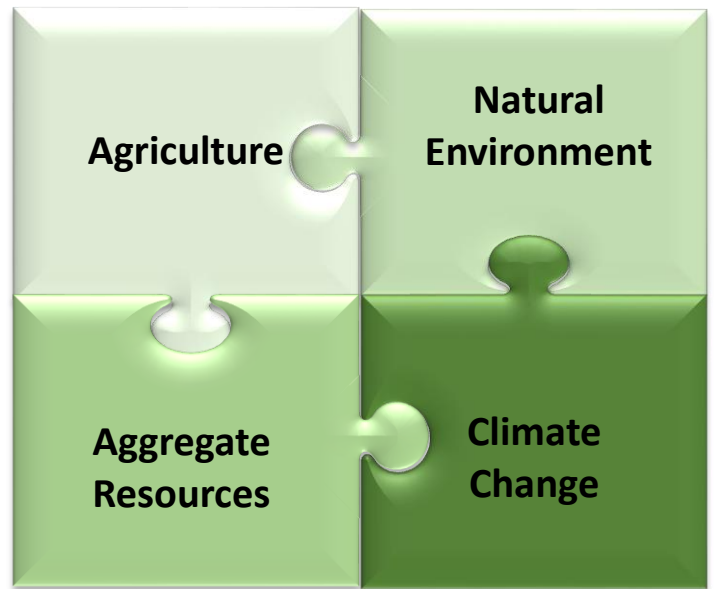
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APPENDIX 1 – PRIORITY BACKGROUND STUDIES

Growth Management



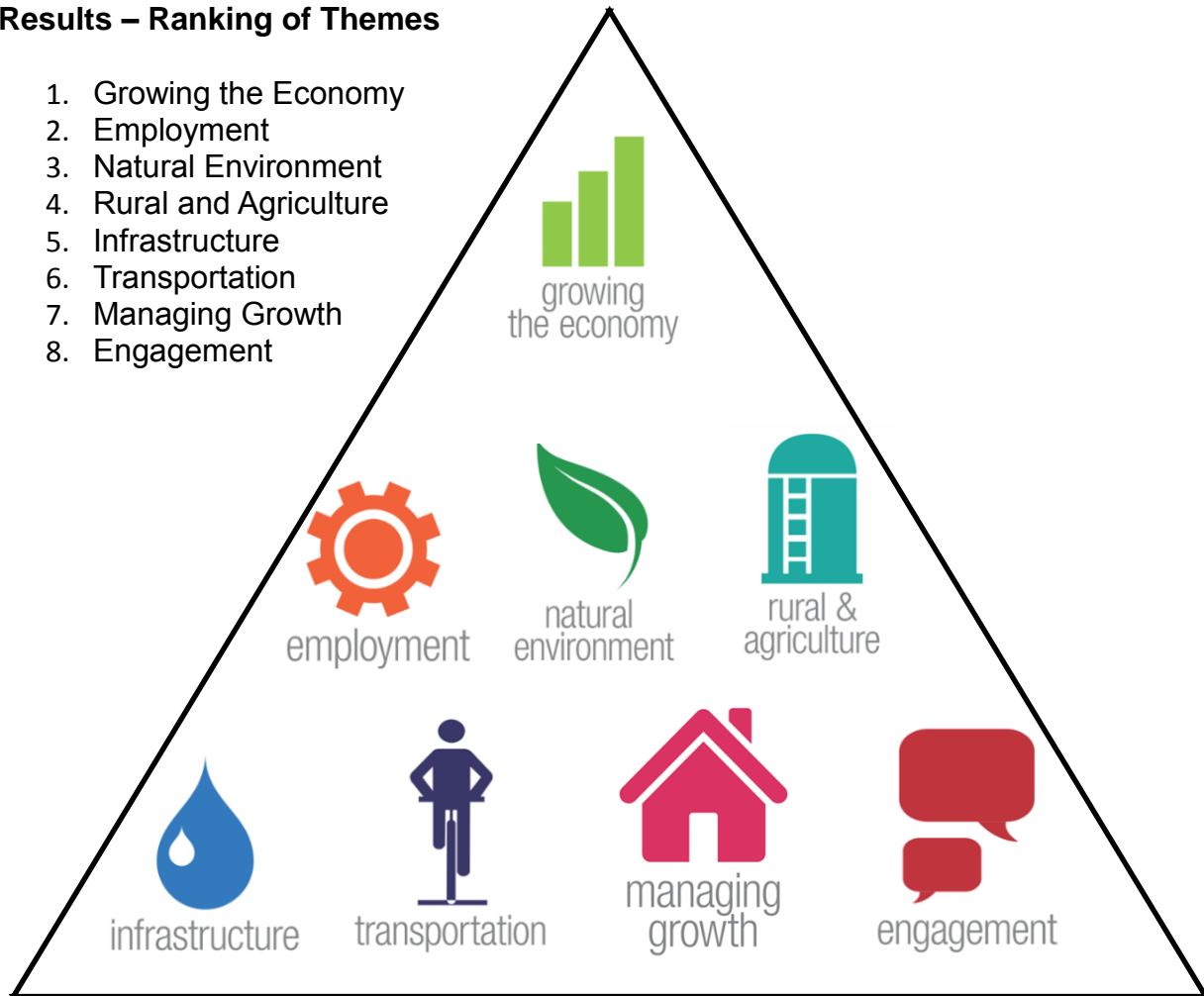
Natural Systems



APPENDIX 2 – IMAGINE NIAGARA THEMES

Results – Ranking of Themes

1. Growing the Economy
2. Employment
3. Natural Environment
4. Rural and Agriculture
5. Infrastructure
6. Transportation
7. Managing Growth
8. Engagement



APPENDIX 3 – CONSULTATION TIMELINE FRAMEWORK

