

Appendix 2  
ED 6-2022  
June 15, 2022

**NIAGARA**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**INSPIRE. INVEST. GROW.**

**NIAGARA'S 10 YEAR ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**2022-2032**

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# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION .....4

Regional Council Strategic Priorities .....	6
Economic Recovery Plan .....	6
Collaboration .....	7
Regional Mandate in Economic Development.....	8
Background Review.....	9

## VISION NIAGARA 2032..... 10

Vision Statement.....	11
Vision Attributes.....	11

## NIAGARA'S PROFILE AND ECONOMY..... 12

Niagara Region Profile .....	13
Economic Base Analysis .....	13
Demographics .....	13
Labour Force.....	16
Industrial Base Analysis.....	20
International Trade and Investment .....	23
Macroeconomic Characteristics .....	24
Regional Benchmarking .....	27

## VOICE OF NIAGARA.....28

Community and Business Engagement.....	29
Key Themes from Community and Business Consultations.....	31
Action Recommendations from the Community and Business Engagement .....	32

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY .....34

Strategic Directions.....	35
Sector Development and Support .....	35
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion .....	45
Education and Workforce Support .....	46
Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) .....	49
Green Development and Sustainability .....	54
Infrastructure and Transportation .....	56

Niagara Economic Strategic Action Plan .....	61
Partnerships .....	61
Strategy 1 Investment Attraction .....	62
Strategy 2 External Marketing .....	64
Strategy 3 Business and Economic Research and Analysis.....	66
Strategy 4 Expedited Services and Business Development .....	68
Strategy 5 LAM and Sector Support .....	70
Strategy 6 Strategic Initiatives and Advocacy .....	72

## APPENDICES .....74

Appendix 1 Strategy Advisory Council Membership Terms of Reference.....	75
Appendix 2 Economic Base Analysis.....	75
Appendix 3 Community and Business Engagement, Final Report, Intelligent Futures.....	75
Appendix 4 Niagara Official Plan 2022: Chapters 3, 4 and 5.....	75

The Economic Development Strategy Advisory Council dedicates this Strategy to our friend and colleague, the late Mr. Adam Joon, in honour of his significant contributions to the economic development profession.

Adam lived his life with integrity, compassion and humour. This is a true reflection of his values which he brought into his work everyday. He will be missed.

# INTRODUCTION

Escapment Lincoln

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The 10 Year Economic Development Strategy is being written at a unique time for Niagara, as we emerge from the economic effects of the worldwide pandemic. In the last two years COVID-19 has accelerated many opportunities and reinforced numerous issues that existed pre-pandemic. Niagara is experiencing exceptional growth in terms of investment, development and forecasting dramatic population increases. Trends such as digitization, e-commerce, artificial intelligence and new work practices are emerging from the pandemic. Conversely, the region is facing many issues that are not unique to Niagara, but exist across Ontario, including low labour force participation, the effect of the pandemic on service based industries, availability of affordable housing, lack of comprehensive broadband coverage across the region and supply chain disruptions.

In this document, Niagara Economic Development (NED) outlines strategic directions, goals, and actions that will guide its work as it collaborates with its partners and to build a strong and sustainable economy together. In this time of opportunity, uncertainty and change, decisions made now will shape Niagara's future for years to come. The Strategy is a dynamic document, which will be iterated and updated as required, throughout its term. From a data perspective, the 2021 census data is to be released over the next few months and economic statistics from a full post-pandemic year are not yet available, all of which may influence the strategic directions. Consequently, the Strategy will be reviewed within the next two years to update the information presented and review the strategic directions and actions.

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# REGIONAL COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In 2019, Regional Council developed Strategic Priorities for the next four years. Priority One is 'Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth' and the four objectives connected to it are: Economic Growth and Development; Support Retention and Development of a Skilled Labour Force; Collaborative Approach to Business Growth and Retention and Strategically Target Industry Sectors. The development of a Long-Term Economic Development Strategy is one of Regional Council's supporting priority projects. However, in May 2020, Niagara Region Planning and Economic Development Committee, passed a motion to pause the development of a new Strategy. Instead, NED was directed to focus on the creation of an Economic Recovery Plan and its implementation, in order to support local businesses and the economy throughout the pandemic.



Downtown, St. Paul Street, St. Catharines

## ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

The Economic Recovery Plan was developed in collaboration with the Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT) which was formed by the Regional Chair and the Mayors, in March 2020. The core ERRT group includes all the municipal economic development staff and the Regional economic development team. However, the broader ERRT group includes an extensive range of external partners, who work with businesses across the region, for example, Chambers of Commerce, industry associations, employment offices, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), Downtown Improvement Areas (DIAs), Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), Brock University and Niagara College. Although, NED provided leadership for the Plan's development, implementation and project management, the effort was a collaboration involving all the economic development offices and the ERRT group.

The actions in the Economic Recovery Plan were organized under three pillars: Research and Information; Advocacy; and Resilience. Each pillar has Immediate, Mid-Term and Long-Term actions. This time-line was intended to progress and align with the Province's Framework for Business Re-opening.

In September 2021, the implementation of the Economic Recovery Plan was almost finalized with many of the actions completed or remaining ongoing to continue to support local businesses. The actions that had not been completed are longer term and will be considered within the context of the new 10 Year Economic Development Strategy. The Region continues to collaborate with the broader ERRT group.

## COLLABORATION

At the direction of Regional Council, the development of the Long-Term Economic Development Strategy has been a collaboration between all the municipal economic development professionals across the region. External consultants were only brought in for one component; the community and business consultation process. This component is labour intensive and benefits from being led by a third party. Formal commitments to collaborate were received from all eight municipalities, who have economic development offices. The other four municipalities, who do not have economic development offices, were represented by a NED team member who is dedicated to providing them with advisory services.

In September 2021, the Economic Development Strategy Advisory Council was created and the Terms of Reference are provided in Appendix 1. The membership includes: representation from all eight municipalities by the director or senior manager; the Regional Economic Development Officer supporting the four municipalities without economic development offices; the Commissioner, Niagara Region Planning and Development Services Department, the Director, NED and the Associate Director, NED, who is the Project Manager.

The Strategy Advisory Council met monthly since September 2021, to provide input and direction on the Strategy development. It was chaired by the Manager, Economic Development, City of Thorold, and the Vice-Chair was the Director, Economic Development and Communications, Town of Lincoln.



# REGIONAL MANDATE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NED's mandate is defined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) of all 12 municipalities. The key functions of Regional economic development in the MOU are: Investment Attraction; External Marketing including Resident Attraction; Expedited Services and Business Development, Business and Economic Research and Analysis as well as Strategic Initiatives, which are projects with a region-wide scope. The action plan to implement the Strategy is based on the key functions identified in the MOU.

# BACKGROUND REVIEW

The Strategy was developed in alignment with municipal economic development strategies and seeks to support their direction where appropriate. It is also directly aligned with the new **Regional Official Plan** in which there has been strong collaboration with Niagara Region's Planning and Development Services Department as well as alignment with Niagara Region's **Transportation Master Plan** and **Water and Wastewater Master Servicing Plan**.

The Strategy is one of Regional Council's priority projects supporting the Strategic Priority: Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth, as described in the **Shape Niagara Plan**.

Appendix 1 – Strategy Advisory Council Membership and Terms of Reference



Welland Canal, Lock 3, Welland

# VISION NIAGARA 2032

Hydrogen Plant

## VISION STATEMENT

The Strategy's vision statement was created with input from over 500 participants from the private, not-for-profit, and government sectors and is an aspirational guide for its implementation over the next 10 years.

*Niagara is where innovative businesses grow and community-minded individuals stay – coming together to build a more prosperous future.*

## VISION ATTRIBUTES

Participants in the community and business consultations provided feedback, listed below, on key phrases in the vision statement. The elements of the vision have been considered in the development of the Strategy.

- Existing and emerging markets and sectors are leveraged as part of a holistic economic development strategy
- Mixed representation in ownership and leadership of organizations and businesses (gender, ethnicity, ability)
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Growth and retention of local talent
- Business incubation (entrepreneurship)
- Seamless approach to doing business across the municipalities in the region (smooth business environment)
- Investment comes from forward-thinking businesses
- Residents driven by community involvement
- Quality of life realized (live, work, play)
- Cross-community partnerships and collaboration
- Leveraging academia and educational institutions (skilled labour, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship and more)

# NIAGARA'S PROFILE AND ECONOMY

Welland International Flatwater Centre

## NIAGARA REGION PROFILE

Niagara is strategically located on the Canada/U.S. border between the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and the U.S. Northeast. The economies of both Canada and the United States are connected by the flow of goods, services and people between the two countries through the region. Niagara is situated within 800 kilometres (500 miles) of 130 million people at the heart of one of North America's business trade corridors. Recognizing the important role that the region plays in facilitating trade, it has been awarded the federal designation of a Foreign Trade Zone Point. It has five international border crossings with over one million trucks crossing each year. Transportation includes road, rail, marine and air. The Welland Canal connects Lake Ontario with Lake Erie and through the St. Lawrence Seaway, it enables access to markets globally. Niagara District Airport provides a regular commuter service between the GTA and Niagara through Fly GTA Airways and is within 100 kms of three international airports. This infrastructure and Niagara's strategic location are key to retaining and attracting future investment.

Niagara is governed by a two-tier municipal structure with responsibilities divided between the Region and 12 local area municipalities (LAMs). The municipalities are a mix of urban and rural with distinct and unique characteristics.

## ECONOMIC BASE ANALYSIS

To measure the progress of the actions in the Strategy, an economic and industrial analysis has been completed as a baseline to benchmark Niagara's economy going forward. The data used is from 2019 and provides the latest pre-COVID picture of the economy. Data from 2020/2021 would have reflected the effects of the pandemic. 2021 is also a census year and all data has not yet been released. Consequently, the economic and industrial analysis will be revisited when post-COVID data is available, as well as the full 2021 census data.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Population



Niagara's population has historically grown slowly when compared to Ontario. From 2011 to 2016, Niagara's population grew by 3.8 per cent compared to 4.6 per cent for Ontario. However, Niagara's population growth has been increasingly rapidly since 2016. From 2016 to 2021, Niagara's population grew by 6.7 per cent where Ontario's grew by 5.8 per cent.

All of Niagara municipalities, except for two, showed a rate of growth greater than Ontario as a whole.

Thorold, in particular, had an exceptionally high growth rates at 27 per cent. Thorold was the fourth fastest growing municipality in Ontario behind New Tecumseh (28 per cent), The Blue Mountains (34 per cent), and East Gwillimbury (44 per cent). Here is a breakdown of population growth rate for the local municipalities in Niagara: Thorold 29 per cent; Port Colborne 9.4 per cent; Niagara-on-the-Lake 9.0 per cent; Lincoln 8.1 per cent; Wainfleet 8.1 per cent; Niagara Falls 7.2 per cent; Fort Erie 7.1 per cent; Welland 6.6 per cent; West Lincoln 6.6 per cent; Pelham 6.3 per cent; Grimsby 5.7 per cent and St. Catharines is 2.8 per cent.

### Population Growth by Municipality

MUNICIPALITY	2016	2021	CHANGE	% CHANGE
Thorold	18,801	23,816	5,015	26.7%
Port Colborne	18,306	20,033	1,727	9.4
Niagara-On-The-Lake	17,511	19,088	1,577	9.0%
Lincoln	23,787	25,719	1,932	8.1%
Wainfleet	6,372	6,887	515	8.1%
Niagara Falls	88,071	94,415	6,344	7.2%
Fort Erie	30,710	32,901	2,191	7.1%
<b>Niagara</b>	<b>447,888</b>	<b>477,941</b>	<b>30,053</b>	<b>6.7%</b>
Welland	52,293	55,750	3,457	6.6%
West Lincoln	14,500	15,454	954	6.6%
Pelham	17,110	18,192	1,082	6.3%
Grimsby	27,314	28,883	1,569	5.7 %
St. Catharines	133,113	136,803	3,690	2.8%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2021

Niagara is forecast to experience substantial growth going forward. **A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe** (2019, as amended) projects a significant increase in population and employment by 2051. Niagara is expected to see the region’s population grow to a minimum of 694,000 with 272,000 jobs. The forecasted population for 2021 is 491,120.

Niagara has an older population compared to Ontario. The median age of the Niagara population in 2016 was 45.7 years, compared to 41.3 years in Ontario. Niagara has a higher portion of seniors with the population aged 65 years and over accounting for 21.4 per cent of the total population. In comparison, seniors accounted for only 16.7 per cent of the population in Ontario. Niagara’s portion of the population 85 years and over (3.1 per cent) is slightly higher than Ontario. Niagara has a lower portion of population in the prime working age group (25 to 44 years) at 22.2 per cent compared to 25.7 per cent for Ontario in 2016.

### Educational Attainment



Niagara is home to two post-secondary institutions Niagara College and Brock University with a combined student population of 29,600. Niagara has lower educational attainment levels compared to Ontario. In 2016, a lower portion of the Niagara population aged 25 to 64 years had a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree (60 per cent) compared to Ontario (65.1

per cent). Niagara has a notably smaller portion of population aged 25 to 64 years who have attained a university certificate, diploma or degree at the bachelor level or higher at 20.7 per cent, compared to Ontario at 31.9 per cent. A higher portion of the Niagara population have College, CEGEP or non-university certificates or diplomas at 29.1 per cent compared to Ontario at 24.7 per cent. Niagara also has a higher portion of people with an apprenticeship, trade certificate or diploma at 8.4 per cent compared to 6.2 per cent for Ontario, as well as a certificate of apprenticeship or certificate of qualification at 4.4 per cent compared to 3.1 per cent for Ontario.

### Commuting Patterns



In 2016, 144,485 people, or 84.5 per cent of the commuting population in Niagara, commuted to work within Niagara. 15.5 per cent of Niagara residents that commute to work commuted to work outside of Niagara. The top 10 destinations for Niagara commuters included Hamilton at 11,845 (6.9 per cent), Halton at 6,125 (3.6 per cent), Peel at 2,495 (1.5 per cent), Toronto at 2,395 (1.4 per cent), Haldimand-Norfolk at 1,000 (0.6 per cent), Waterloo at 515 (0.3 per cent), York at 490 (0.3 per cent), Brant at 275 (0.2 per cent), Wellington at 270 (0.2 per cent), and Middlesex at 170 (0.1 per cent).

Commuting patterns will change with the introduction of the regular GO Train service; changing work practices following the pandemic; the approval of an integrated regional transit system; student travel; active transportation; proposed ferry service between Toronto and Niagara, and the introduction of private services like FlyGTA and Uber.



# LABOUR FORCE

In 2019, Niagara's labour force was 216,900. From 2016 to 2019, Niagara's labour force declined by 4,000 or 1.8 per cent. Males accounted for 900 or (0.8 per cent) while females accounted for 4,900 or 4.5 per cent of the decline. Niagara's employed population was 204,300 in 2019, which was a decline of 600 or 0.3 per cent over 2016. Male employment grew during this period by 2,900 or 2.7 per cent, while female employment declined by 3,600 or 3.5 per cent. Total full-time employment declined by 700 or 0.4 per cent, while part-time employment grew by 100 or 0.2 per cent. Full-time employment for males grew by 2,100 or 2.4 per cent, while full-time employment for females declined by 2,700 or 3.8 per cent. Part-time employment for males grew by 900 or 6.0 per cent, while it declined for females by 800 or 2.6 per cent.

There is a low participation rate in the labour force, particularly women, as a result of the pandemic. Mitigation strategies could include the provision of affordable and available childcare, affordable housing, innovative employment attraction by employers, regional transit and flexible working options. Policy announcements, at both the provincial and federal level, are already forth coming. Succession planning and newcomer attraction could also help to increase the labour force.

In 2019, there were 16,000 unemployed people in Niagara's labour force. From 2016 to 2019, there were 3,400 or 21.3 per cent fewer unemployed people in Niagara. Unemployment for males declined by 2,000 or 20.8 per cent, while unemployment for females declined by 1,500 or 23.4 per cent. The unemployment rate made steady progress declining by 1.4 per cent to 5.8 per cent in 2019. The unemployment rate for males declined by 1.8 per cent and 1.2 per cent for females. From 2016 to 2019, the participation rate for Niagara declined by 4 per cent to 62.9 per cent. It declined by 4.6 per cent for males and 3.7 per cent for females. The employment rate also declined by 2.9 per cent from 2016 to 2019 to 55.6 per cent. It declined evenly for both males and females at 3.0 per cent.

In 2019, there were 219,245 total jobs in Niagara, which includes both the employed and self-employed. Job growth in Niagara was 16,854 or 8 per cent from 2016 to 2019. Anecdotally, there is a mismatch between the jobs available and the skills of the job seekers. There are jobs available but businesses are struggling to fill vacancies. The skills and employment needs of the job seekers are a complex challenge that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

## Labour Force Characteristics, Niagara CMA, 2016 to 2019

	SEX	2016	2017	2018	2019	CHANGE	CHANGE %
<b>INDICATOR</b>		<b>PERSONS</b>					
<b>Labour Force</b>	Total	220.9	215.2	220.4	216.9	-4.0	-1.8%
	Males	112.8	112.7	116.1	113.7	0.9	0.8%
	Females	108.1	102.5	104.3	103.2	-4.9	-4.5%
<b>Employment</b>	Total	204.9	200.8	205.7	204.3	-0.6	-0.3%
	Males	103.2	103.9	108.2	106.1	2.9	2.8%
	Females	101.8	96.9	97.5	98.2	-3.6	-3.0%
<b>Full-Time Employment</b>	Total	159.1	155.5	156.3	158.4	-0.7	-0.4%
	Males	88.0	86.4	91.1	90.1	2.1	2.4%
	Females	71.0	69.1	65.1	68.3	-2.7	-3.8%
<b>Part-Time Employment</b>	Total	45.8	45.3	49.4	45.9	0.1	0.2%
	Males	15.1	17.4	17.1	16.0	0.9	6.0%
	Females	30.7	27.9	32.4	29.9	-0.8	-2.6%
<b>Unemployment</b>	Total	16.0	14.4	14.7	12.6	-3.4	-21.3%
	Males	9.6	8.8	7.9	7.6	-2.0	-20.8%
	Females	6.4	5.5	6.8	4.9	-1.5	-23.4%
		<b>PERCENTAGE</b>					
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	Total	7.2	6.7	6.7	5.8	-1.4	..
	Males	8.5	7.8	6.8	6.7	-1.8	..
	Females	5.9	5.4	6.5	4.7	-1.2	..
<b>Participation Rate</b>	Total	63.1	60.5	61.0	59.1	-4.0	..
	Males	67.5	65.0	64.9	62.9	-4.6	..
	Females	59.1	56.3	57.1	55.4	-3.7	..
<b>Employment Rate</b>	Total	58.5	56.5	56.9	55.6	-2.9	..
	Males	61.7	59.9	60.5	58.7	-3.0	..
	Females	55.7	53.2	53.3	52.7	-3.0	..

Source: Statistics Canada, Table: 14-10-0385-01

## Top 10 Sectors by Total Jobs in 2019



The top 10 sectors by total jobs in 2019 included accommodation and food services (28,323 jobs); retail trade (27,059 jobs); health care and social assistance (6,539 jobs); manufacturing (16,445 jobs); educational services (14,949 jobs); construction (14,635 jobs); administrative support, waste management and remediation, public administration (11,218 jobs); professional, scientific and technical services (10,727 jobs); other services (9,691 jobs).

The top 10 sectors by real job growth from 2014 to 2019 included accommodation and food services with 4,314 jobs; health care and social assistance with 3,375 jobs; public administration with 1,629 jobs; educational services with 1,566 jobs; professional, scientific and technical services with 1,162 jobs; construction with 1,101 jobs; unclassified with 954 jobs; retail trade with 830 jobs; transportation and warehousing with 788 jobs; and, administrative support, waste management and remediation with 632 jobs.

The top 10 sectors by highest provincial location quotient in 2019 included agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 2.2 jobs; accommodation and food services at 1.9 jobs; arts, entertainment and recreation at 1.9 jobs; retail trade at 1.2 jobs; health care and social assistance at 1.1 jobs; other services at 1.1 jobs; unclassified at 1.0 jobs; educational services at 1.0 jobs; construction at 1.0 jobs; construction at 1.0 jobs; and administrative support, waste management and remediation at 1.0 jobs.

## Employment by Sector, Niagara CMA, 2016 to 2019

NORTH AMERICAN INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM	2016	2017	2018	2019	CHANGE	CHANGE %
Wholesale and Retail Trade	34.5	32.3	32.5	31.4	-3.1	-9.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	28.2	24.9	25.7	26.6	-1.6	-5.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	24.2	24.5	25.1	24.3	0.1	0.4%
Manufacturing	19.8	22.4	18.6	19.0	-0.8	-4.0%
Construction	17.5	13.2	18.7	18.7	1.2	6.9%
Educational Services	12.3	13.5	14.7	14.6	2.3	18.7%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	8.6	9.6	9.6	9.7	1.1	12.8%
Information, Culture, and Recreation	11.0	9.4	9.7	9.7	-1.3	-11.8%
Other Services	7.2	9.7	8.8	9.3	2.1	29.2%
Business, Building and Other Support Services	10.7	10.1	11.7	8.9	-1.8	-16.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	8.9	8.2	9.2	8.9	0.0	0.0%
Public Administration	9.0	8.0	7.4	8.4	-0.3	-3.3%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	8.1	9.9	7.7	8.4	0.3	3.7%
Agriculture	3.7	3.2	3.6	4.0	0.3	8.1%
Utilities	x	1.7	1.6	1.5	x	x
Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Total</b>	<b>204.9</b>	<b>200.8</b>	<b>205.7</b>	<b>204.3</b>	<b>-0.6</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Table: 14-10-0384-01

# INDUSTRIAL BASE ANALYSIS

## Job Growth and Location Quotients

In 2019, there were 219,245 total jobs in Niagara, which includes both the employed and self-employed. Job growth in Niagara was 16,854 or 8 per cent from 2016 to 2019.

Ontario provincial location quotients (LQ) are used to identify sectors and industries with some form of specialization. LQ are ratios that show the concentration of jobs relative to total jobs in an area compared to the concentration of jobs in a larger geographical area. In this case, the location quotients are comparing the concentration of jobs by sector and industry in Niagara relative to Ontario. For example, a LQ of 1.0 means that Niagara has the same concentration of jobs in a sector or industry relative Ontario (1:1). A LQ of 2.0 means that Niagara has 2.0 times the concentration of jobs in a sector or industry relative to Ontario (2:1). A LQ less than 1.0 means that Niagara has a lower concentration of jobs in a sector or industry relative to Ontario.

The top 10 sectors by highest provincial LQ in 2019 included agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting at 2.2; accommodation and food services at 1.9; arts, entertainment and recreation at 1.9; retail trade at 1.2; health care and social assistance at 1.1; other services at 1.1; unclassified at 1.0; educational services at 1.0; construction at 1.0; and administrative support, waste management and remediation at 1.0.

Although manufacturing has a relatively low LQ of 0.8 and a decline in jobs during 2014 and 2019. It did see job growth in some sub-sectors as well as relatively high LQs. These sub-sectors include sugar and confectionery product manufacturing, beverage manufacturing and cannabis product manufacturing. Cannabis product manufacturing emerged as a brand new industry in Niagara during this period.



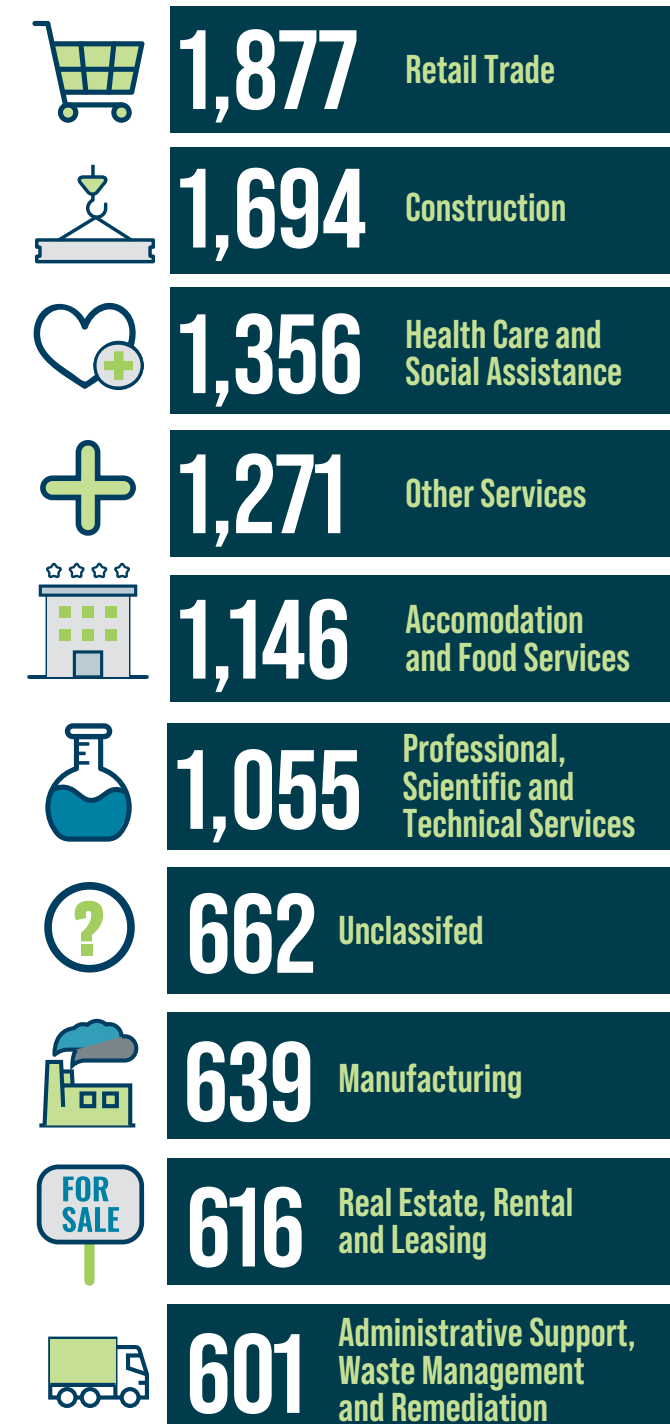
Peach Farm, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Business Counts data is organized by number of businesses without employees and number of business with employees by employment size range. In 2019, Niagara had 13,641 businesses with employees and 28,153 businesses without employees.

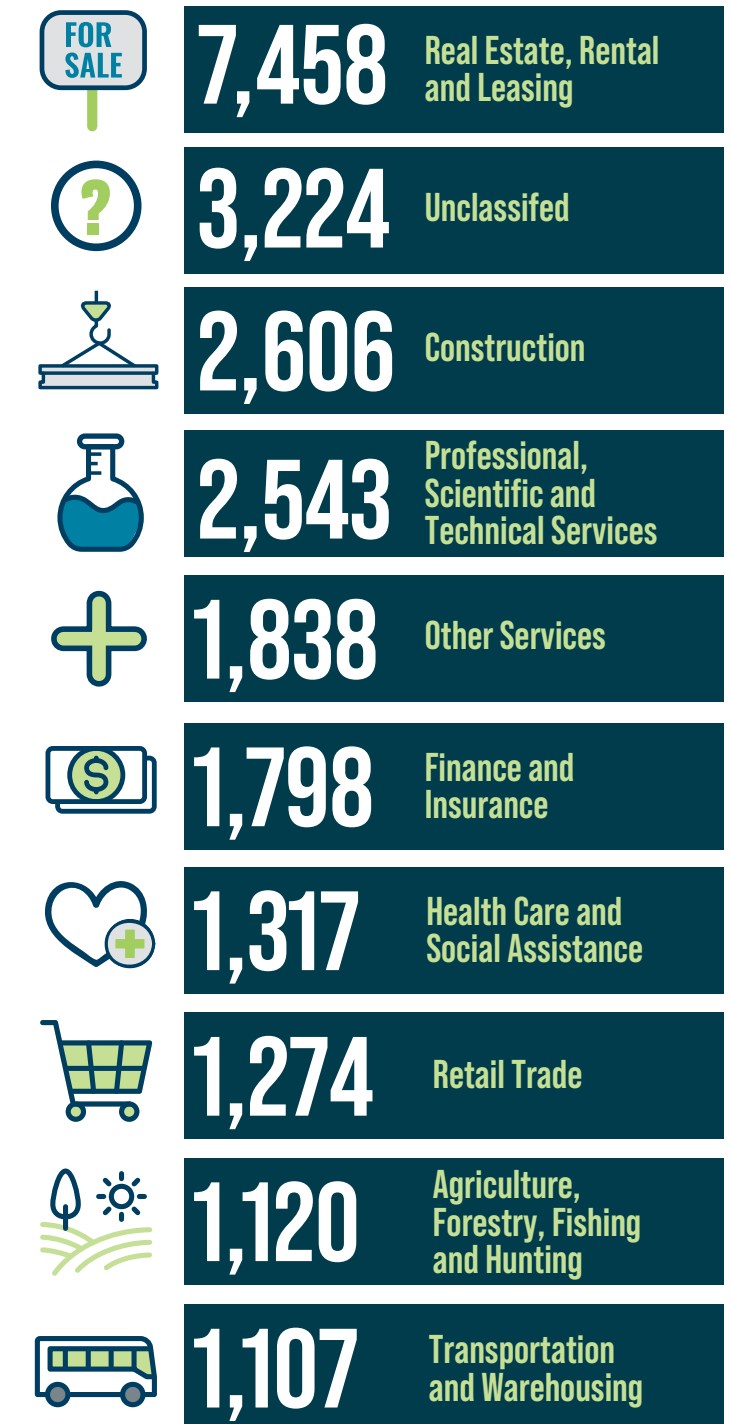
90 per cent of Niagara businesses have less than 50 employees. Therefore, the region is a small business economy with two Small Business Enterprise Centres (SBECS) supporting start-up, education and connection to resources.

In regards to businesses with employees, 71 per cent had 1 to 9 employees, 23 per cent had 10 to 49 employees, 5 per cent had 50 to 199 employees, and 1 per cent had more 200 plus employees.

## Top 10 Sectors by Total Business with Employees



## Top 10 Sectors by Total Business without Employees



The top 10 sectors with the largest employers in Niagara were accommodation and food services with 21 businesses employing 200 plus people, followed by health care and social assistance with 17; retail trade with 11; manufacturing with 9; professional, scientific and technical services with 8; public administration with 8; administrative support, waste management and remediation with 7; and, transportation and warehousing with and management of companies tied with 3.

## Business Counts by NAICS, Niagara Region, June 2019

NAICS = North American Industry Classification System

**NE** No Employees

**E** Employees

### EMPLOYMENT RANGE

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	NE	E	1-9	10-49	50-199	200+
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1,120	517	330	149	35	3
21	Mining, Quarrying, Oil, Gas	11	12	7	5	0	0
22	Utilities	76	25	16	6	3	0
23	Construction	2,606	1,694	1,399	260	33	2
31-33	Manufacturing	464	639	324	213	93	9
41	Wholesale	498	511	335	149	25	2
44-45	Retail Trade	1,274	1,877	1,180	557	129	11
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	1,107	555	419	109	24	3
51	Information and Culture	241	162	114	40	8	0
52	Finance and Insurance	1,798	484	346	130	8	0
53	Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	7,456	616	544	65	7	0
54	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	2,543	1,055	905	130	12	8
55	Management of Companies	305	48	26	15	4	3
56	Admin, Support, Waste and Remediation	858	601	432	133	29	7
61	Educational Services	252	134	81	40	6	7
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,317	1,356	954	334	51	17

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2019

NAICS = North American Industry Classification System

**NE** No Employees

**E** Employees

### EMPLOYMENT RANGE

NAICS	DESCRIPTION	NE	E	1-9	10-49	50-199	200+
71	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	508	259	170	63	24	
72	Accommodation and Food Services	653	1,146	475	517	133	
81	Other Services	1,838	1,271	1,086	169	16	
91	Public Administration	2	17	1	1	7	
X0	Unclassified	3,224	662	596	60	5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>28,153</b>	<b>13,641</b>	<b>9,740</b>	<b>3,145</b>	<b>652</b>	

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT

In 2019, Niagara had 625 exporting establishments. This was an increase of 12 or 2.0 per cent over 2016. In the same year, Niagara had 1,752 importers, which was an increase of 56 or 3.3 per cent over 2016.

In 2019, total export values for Niagara exporting establishments were \$4.7 billion. This was an increase of 13 per cent over 2016. Total import values were \$3.2 billion, which was an increase of \$1.2 billion over 2016. In 2019, Niagara had a net trade balance of \$1.5 billion. This was a decrease of \$606 million or 29 per cent over 2016.

Niagara has had a strong trade balance which is starting to be eroded. The growth in the number of exporters is slower than the growth in the number of importers.

# MACROECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

## Gross Domestic Product

Total real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for Niagara was \$15.8 billion in 2019. This was an increase of \$492.8 million over 2016. Niagara's top 10 sectors by total GDP included real estate at \$3.7 billion; manufacturing at \$1.8 billion; health care and social assistance at \$1.4 billion; construction at \$1.3 billion; educational services at \$1.1 billion; retail trade at \$1.1 billion; primary and utilities (which includes agriculture) at \$882.1 million; public administration at \$880.9 million; accommodation and food services at \$852.7 million; and, wholesale trade at \$821.9 million.

Sectors showing GDP growth between 2016 and 2019 were health care and social assistance, which would have been affected by the new hospital in St. Catharines as well as real estate, which has seen growth not just in Niagara, but also Ontario and Canada. The manufacturing sector is also growing in output; therefore, becoming more productive.



Automotive Manufacturing, St. Catharines

## Household Income

**\$14.6B** TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN NIAGARA 2019



Income outpaced inflation.

**\$33.7K** HOUSEHOLD INCOME PER CAPITA IN NIAGARA 2019



This low growth demonstrates that the population is growing slower than income.

## Consumer Price Index (CPI)

**1.37** CONSUMER PRICE INDEX FOR NIAGARA 2019



CPI slightly outpaced household income per capita in 2017 and 2019, which means cost of living accelerated more than income.

## Retail Sales

**\$6B** RETAIL SALES IN NIAGARA 2019



Some of the growth is explained by the opening of the Niagara Outlet Mall.

## Investment in Construction

From 2016 to 2019, Niagara experienced very strong growth in investment in building construction across all types of construction, except for institutional, which includes government funded building construction. Total investment in building construction was \$1.8 billion in 2019, which was an increase of \$543.4 million or 43 per cent over 2016. Investment in residential building construction was \$1.3 billion in 2019, which was an increase of \$371.0 million or 39 per cent over 2016. Investment in industrial building construction was \$102.4 million in 2019, which was an increase of \$44.3 million or 76 per cent over 2016. Investment in commercial building construction was \$333.0 million, which was an increase of \$169.3 million or 103 per cent over 2016. Investment in institutional building construction was \$46.2 million, which was a decrease of \$41.2 million or 47 per cent over 2016. This latter will have increased with the building of Canada Games Park.

More recent data reported in the fall of 2020 'COVID-19 Impact on Investment and Development in Niagara' recorded that investment and construction activity remained strong for Niagara going into 2020. However, investment values were drastically affected in April 2020 due to COVID-19. Interestingly, they rebounded almost immediately and remained stable. This is a good sign that Niagara may not have lost momentum in new investment and development in Niagara.



Residential Development, Grimsby

Investment in residential and commercial building construction were impacted drastically more than industrial, and government and institutional building types. This is likely due to the nature of residential and commercial developments compared to industrial and institutional. Commercial and residential projects are much higher in volume and react more quickly to market conditions. Industrial and institutional projects are typically larger, fewer and take longer to complete.

Industrial, and institutional and government construction remained relatively stable throughout the COVID-19 restrictions period. As evident in the results from the Niagara COVID-19 Business Impact Surveys and the results from the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, the goods producing sector which included manufacturing, construction and agriculture, were not negatively affected as much as the service sector when it came to lost jobs and revenue.

Investment in building construction returned to pre-pandemic levels as of July 2020 and was higher for residential and commercial building types.

Investment remains strong, but there are economic challenges on the horizon that could affect this including the end of support programs for individuals and business, as well as the end of mortgage and other debt payment deferral programs. This will have negative macroeconomic implications that may affect business confidence, access to capital, and new investment into the future.

Residential building permits remain strong, but there is softening in commercial, industrial, and government and institutional values, which is a sign that investment levels may decline into the future, if conditions do not improve.



New Development, Lincoln

## REGIONAL BENCHMARKING

Niagara census metropolitan area (CMA) was benchmarked with the Hamilton CMA; Waterloo CMA; London CMA and Windsor, across indicators including population growth, labour force characteristics, international trade and construction investment. Generally, Niagara is growing at a lower rate than these neighbouring CMAs. These CMAs were chosen because they have similar economic characteristics to the region.

### Appendix 2 – Economic Base Analysis, July 2021

# COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Consultation is a critical component of strategy development. The objective, with this engagement, was to undertake a broad, extensive consultation to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to participate. A diverse range of groups were to participate including: Regional and Municipal Councillors; Chambers of Commerce; Business Improvement Areas/Downtown Improvement Areas (BIA/DIA); employment organizations; Small Business Enterprise Centres; post-secondary institutions; economic development offices and their networks; Destination Marketing Organizations; industry associations; financial organizations; groups representing women, youth as well as Francophone, multicultural, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ communities; home-based businesses and private-sector businesses through the Niagara Employment Inventory.

The objective of the engagement was to understand perspectives on the strengths and opportunities for economic growth and the barriers that are currently preventing those opportunities from being realized. The feedback helped to understand the local context and uniqueness of Niagara.

Over the last two years, in-person interviews and workshops have become virtual and many new tools and methods of engagement have been developed. Intelligent Futures, a company based in Alberta which specializes in this type of engagement, was contracted through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process, to undertake this component of the strategy development.



Rendering of Wainfleet Fire Station

## The engagement methods included:

- Participation in an online survey, on [niagaracanada.com](https://niagaracanada.com)
- Individual participation through a series of one-on-one interviews
- Participation in a Data Walk workshop and one of five Future of the Economy workshops

# VOICE OF NIAGARA

Niagara Regional Headquarters

## A communications plan was developed to promote the engagement opportunities and included:

- An Economic Development Strategy webpage on [niagaracanada.com](https://niagaracanada.com)
- Direct email or phone invitation to over 10,000 businesses, elected officials, Chambers of Commerce, industry associations, employment offices, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, BIAs, DIAs, DMOs, Brock University, Niagara College, financial organizations; groups representing women, youth as well as Francophone, multicultural, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ communities; home based businesses to participate
- Media release
- Promotion through social media channels

The online survey was available from Oct. 14 to Nov. 13, 2021, and explored key issues impacting the economy in Niagara and the potential vision for Niagara's future.

A three-hour Data Walk workshop asked participants to respond to a series of data and trends from the Economic Base Analysis (Appendix 2) related to the current state of the economy in Niagara. Participants were able to explain why they thought specific trends were occurring, which helped to interpret the statistics.

The Future of the Economy workshops invited participants to share the opportunities and issues they thought were effecting the economy and develop an aspirational vision statement to describe the future state of the economy. This was done through a rich-picturing exercise. Finally, participants brainstormed what actions were necessary to make the Vision a reality.

Based on the engagement feedback from participants and a review of the economic base analysis data, five vision statements were created, in partnership with the Strategy Advisory Council. They were refined by Intelligent Futures and re-circulated to the Strategy Advisory Council, for a vote. The results of the vote were put out to a 'pulse check' using a survey asking those who had participated in the consultations, to rate three Vision Statements. Feedback was collected through an online questionnaire and individual interviews with Regional Councillors.



Cruise Ship, Port Colborne

# KEY THEMES FROM COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS CONSULTATIONS

Participants were asked about Niagara's greatest assets, top barriers and future opportunities. Their direct feedback is summarized below.

## Niagara Region's greatest assets:

- The proximity of the region to major markets, including the GTA and the USA
- The food and agriculture industry in the region and all that is associated with it
- The tourism economy draws millions of visitors per year due to the growing number of attractions and reasons to visit creating an economy that is larger than just visiting Niagara Falls

## Niagara Region's top barriers:

- Too much government leads to an inefficient tiered system and added red tape, leading to redundancies and duplication
- The lack of affordable housing with the rising cost of living in the region makes it challenging for lower-income families to reside in the region
- A lack of diversity in the labour force and skill sets, with an aging population, a mismatch of labour force and top talent moving to bigger markets due to opportunities

## Niagara Region's future opportunities:

- Opportunity to bolster the technology and innovation sector in the region and provide support for start-ups, innovation ecosystems and grow the post-secondary institutions located in the region
- Improve the quality of life in the region by providing more affordable housing and childcare, support for newcomers, regional transportation and more equity, diversion and inclusion
- Build on the tourism draw in the region and expand it into other year-round attractions, including eco-tourism, wellness-tourism and agri-tourism



# ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Key themes emerged from the consultations that have been considered as part of the new Strategy. A summary of the main points is provided under each theme.

## Agribusiness, Manufacturing and Tourism



- Sector support, value-added opportunities, support agri-tech, diversification and emerging sector opportunities, protection of natural heritage and the Greenbelt
- Opportunities in transportation and logistics, advocacy for broadband, build on strategic location

## Diversity and Inclusivity



- Prioritize affordable housing, engage with Indigenous communities, employment opportunities for newcomers, affordable childcare, engage with people representing a broad cross section of interests

## Governance and Finance



- Reduce bureaucracy and red tape, Economic Development Strategy collaboration with all municipalities, innovation through policy and planning, financial incentives to support downtown redevelopment and business attraction, increase industrial tax base

## Employment, Business and Investment



- Talent attraction and retention strategy, showcase Niagara's story nationally and internationally, increase value-added industries and sectors in the region, enhanced workforce development, support for small businesses

## Education and Support for Workforce



- Regional transit, broadband coverage, affordable housing, available and affordable childcare, flexible working hours, work with post-secondary institutions to fulfill labour market demands and support existing workforce

## Infrastructure and Transportation



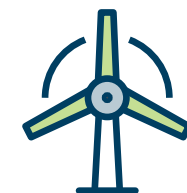
- Regional transit system, zero-emission transportation, GO train service, development paying for infrastructure, advocacy to upper levels of government for funding, enhancements to roads, rail and ports, opportunities for Niagara District Airport

## Business Growth and Retention



- Strengthen the technology and innovation ecosystem, support new business start ups, partnerships with post-secondary institutions

## Green Development and Sustainability



- Encourage sustainable, off-grid, smart development, manufacture clean renewable energy, sustainable technologies in municipal government and climate change

## Community



- Encourage community pride, focus on wellness as a key value for Niagara, place-making opportunities, and consult with the whole community

Appendix 3 – Community and Business Engagement, Intelligent Futures Final Report

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Advanced Manufacturing, Grimsby

The strategic directions of the Economic Development Strategy were established by combining input from the research conducted through the background review, the economic and industrial base analysis and the community and business engagement. The Strategy builds on the strengths of the region, addresses weaknesses and identifies potential opportunities. The objective is to achieve a confident and positive business environment that is necessary to grow a strong and sustainable economy.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

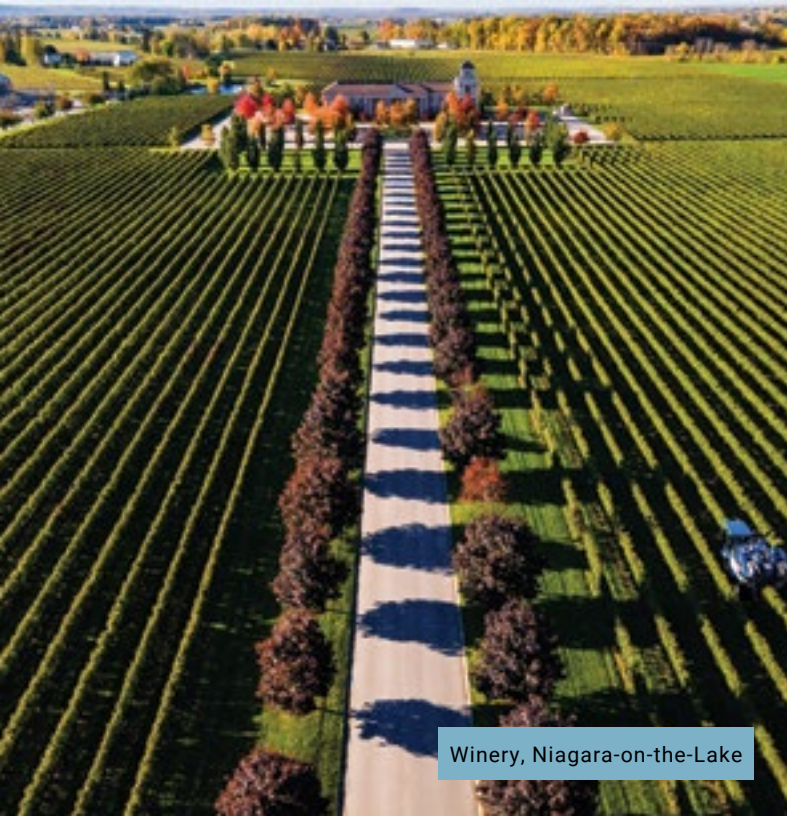
### SECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

**GOAL:** To foster resilient diversity in our economy through the development of emerging sectors and value-added opportunities while continuing to grow and support our strong industry clusters, uniquely established by our strategic location, natural assets and competitiveness.

#### Agriculture

Niagara region hosts a well established and thriving agri-business sector that contributes significantly to the economic prosperity and quality of life in Niagara. With an abundance of agricultural land and as a major component of both the Greenbelt and the Greater Golden Horseshoe food and farming cluster, it is one of the most significant agri-food clusters in North America. Niagara region is positioned

Vineland Research and Innovation Centre



Winery, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Photo: MarkZelinski.com

as a prominent target for new investment, relocation, or expansion of agri-businesses. Niagara’s strengths in the agriculture sector include: greenhouse growers; cash crops; poultry; tender fruit and grape growers and it has some of the highest gross farm receipts in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Niagara Region has always supported and promoted its agricultural sector by maintaining a supportive policy environment, seeking to attract, retain and expand agri-food business, engaging in ongoing outreach to the sector and pursuing ways to support and address challenges in the agricultural labour force. Niagara also has the climate, land base, experienced operators, research capacity and skills to expand its position as a leader in the production of agri-food products. Broadband

coverage and technology innovation can help farmers better analyze their crops for growth and any potential diseases yielding in more crops annually.

The eco-system supporting agri-innovation in Niagara includes: Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, a world renowned research centre focused on forwarding a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable horticultural industry driven by innovation; Niagara College’s Food and Wine Institute, supporting education and agri-business start-up with hands-on learning at the on-site 40 acres of vineyards, hop yard, culinary gardens, apiary, fruit tree orchard, greenhouse and micro-processing facility and Niagara College’s Agriculture & Environmental Technologies Innovation Centre, working with public and private sector partners to develop innovative solutions in precision agriculture, GIS, sustainable food production, plant growth, horticultural practices, greenhouse operations, aquaponics, environmental management and renewable energies.

Brock University’s Niagara Community Observatory (NCO) is engaged in ongoing research and analysis focused on agri-tech innovation to inform and influence public policy to further support the sector.

In the future, Niagara will have the opportunity to capitalize on its existing base and move forward successfully through progressive innovation, support of value-added agriculture and agri-tourism, and deeper development of the agri-food supply chain.

Niagara Region’s Official Plan recognizes and protects the agriculture sector as an essential component of Niagara’s economy. This includes supporting the use of agricultural lands for farming, processing, research and development and agri-tourism. Niagara Region’s Agriculture Policy and Action Committee is committed to supporting actions and strategies needed to advance the local agricultural sector.

## Manufacturing

Manufacturing has traditionally been an important sector of Niagara’s economy with a diverse base of companies, employing tens of thousands of people in automotive, paper and steel manufacturing. Historically, it consisted of many branch plant facilities employing large numbers of people in each facility, the sector is now predominantly comprised of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and has diversified. It has strengths in food and beverage processing, wood products, chemical manufacturing, steel production and fabricated metal.

The manufacturing sector is one of the largest contributors to Niagara’s GDP at \$1.8 billion, which is 11 per cent of total GDP. The sector is the fourth largest in Niagara in terms of employment with 16,445 jobs. Although it has fewer jobs than accommodation and food services, retail, health care and social assistance, manufacturing has much higher job multipliers than the service producing sectors. It is estimated that each manufacturing job in Niagara supports an additional 3.2 jobs in other industries. The sector has also seen job growth during the pandemic.

Manufacturing companies capitalize on Niagara’s strategic location on the Canada/U.S. border and there has seen growth in exports as well as imports. It is supported by a growing transportation and warehousing sector. Exporting activity is strengthened by international trade agreements, for example, Canada-United States-Mexico agreement (CUSMA) and the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade agreement (CETA) and supported locally by services provided through the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone point.



Manufacturing, Niagara Falls

The sector is supported by Niagara College's Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre that assists manufacturers with engineering design, 3D technology, lean manufacturing processes and additive manufacturing. The Niagara Industrial Association (NIA) was formed in 2007 and has around 200 members. The NIA provides a voice for the sector in the region and advocates for policy changes that reflect current market conditions.

Investment activity in the manufacturing and industrial sector was high before the pandemic started and, despite an initial dip, has returned to high levels indicating confidence in the sector and its future.

NED supports the manufacturing sector through: investment attraction; planning and policy development in the Official Plan which protects employment areas; advocacy of identified sectors e.g. marine sector; promotion of the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone which provides support to exporters through federal programming and connects exporting businesses to federal agencies such as Canada Border Services Agency, Canada Revenue Agency and Export Development Canada (EDC).

## Tourism

Niagara is an important tourism destination for Canada and a major global attraction. The region is home to an abundance of natural scenery, diverse geography that includes hiking trails (including portions of the Bruce Trail), small waterfalls and powerful rapids, and one of the world's natural wonders, Niagara Falls, and its many attractions. Niagara Falls is the leading leisure destination in Canada. Outdoor enthusiasts can indulge in extensive activities such as cycling trails, watersports, golf and much more. Additionally, the environment supports vineyards and agri-tourism assets annually drawing over 13 million visitors, nationally and internationally.



With over 140 wineries, breweries and distilleries and setup in an agri-food cluster bringing farm to table experiences, Niagara also boasts a world-class culinary paradise. The region also encompasses a rich and fascinating history showcased by monuments, museums, former battlefields, forts and heritage structures due to its riveting heritage. From Lincoln to Niagara Falls, there's much to see and experience throughout Niagara, including local markets, festivals and events, live theatre, movies, orchestras, visual arts and more.

Tourism is a major economic contributor in Niagara generating a significant amount of business activity, jobs, and other economic benefits. While historically, visitors were attracted to the natural wonders and assets, prominent Canadian wine region and the tourism attractions, the pressure created by COVID to focus on local tourism and outdoor activities has also introduced visitors to the charming local downtowns, beaches, agri-tourism and farm to table opportunities.

The current tourism ecosystem identifies multiple partnering organizations across the sector, with the majority engaged in tourism marketing and about half involved in product development. The Tourism Partnership of Niagara leads the marketing efforts with the support of the local DMOs, Niagara Parks Commission and industry associations as well as Chambers, BIAs and local area municipal economic development offices who also engage in product development. NED supports the sector through investment attraction, planning and policy development and advocacy.

## Professional Services

Professional services are a growing sector in Niagara, in terms of employment and one of the top, in terms of number of businesses. Professional services has been identified as one where there is potential to attract higher skilled finance, technical, professional and scientific services jobs. Due to physical constraints, some Niagara municipalities face challenges to growth and are looking for intensified and higher use development in their downtowns by attracting companies in the professional services sector.



## Emerging Sectors

Sectors that are considered emerging have been identified because they offer new and growing opportunities to Niagara's economy. These sectors are described below and include health care, film industry, sport tourism, marine sector and electric vehicles. Investments in these emerging sectors have not traditionally been a focus of Regional Economic Development and therefore will require research to understand the assets and develop actions going forward.

## Health Care

Niagara has seen considerable investment in the broad health care sector in recent years. Over the last decade investments have included: the Niagara Health System's completion of a new state-of-the-art hospital for the St. Catharines area providing more than a million square feet of care; the expansion of McMaster University's Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine to include a regional campus located inside Brock University; Roy and Lois Cairns Health and Biosciences Research Complex at Brock University; the redevelopment of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital and most recently the announcement and release of a Request For Proposal for the new South Niagara Hospital. Health care is an emerging sector in Niagara and has the potential to become a hub in the future.

The new South Niagara Hospital complex will consolidate and expand acute care services; replacing outdated infrastructure with high tech facilities and supporting better, connected care in the region. In addition to emergency, critical care and surgical services, South Niagara

Hospital will feature several centres of excellence specializing in stroke, complex care, geriatrics and geriatric psychiatry and wellness in aging. Cutting-edge technology will transform and improve the patient experience at the future South Niagara Hospital.

The West Lincoln Memorial Hospital (WLMH) redevelopment project is also moving forward with construction beginning in 2022. The new WLMH will be a state-of-the-art 120,000 sq. ft. site featuring an expanded 24-hour emergency department, several acute inpatient beds, increased outpatient care, continued maternal and newborn services, day surgery services, and advanced diagnostics, including X-ray, mammography, echocardiography, ultrasound and CT scanning capabilities.

These assets come together to offer new economic opportunities in the health care sector for the region as well as high quality health care services for Niagara residents. NED has worked with the Niagara Health System to develop a local business directory to help promote supplier opportunities to local businesses, which will maximize the economic impact of the new hospital in Niagara.

The broader life sciences sector, which includes health care, is currently very nascent in the region. This includes notable companies that focus on: biotechnology; pharmaceutical manufacturing; vector-borne pathogen testing, identification and surveillance; hygiene product dispenser manufacturing, and prosthetics and orthotics manufacturing.

## Film Industry

Across all municipalities, Niagara is seeing interest from the film industry. The region has much to offer in terms of unique locations. There are economic benefits from the hiring of local people and services to the fees paid to municipalities and property owners and increased tourism.

Marketing the region as a potential film location and streamlining the process for film companies could increase the economic benefits from the film industry. Niagara already has a base of 259 businesses in this sector and between 2015 and 2019 saw huge increases in the jobs associated with the film industry.



Rendering of South Niagara Hospital



Film Production, St. Paul Street, St. Catharines

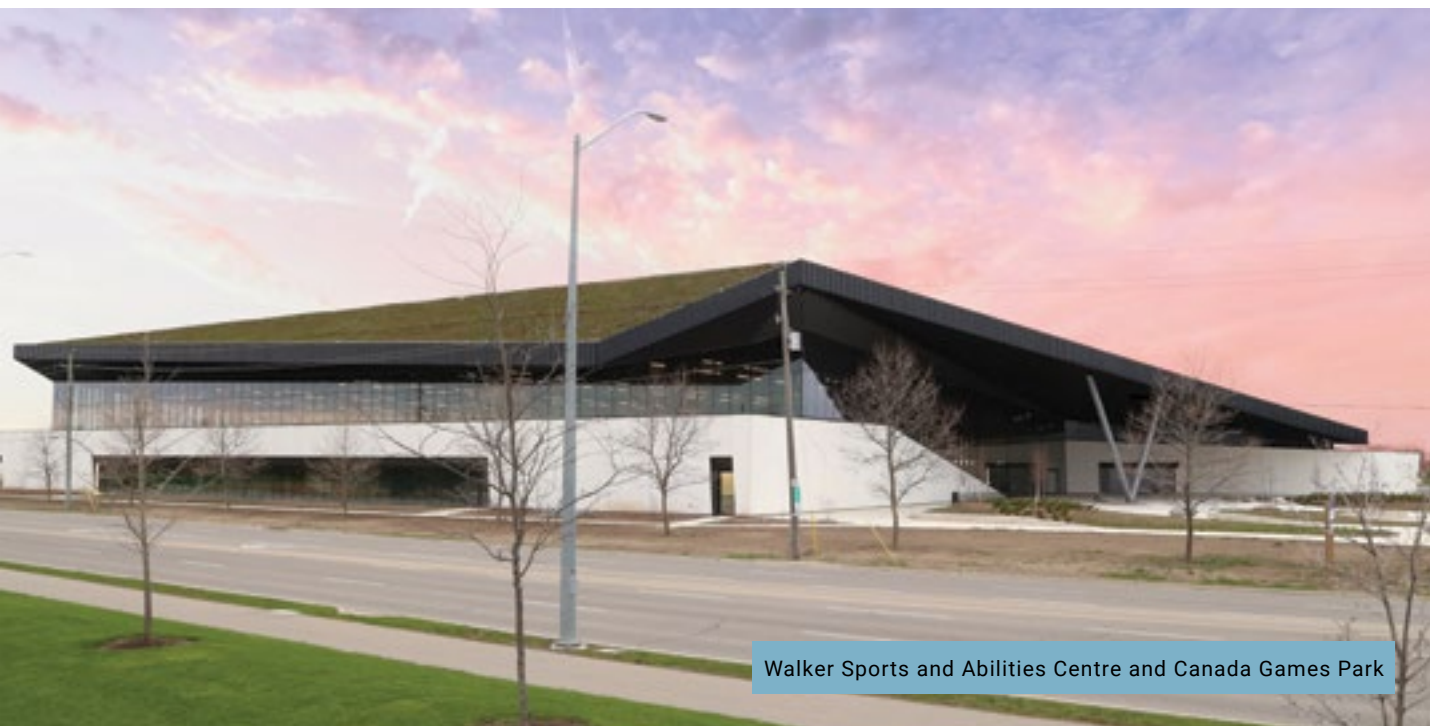
## Sport Tourism/Active Economy

Niagara has hosted large international sport events such as the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta, the Lightning North American Sailing Championship, the Pan American Games, World Dragonboat Championships, IIHF Ice Hockey Women's U18 World Championships and FIBA U18 Americas Basketball Championships. All have left a legacy of sports infrastructure as well as adding economic benefits in increased hotel room nights, business to local restaurants as well as business development opportunities associated with showcasing investment opportunities to business delegations. Niagara is also home to Brock University's Sport Management program, which is considered one of the best in Canada.

The Canada Summer Games are being hosted in Niagara in August 2022 and has created the local capacity to attract, organize and run large sporting events in the future, contributing to the growing sector of sport tourism. The four consortium partners of City of Thorold, City of St. Catharines, Regional Municipality of Niagara and Brock University are working in conjunction with the Canada Games Host Society to develop Canada Games Park which will be a legacy facility for the community after the Games.

The City of St. Catharines, in partnership with St. Catharines World Rowing and Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA), will be hosting the 2024 World Rowing Senior, Under 23 and Junior Championships in 2024. This will be the third time that the championship has been held in St. Catharines.

This may be the time to consider how to focus on this sector and maximize the economic benefits across the region. The broader perspective would position sport as an economic driver when considered as a part of the Active Economy. The Active Economy incorporates all enterprises participating in, or contributing to, improving individual or community prosperity through the development and delivery of active living, organized sports, active recreation, and health and wellness experiences.



Walker Sports and Abilities Centre and Canada Games Park

## Marine Sector

Niagara has many assets in the marine sector, including access to the Great Lakes, the opportunities associated with the Welland Canal (including the potential on employment lands) and the recent investment in a multimodal hub by the Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority (HOPA). Development of the hub in the City of Thorold is the initial phase of the 'Niagara Ports' plan to create a corridor of multimodal industrial hubs along the Welland Canal. HOPA has invested in a 200 acre complex adjacent to the Welland Canal which has 500,000 sq. feet of privately-owned warehousing.

The local impact of the Welland Canal on Niagara's economy is significant. It supports the activities of over 50 businesses and over 2,400 jobs, creating substantial business revenue in the region.

Many of Niagara's manufacturing companies and services industries are suppliers to the marine industry. This includes, major players like, Heddle Marine who own and operate the Port Weller Dry Docks facility, which is the largest Canadian-owned dry dock facility on the Great Lakes as well as smaller machining and metal working companies.

Recent advocacy to the province, spearheaded by municipalities, marine businesses and industry associations within Niagara, has resulted in the Ontario government's confirmation of its intention to develop a maritime strategy for the province that would make the industry more competitive against other provinces (e.g. Quebec and British Columbia) who already support the marine sector.



Port Weller Dry Docks, St. Catharines



## Electric Vehicles (EV)

'Driving Prosperity: The Future of Ontario's Automotive Sector' positions the province to be a leader in North America in developing and building the car of the future through emerging technologies and advanced manufacturing processes.

Recent announcements show that automakers are investing around \$4 billion in transformative electric vehicle investments at their Ontario assembly plants. Premier Doug Ford has solidified his commitment to Ontario by announcing \$1.8 billion to produce battery EVs at its Oakville assembly complex, including the production of five new electric vehicle models. Stellantis announced it will invest up to \$1.5 billion to upgrade its assembly plant in Windsor to build new electrified vehicles. GM announced it would invest \$1 billion in its plant in Ingersoll to produce their BrightDrop EV delivery van – the first all-electric vehicle produced by a mainstream automaker in Canada. In November 2021, Tesla announced that they were opening a battery manufacturing facility in Markham.

The most recent announcement in March 2022, more than doubles that investment amount. A \$4.9 billion investment is being made by LG Energy Solutions and Stellantis in Windsor, to produce lithium based batteries for electric vehicles. This is the largest single investment in manufacturing to be made in Ontario and will serve as a catalyst for the establishment of a strong battery supply chain. With Niagara's strengths in the automotive sector, there are opportunities that should be explored with EV battery manufacturers and their supply chains.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

**GOAL:** Consistently incorporate the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion throughout our goals to attract and sustain an inclusive society where everyone has the necessary tools to succeed and thrive.

In 2020, Niagara Region and the 12 municipalities signed a joint declaration to join the Coalition for Inclusive Municipalities. This confirmed that all municipalities in Niagara would view policy development and municipal practices through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). It recognizes that Niagara's population is becoming increasingly diverse. The current DEI work is focused on creating an action plan to guide the work in the Region for the next five years, and the initial steps being taken to advance DEI in Niagara.

There is a role for Regional economic development to encourage the growth of businesses owned by members of underrepresented groups and support equal opportunities for participation in the labour force. It is important to encourage the integration of newcomers, women, youth and Indigenous people into the labour force. Supporting initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing, ensuring affordable and available childcare is accessible, providing an economic perspective into Regional transit etc., is crucial to ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are a reality in Niagara's labour force.

NED currently views its work through the lens of DEI, particularly in developing survey questions and in engaging with groups representing all interests in Niagara to provide input into the new Economic Development Strategy and other projects.



Photo: Julie Jocsak/Torstar

# EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SUPPORT



Machining at Niagara College

**GOAL:** Work with businesses, employment organizations and post-secondary institutions to ensure a robust workforce.

As the economy moves to higher skilled wage jobs, NED will work with businesses, employment organizations and post-secondary institutions to ensure Niagara's labour force has access to targeted training aligned with the skills needed to create a high quality and more effective labour force. NED will continue to develop a compelling business case to inform projects in regional transit, broadband expansion, affordable housing, childcare, and flexible working hours as they relate to the goal of increased participation in the labour force.

Between 2019 and 2020, our labour force decreased from 216,900 to 211,200 continuing a trend that started in 2016. However, the latest data released by Statistics Canada in March 2022, shows an increase in the labour force to 234,600. Niagara's

unemployment rate rose from a low of 5.8 per cent in 2019 to 9.8 per cent in 2020. Niagara's labour market participation rate fell to 56.9 per cent in 2020 from 59.1 per cent in 2019, and the local employment rate fell to 51.3 per cent in 2020 from 55.6 per cent in 2019. 2021 shows a growing trend. Not all sectors were affected equally during the pandemic with the greatest losses in the accommodation and food service, arts, entertainment, and recreation and retail/wholesale trade sectors.

2020 represented a year of considerable employment disruption. Annual data estimates that 13,700 people lost employment between 2019 and 2020. COVID-19's employment impacts also were unequal across the labour force, with women carrying the larger share of employment disruption. Monthly employment trends demonstrate that men briefly saw their level of employment rise above pre-pandemic levels in the summer of 2020, employment for women surpassed pre-pandemic employment in September of 2021.

While it is expected that employment levels will rebound in 2022, some issues are continuing to emerge. These are issues that are not unique to Niagara, but exist in the province and across Canada. They also existed before the pandemic but have been accelerated by it.

## Mismatch Between Jobs and Labour

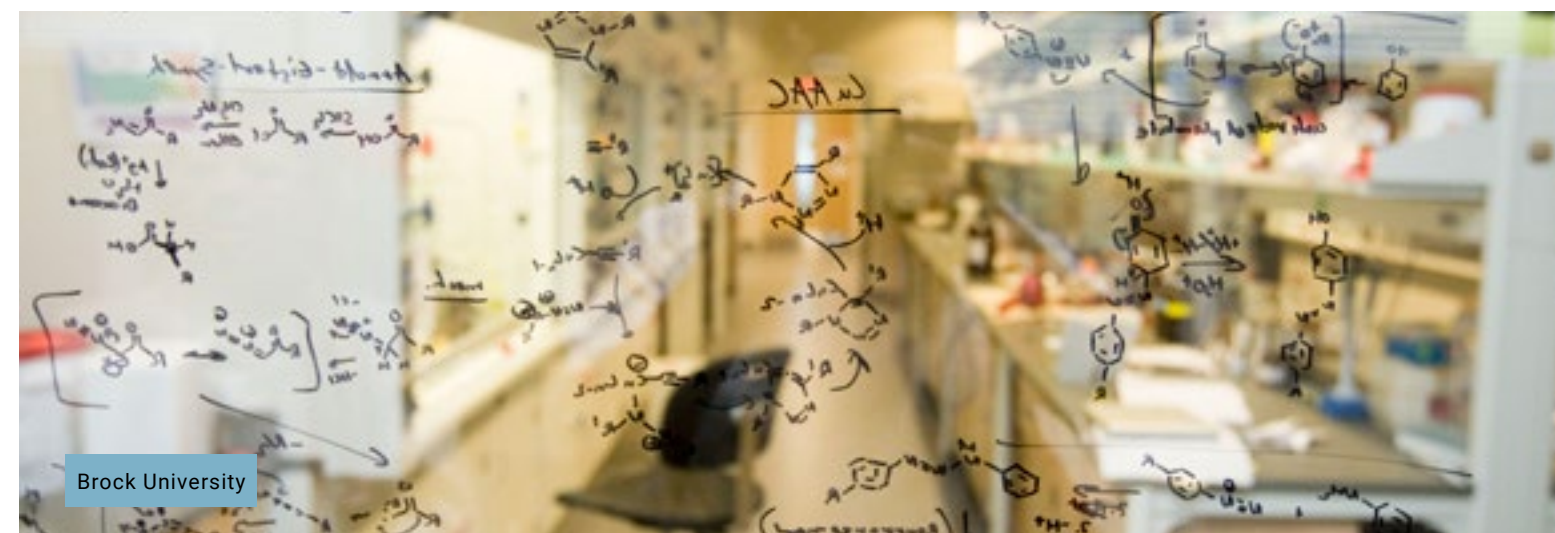
Although there are jobs available and there are people looking for jobs, people are not finding work and employers are not filling positions. The reasons for this mismatch are not completely understood. Pre-COVID, one explanation was that students were staying in school rather than entering the labour force and studying subjects that didn't equip them for employment. In turn these over-qualified employees were taking jobs from lesser qualified employees who were a better fit. Another explanation for the mismatch is that potential employees have unrealistic expectations and/or are less tolerant of existing working conditions since the pandemic. Some employers may also be unaware of changing expectations, not necessarily pay but, for example, flexible working hours. In some cases they are asking for a higher level of education than is needed and preventing capable people from applying.

## Mitigate Low Participation Rates

From 2016 to 2019, the participation rate in Niagara's labour force declined by 4 per cent to 62.9 per cent. It declined by 4.6 per cent for males and 3.7 per cent for females. In 2020 the participation rate fell further to 56.9 per cent with men and women not being affected equally. It fell by 1.8 per cent for men and 2.8 per cent for women. This is a trend that began before the pandemic and has been accelerated by its disruption in 2020 and 2021. However, the participation rate has rebounded to 62.5 per cent in March 2022.

There are many social issues that need to be addressed to increase participation in the labour force and ensure equal employment opportunities for everyone. These issues include the provision of affordable and available childcare, availability of affordable and attainable housing, the availability of integrated regional transit with routes and times to suit work schedules, employers offering flexible working arrangements around school hours and access to reliable broadband coverage across the region. These are areas where NED is playing a supporting role by providing the economic development perspective to others who take the lead.

In the last few months, progress has been made in a number of areas. On March 28, 2022, the Ontario government signed a childcare deal with the federal government; a move that will see



Brock University



child-care fees cut in half by the end of the year and rebates (retroactive to April 1) handed out to parents in May. By December 2022 there will be another reduction in childcare costs and in September 2024, families will see further cost reductions, with the price for child care falling to an average of \$10 a day by September 2025. The deal also includes a plan to create 86,000 new childcare spaces in Ontario by 2026, with the priority on not-for-profit operators.

The Niagara Region Transit system is a significant move forward to improve and modernize public transit by creating one integrated system. Upon implementation, the system will provide improved access to employment and services in the region, as well as expand the potential for residents to explore work opportunities in neighbouring communities. It will also support the expansion and connectivity of the GO Transit service to the region.

Construction is underway to connect more than 4,800 homes, farms and businesses in Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, West Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, Pelham and Wainfleet, to reliable high-speed internet services by December 2022. This \$17.9 million initiative to build three new infrastructure networks in Niagara region will help ensure that farms and businesses in the region will have the ability to attract new customers, grow their business, create new jobs and stay competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace. Another initiative announced in July 2021 will enable the roll out of 5G service to Pelham, Thorold and Welland.

All of these initiatives are positive steps towards enabling equal employment opportunities to Niagara residents and increasing the participation rate in the labour force. NED will monitor ongoing announcements in these areas and continue to insert the economic development perspective where appropriate, working with other Regional departments.

Reference: 2021-2022 Labour Market Planning Report, Niagara Workforce Planning Board



## BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE)

**GOAL:** To ensure that municipal economic development offices have support, as appropriate, from NED to encourage their businesses to stay and grow. Recognize the differentiation between communities which are urban and rural and the opportunities and challenges they both face. Encourage collaboration between the two tiers of local government in support of BRE.

BRE is the priority of the LAMs. It is agreed within the profession that 80 per cent of economic growth comes from existing business retention and expansion and 20 per cent from new investment. NED supports BRE through the following areas of focus.



### Technology and Innovation Eco-system/Partnerships with Post-secondary Institutions

Entrepreneurs are critical to our economy because they create jobs, as well as diversifying and strengthening it. In order to succeed, these new businesses need the support of a robust innovation ecosystem. Niagara has a strong ecosystem including several nationally renowned innovation centres who work with local companies across a number of sectors.

The region has a strong research network through the two post-secondary institutions, Brock University and Niagara College as well as the McMaster Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine campus. Brock University, based in St. Catharines, is recognized as one of Canada's top five institutions for co-operative education. Its transdisciplinary approach to research bring together different disciplines. Brock recently established the Brock LINC as a home for creativity, innovation, research and entrepreneurship. The Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) is focused on the research priorities of the Canadian grape and wine industry and in the past two years Brock University has received federal funding to create the Brock-Niagara Validation, Prototyping and Manufacturing Institute (VPMI).

Niagara College programs are divided between two campuses in Welland and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Its research and innovation division brings together the Walker Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, the Canadian Food and Wine Institute and the Agricultural and Environmental



Niagara College

Technologies Innovation Centre. The Greenhouse Technology Network is a collaboration between Niagara College, the University of Guelph and Vineland Research and Innovation Centre.

Funded provincially and federally, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre focuses on horticultural science and innovation. Innovate Niagara is the Regional Innovation Centre and has access to its network of resources across Ontario. The Niagara Falls-Ryerson Innovation Hub (NFRIH) was formed through a partnership between The City of Niagara Falls, Spark Niagara and Ryerson University.

McMaster University, based in Hamilton, has created strong links with Niagara. McMaster's Niagara regional School of Medicine campus, which is located at Brock University, offers practical hospital experience occurs at hospital sites within Niagara.

There have been a number of local initiatives to explore the opportunities for incubation-related support facilities for the agri-food sector in Niagara. Port Colborne recently conducted a study looking at the introduction of commercial kitchen facilities and a food-related incubator. Lincoln plans to renew efforts to consider the development of a food hub in 2022 and is focused on a model that includes warehouse space and technical equipment, as well as incorporating elements of their successful agri-tech hackathon.

In addition, early stage companies often need access to capital. As well as federal funding programs, the Niagara Angel Network is an independent consortium of over 40 individual accredited angel investors mainly from Niagara, and throughout Southern Ontario. The Niagara Angels typically invest \$100,000-\$1,000,000 in seed/early stage companies, and syndicate deals with other Angel groups across Ontario.

For established businesses to remain competitive and be successful, it is critical to employ new technology and embrace innovation. Since 2011, Niagara has seen double-digit growth in an emerging tech sector. This includes jobs in computer systems design, scientific research and development, and architecture and engineering. There has been a job growth of 81 per cent in the information and technology sector.

NED recognizes the importance of encouraging growth through entrepreneurship and will continue to support the innovation ecosystem and its development by supporting projects, promoting programing and providing corporate funding. Work within the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) program will also target businesses that focus on new technologies, including automation and artificial intelligence as well as continuing to support increased connectivity through the expansion of broadband coverage.

## Funding Opportunities (Incentives and Grants)

Niagara Region formed a Grants and Incentives Review Committee in 2019. The purpose of the committee was to review the efficacy of existing grant programs and to determine if new programs needed to be created. Due to the success of the Gateway Economic Zone and Centre Community Improvement Plan (CIP) there have been millions of dollars of new investment by companies focused on manufacturing and food processing in participating municipalities. To support increased investment throughout the region, a new 'Niagara Business Attraction' program is being created to provide matching dollars to the seven municipalities outside of the Gateway Economic Zone and Centre should they decide to implement similar CIPs.

The decision to match local municipal employment-related CIPs will improve Niagara region's competitiveness; support the local economic development initiatives; and leverage the local sector strengths of Niagara's economy.

Staff at Niagara Region and across all the local municipalities are acutely aware of the importance of supporting new residential developments to address increasing housing prices that is affecting affordability and to accommodate the forecasted growth of the region over the next 30 years. Homeownership and housing affordability contribute to healthy communities. To address these pressing challenges a range of incentives and policies have been updated to meet Niagara's changing needs.

Niagara is home to a number of different downtowns, each of which have their own sense of character. Niagara Region provides support to local municipalities through secondary plans, infrastructure upgrades and accessing other sources of funding. The Region is in the process of adapting its brownfield remediation and development grants to incentivize the provision of attainable and affordable housing in residential developments which, although not specific to downtowns, will assist their redevelopment and growth.

Niagara Region remains focused and committed to attracting and retaining manufacturers that create jobs in the region. These efforts will continue to increase the industrial tax base through higher and better uses of existing and future employment lands. The provision of both development charge and tax increment-based grants or deferrals provides Niagara with a unique value proposition that provides a competitive business climate.



Thorold Multimodal Hub

## Streamline Development Processes

Niagara Region is a two-tier municipality comprised of 12 local municipal governments and Regional government. As a result of this structure, the majority of development applications are received, reviewed, and approved by local planning departments. Niagara Region's Planning and Development Services Department primarily collaborates with local planning departments to ensure developments adhere to both Regional and provincial planning requirements.

A new Official Plan for Niagara Region will be completed in 2022. This is the first time that a brand new plan has been drafted in nearly 50 years. The 12 local municipalities will be required to update their own Official Plans to ensure that they are in conformity with the new Regional Official Plan.

This provides a unique opportunity to harmonize municipal and Regional planning requirements and local zoning bylaws and for Niagara's employment lands and areas to create a made in Niagara solution to support new and future investment. This level of conformity between both tiers of government would place us in a similar category as single-tier municipalities in terms of doing business. Niagara Region will work with local area municipalities to streamline the development approvals process.

## Expanding Local Supply Chain

A recent survey conducted by Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME), March 2022, found that nine out of ten companies in the manufacturing sector are struggling with supply chain issues. Canadian manufacturers say supply chain disruptions are cutting into their production and putting the recovery of the sector at risk. To facilitate economic recovery, build manufacturing capacity and mitigate against future pandemics, it is necessary to have resilient supply chains.

The third COVID-19 survey to Niagara businesses conducted by the ERRT in 2021 also identified that sourcing critical supplies was one of the top five business needs as well as finding more local suppliers and service providers. Throughout the pandemic, the ERRT, led by NED, promoted local businesses in Niagara through the creation of online directories, including a PPE directory,

and there are plans to continue to support 'buy local' campaigns. In a recent project, NED has partnered with Niagara Health to highlight Niagara businesses in preparation for the South Niagara Site construction phase. A new online tool will connect the project team with local Niagara businesses able to supply services or materials for the project.

NED's FDI program will work with industry associations to identify supply chain gaps in the region as a focus for investment attraction.



Canada/US Border Crossing



Peace Bridge, Fort Erie

Photo: MarkZelinski.com

## Cross Border Collaboration

Niagara is at the centre of a binational corridor that runs from Toronto to Buffalo. This geographic area facilitates billions of dollars in trade between Canada and the United States every year and supports jobs on both sides of the border. It presents a unique opportunity for Niagara to explore potential partnerships and collaborations to strengthen our economy. Previously, opportunities for collaboration within this binational geography have been explored by a number of organizations, in areas such as the innovation eco-system, health sciences, investment attraction and tourism. Buffalo Niagara is home to one of only five World Trade Centres that span an international border. The World Trade Centre Buffalo Niagara is licensed by the World Trade Centres Association to serve as a binational region that includes Western New York, the Southern Tier, the Finger Lakes and Southern Ontario.

NED will continue to build relationships across the border and investigate opportunities for collaboration with partners in Niagara.

# GREEN DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY



Sir Adam Beck Hydroelectric Generating Station

**GOAL:** Niagara will look to not only preserve but leverage its unique natural features to build a sustainable environment through innovative thinking and adopting new technologies. There will be an alignment with climate change policies with all levels of government to achieve smart environmentally-sustainable development.

The Niagara peninsula, located in between Lakes Erie and Ontario, is defined by the Greenbelt and the Niagara Escarpment. Home to Ontario's tender fruit farms and Canada's grape growing region inherently means that environmental stewardship goes hand-in-hand with economic development. The region's unique agricultural strengths will make it a destination for future investments across all levels of the food cultivation and processing sector. As companies look to localize and shorten their supply chains Niagara's agricultural strengths make it a top destination for investment.

To accommodate increased investment, Niagara will have to promote and leverage its strength as one of North America's largest green energy providers. For over 100 years,

hydroelectric generators at Niagara Falls have been producing green, renewable, emission-free electricity. As an increasing number of companies begin to evaluate the triple bottom line of their businesses, Niagara can become a choice destination. However, in order to meet Canada's target of net-zero emissions by 2050 and the more ambitious target of reducing emissions by 40-45 per cent by 2030 it will take new and innovative investments.

The Ontario government announced its Hydrogen Strategy in April 2022, alongside an announcement that Atura Power, a subsidiary of Ontario Power Generation, has chosen Niagara Falls as its first Ontario site for large-scale hydrogen production. Hydrogen is a versatile fuel that can be used for vehicles, industrial processes and heating homes and businesses while emitting little or no greenhouse gases and other pollution. It is important in the fight against climate change. This investment decision positions Niagara at the forefront of the clean energy



Niagara region Wind Farm, West Lincoln

and hydrogen economy, as one of Canada's largest green energy hubs. It will have a positive direct and indirect economic impact in Niagara with jobs created during construction and operation as well as further employment potential in the supply chain.

NED will support sustainable developments through the Gateway Economic Zone and Centre Community Improvement Plan (Gateway CIP). A core component of the Gateway CIP is to attract new investment to Niagara that will leverage our location and natural advantages. Importantly, the Gateway CIP encourages the investment and implementation in sustainable technologies, site design, and infrastructure to reduce the environmental impacts of business operations on the environment.

The economic growth of Niagara cannot come at the cost of the local environment. Green development and sustainability is important to overall community wellbeing, identified in the Vision statement. Niagara Region supports new and innovative uses of new technologies that will lower our carbon footprint as demonstrated in this Economic Development Strategy and the new Official Plan. This includes permitting and encouraging the adoption of new clean and renewable technologies in residential, commercial, and industrial developments.

## Appendix - Official Plan, Chapter 3 - Sustainable Region

# INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION



**GOAL:** The transportation infrastructure network will support the efficient movement of goods, provide adequate connections to support the tourism industry, and provide high-quality access to employment for all residents. Achieve a higher and better use of infrastructure to support economic growth in Niagara.

Niagara region is planning to add 214,000 new residents by 2051, which will result in a total population of nearly 700,000 people and a total of 272,000 jobs. The City of St. Catharines is the only identified Urban Growth Centre by the Province of Ontario in Niagara. Accommodating this growth will require municipalities to re-evaluate not only their urban boundaries, but housing densities in

order to make the best use of the land and the infrastructure in Niagara. As communities across Niagara continue to grow adding affordable and attainable housing stock will be needed to address the growing challenge of housing affordability across Niagara.

As Niagara's new Official Plan comes into effect and local municipalities bring their Official Plans into conformity. This will allow municipalities to re-evaluate how they will meet their own growth targets and for communities such as Lincoln, Grimsby, St. Catharines, and Niagara Falls the continued expansion of the GO Train service will enable new types of transit-orientated development planning policies. This is an opportunity to realize new types of high-density developments to generate economic development growth. Creating and leveraging new and forward thinking and permissive mixed-use developments will make better use of Niagara's existing and future infrastructure, increase municipal tax base and create more affordable and environmentally sustainable communities.

The updated Employment Lands Needs Assessment that is used in Niagara region's new Official Plan identified that between 2021 and 2051 the region will require an additional 210 hectares of new employment lands to meet growth forecasts. Future employment corridors along the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW), between Fort Erie and Niagara Falls and along the Niagara-Hamilton-GTA Corridor between Fort Erie and Welland, have also been identified in the Official Plan.

This will require Niagara Region in collaboration with local municipalities to fund the necessary infrastructure to provide services to existing and new employment lands.

Two key pieces of needed infrastructure include the new water treatment facility in South Niagara Falls that will enable the extension of servicing to northern Fort Erie. This investment by Niagara Region will enable the development of land in Niagara Falls' urban boundary expansion. Critically, this will be bringing online a new 210 hectare employment area along the QEW transportation corridor. The servicing of this new employment area will not only support new investment attraction to the region, but also support the growth of local businesses.

The second economic priority is the lack of servicing to the employment lands on the east side of the Welland Canal in the City of Port Colborne. Niagara Region has planned to invest in the construction of a tunnel under the Welland Canal to bring the necessary services to enable new industrial investment in the city. The success of this project will require both inter-departmental and inter-municipal collaboration to ensure that the infrastructure investment occurs on time.

Investments to service employment lands will ultimately enable Niagara's future economic growth and will leverage the region's unique location to attract new investment as well as support the expansion of local manufacturers. The combination of Niagara's potential for multimodal transportation (air, rail, marine, and road), access to sustainable and net-zero electricity and proximity to some of the largest markets in North America will position the region as an ideal location to do business.

## Office Vacancies

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated demographic and economic changes across the globe. In southern Ontario there has been an exodus of people from the Toronto-area and into surrounding municipalities seeking more affordable housing options. This has been referred to by individuals in the real estate and housing construction sectors as the 'Drive to Qualify' phenomenon. The investment by the Province into Transit Oriented Communities and the fact that Niagara is increasingly part of the larger Greater Golden Horseshoe provides a new opportunity to redevelop and grow communities across Niagara.

People migrating to surrounding communities has been fueled by many companies switching to remote or hybrid models that no longer require staff to be physically present in offices. This new remote work reality has



resulted in all-time high office vacancy rates as companies decide how they will pivot their businesses. Ottawa-based Shopify is a leading example of a Canadian company that has transitioned to a digital by default work model.

Moving to a more digitalized work environment could result in an increase in office vacancy rates across southern Ontario, which may create an excess supply of commercial real estate. The significant forecasted growth of Niagara region will continue to place pressure on housing. Regional staff should begin investigating the creation of conversion policies to allow existing commercial zoning to be easily converted to residential uses. By enacting proactive planning to address supply and demand challenges would be one step to addressing the region's housing shortage and rapidly increasing housing costs. This could provide an opportunity to convert under-used space in downtowns and urban cores to more mixed-use commercial and increased residential densities.

## GO Train



GO Train Service in Niagara

In 2019, Metrolinx provided the business case for expanding GO Train service to Niagara region with a plan to build a new GO Station in Grimsby and make improvements at both the existing train stations in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. These investments are part of larger plan of creating a more integrated transportation network across the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area and supporting Destination Orientated Communities. This will increase Niagara's connectivity to the GTA and provide new development opportunities around the proposed stations. In March 2022, Metrolinx released its Initial Business Case (IBC) for a new GO train station in Beamsville. The IBC confirms the feasibility of a Beamsville GO station and is the first step in a multi-year planning process.

The investments by Metrolinx and private sector developers provides new economic development opportunities to create new mixed-use communities that will leverage the connectivity that GO service will provide. Currently, both local and regional governments are developing and implementing secondary plans to promote mixed-use developments around these transportation nodes. The resulting investments will increase Niagara's competitiveness in attracting remote and hybrid workers that will require easy access to the GTA.

## Airport

Airports are recognized as being important economic drivers within a region. There have been a number of academic studies to assess their contribution to regional economic development. These studies support the belief that airports, and specifically scheduled airline services, contribute significantly to the growth of local economies.

Niagara has two airports, Niagara District Airport (NDA) in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Central Dorothy Rungeling Airport (NCDRA) in Pelham. The two airports serve different roles, however both are important economic drivers. While fewer business development opportunities have been identified for Niagara Central Airport, the facility plays an important role by supporting air ambulance, law enforcement, flight training, and general aviation commercial and recreational activities. The presence of almost 100 based aircraft, demand for affordable aircraft hangars across southern Ontario, and the steady rate of historical development suggests that there is continued demand for this facility. In September 2021, the City of Welland announced that it would finance the construction of 10 hangars at NCDRA and that nine of the hangars already have tenants lined up.

Recent reports have suggested that the NDA has not been able to leverage its full economic potential because the financial support to expand and develop the facility is not available. The Niagara District Airport Commission (NDAC) and its municipal partners: Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake are currently looking for an operator to manage the airport. The Commission would like to ensure the growth of the facility to support the regional economy.

Transportation access to and from the GTA has been identified as a potential barrier to economic growth in Niagara, particularly in the tourism sector. Current scheduled passenger air services operating at NDA offer quick and efficient connections to downtown Toronto and have the potential to expand.

Reference: Feasibility Study and Business Care for Niagara District Airport and Niagara Central Dorothy Rungeling Airport, HM Aero, 2022



Niagara District Airport, Niagara-on-the-Lake



Garden City Skyway, QEW

## Niagara to GTA Corridor

The trade relationship between Canada and the US is dependent on strategically located transportation and trade hubs that facilitate supply chains that are highly integrated with manufacturing plants, warehouses and distribution centres situated on either side of the border. Trade flows across the Niagara international borders total \$93 billion with 81 per cent of the integrated trade value transported by truck. In 2021, 1.1 million trucks (2-way) crossed the Peace Bridge using the QEW Corridor, which represents approximately 17 per cent of total international truck movements observed at Canada-US border crossings.

Niagara Region's Transportation Master Plan indicated that truck volumes are expected to increase by 50 per cent over the next 25 years for truck trips either traveling through Niagara to border crossings or between Niagara and GTHA. Niagara Region's Foreign Trade Zone Point designation promotes the region as an International Trade Hub with tariff and tax exemptions, which requires improved transportation capacity, system fluidity, redundancy, and reliability while reducing supply-chain costs.

The QEW is a major trade, tourism and commuter corridor traversing Niagara region, which experiences significant traffic congestion during peak work and tourist travel periods especially through the cities of St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. Planned growth along the QEW Corridor and increased trade values crossing Niagara border crossings, without additional infrastructure, will affect the fluidity of the transportation system and supply chain management, due to longer periods of traffic congestion, increased truck travel times and increased safety issues. It is recommended that the Region advocate with the provincial and federal governments to advance the Niagara-Hamilton Trade Corridor and NGTA East Corridor, providing an efficient trade route connecting Niagara region to the GTHA and the US. This will provide a key link of an alternate truck route to the QEW that provides travel time reliability, road safety, and network redundancy, which improves supply chain efficiency as well as incorporates design elements to address a changing climate and new technology including an Integrated Truck Corridor Management System. Analysis completed for the Transportation Master Plan confirmed the need for an improved crossing of the Niagara Escarpment to accommodate the movement of people and goods. It would act as a link between the QEW and the Niagara to GTA Corridor.

**Appendix 4 – Official Plan: Chapter 3 Sustainable Region; Chapter 4 Competitive Region and Chapter 5 Connected Region.**

# NIAGARA ECONOMIC STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Implementation of the 10 Year Economic Development Strategy through the Action Plan will focus on the role of NED and its current mandate as defined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Most of the actions go beyond the key functions of Regional economic development and will be developed in collaboration and partnership with members of Team Niagara and the broader community and business group in the region.

## PARTNERSHIPS

**Team Niagara**

**Innovation Eco-System**

**Business/Downtown Improvement Associations**

**Employment Organizations**

**Post-Secondary Institutions**

**Tourism Organizations**

**Chambers Of Commerce**

**Provincial Government Ministries**

**Industry Associations**

**Niagara Workforce Planning Board**

**Small Business Enterprise Centres**

**St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation**

**Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority**

**Venture Niagara**

The actions in the Strategic Action Plan directly support the Strategic Directions in the Economic Development Strategy. Each action is given a specific timeframe according to its priority level. The timeframes are: Ongoing (continuous); Immediate (1-3 years); Medium (3-6 years) and Long-Term (6-10 years).

Performance metrics are provided for the actions and are essential to measure the progress of the implementation within the Economic Development Strategy. The metrics can also be used to improve economic development programming and performance as well as inform policy development and decision making.

Within the profession of economic development, performance measures are recognized as important as well as being recognized as difficult to quantify. The metrics provided in this Strategy are measures of activities, for example leads generated, as well as outcomes, for example increased level of investment and jobs in the region. Outcomes are particularly difficult to measure because they generally relate to the region-wide economy and so it is challenging to attribute them specifically to regional economic development or to any other organization.

## STRATEGY 1

# INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

**GOAL:** To grow and diversify the economy through targeted business attraction in sectors where Niagara has a competitive advantage, as well as in emerging sectors, where Niagara can demonstrate a strong business case for investment.

## Actions

### ONGOING

- Conduct lead generation focused on sectors or subsectors where Niagara has an advantage as identified through research
- Build the investment pitch based on Niagara's advantages and unique assets (e.g. strategic location)
- Pro-actively engage in regular communication with local economic development offices to keep current on opportunities, successes and new assets to be promoted within the FDI pitch
- Responsible for developing the agenda, itinerary and content of inward missions and familiarization (FAM) tours to promote Niagara
- Development and planning of external trade and investment missions, events and trade shows to promote Niagara to potential investors
- Raise Niagara's profile to intermediary contacts, including the CCCA, Canadian Trade Commissioners, Ontario representatives abroad, foreign consuls, overseas Chambers of Commerce, Export Development Canada etc.
- Promote the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone programs through marketing activities to local businesses to support export diversification of Niagara's manufacturing companies into new foreign markets. Continue to collaborate with the World Trade Centre Toronto to promote and facilitate the Trade Access Program (TAP).

### IMMEDIATE

- Promote Niagara as a new destination for film and television production, identify resources and streamline the permitting process
- Develop a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that is customized to the needs of NED and explore the opportunity to develop an integrated system with municipalities

### IMMEDIATE/MEDIUM

- Understanding gaps in the supply chain and identifying value-added industries that could be investment targets

### MEDIUM/LONG

- Identify opportunities in emerging and green technology sectors (e.g. alternative fuels, artificial intelligence, electrification of the automotive industry), where Niagara can demonstrate strengths and/or unique assets

### LONG-TERM

- Partner with Foreign Trade Zone Points across Canada to advocate to the federal government – for new resources and programs to increase Niagara's international competitiveness
- Leverage the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone Point designation as part of a business case for Niagara region to be designed a federal Economic Trade Corridor

## Performance Metrics

- Activity measures: number of leads generated, meetings and events and number of prospects
- Increased level of investment and jobs in the region
- Identification of targets within emerging sectors to inform investment attraction programming
- Increased uptake in federal exporting programs
- Niagara FTZ Increased value through new programming and services
- CRM used to develop reports track relationships with prospects and define sales funnel



# STRATEGY 2

## EXTERNAL MARKETING

**GOAL:** Position and market Niagara region as a choice destination for businesses to locate and transform Niagara into a globally renowned community. Promote Niagara as a location for business and resident investment in key markets and sectors through marketing activities.

### Actions

#### ONGOING

- Leverage Niagara’s membership of the CCCA to promote Niagara’s brand and value proposition alongside other membership municipalities to an international audience
- Develop and maintain an asset inventory of marketing collateral across all 12 municipalities in partnership with local economic development offices to be used in internal and external marketing initiatives
- Work with the Local Immigration Partnership to promote [welcomeniagaracanada.com](https://welcomeniagaracanada.com) as the primary online source for information to newcomers

#### IMMEDIATE

- Develop, implement and monitor digital marketing campaigns to showcase Niagara as a location of choice for investment both nationally and internationally
- Develop, implement and monitor a resident attraction marketing campaign to grow and strengthen the local labour force
- Collaborate with Niagara Region’s Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Division to develop a communications plan to promote Niagara business and investment successes

#### LONG-TERM

- Through strategic marketing, position Niagara as a premier location for investment in North America

### Performance Metrics

- Annual marketing plan is updated on an on-going basis and key metrics are reported
- Increased website and campaign analytics for [niagaracanada.com](https://niagaracanada.com) and [welcomeniagara.com](https://welcomeniagara.com)
- New web content is developed as needed to support new sectors and economic development initiatives, reported in website analytics
- Maintain an updated investment pitch package that showcases assets in all Niagara municipalities



## STRATEGY 3

# BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

**GOAL:** To interpret Niagara's economy through regional economic and business research and analysis and inform policy development and economic development initiatives.

## Actions

### ONGOING

- Continue to monitor and provide analysis to ensure Strategy is relevant
- Support the work of regional economic development and other partners across the region by providing the latest economic and business information
- Continually investigate new sources of data and tools to provide business and economic research and analysis to support NED projects
- Provide research and analysis to support projects in the local economic development offices
- Support internal departments, including the Chair's Office, by providing economic and business data

### IMMEDIATE/ONGOING

- Support the Niagara Employment Inventory project led by the Planning and Development Services Department

### IMMEDIATE

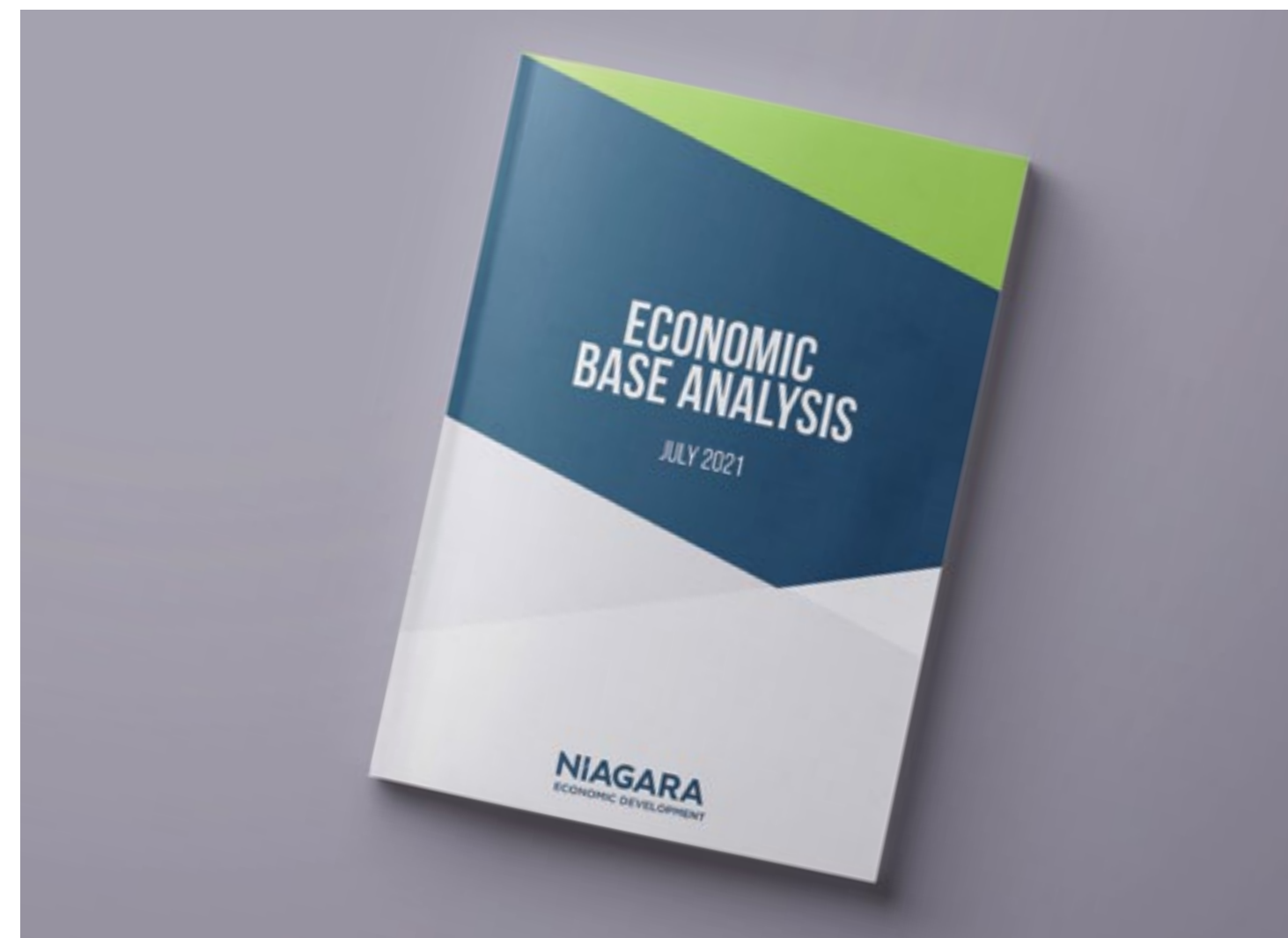
- Update the Economic Base Analysis once post-COVID data is available
- Update sector profiles once the 2021 census data has been released
- Use an evidence-based analysis to review and assess the success of the strategy to ensure it remains aligned with economic development priorities

### MEDIUM

- Monitor new labour force practices in Niagara including remote working
- Benchmark Niagara against other municipalities, locally, provincially, nationally and internationally

## Performance Metrics

- Economic and business data current on website, profiles and reports
- Analysis incorporated into NED initiatives
- Identification of opportunities and issues from the economic data
- Inform Council and partners on latest economic and business data and analysis
- Report on support to LAMs economic development offices, tracked through the CRM



## STRATEGY 4

# EXPEDITED SERVICES AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

**GOAL:** Collaborate with departments and municipalities to enable and support new industrial and residential investment to grow communities across Niagara.

## Actions

### ONGOING

- Work with the LAMs to prioritize developments that include affordable and attainable housing through the development and planning process
- Planning and Application Expediting – Support companies investing in Niagara through the planning approvals process to ensure projects meet realistic timelines
- Continuous engagement with the industrial and commercial realtors and brokers to understand Niagara’s real estate market
- Respond to inbound site selection requests and coordinate with local municipalities to provide complete responses
- Explore opportunities to fast track servicing and funding for employment lands and areas across Niagara
- Continue to be the local referral partner for the Global Skills Attraction program to fast-track foreign nationals with specific skills to jobs in Niagara

### IMMEDIATE

- Collaborate and support both local and regional planning departments in the development of secondary plans in both urban and employment areas to ensure economic development objectives are considered
- Introduce a new suite of incentives that will be administered by economic development to support business growth and new investment in the region
- Market and promote Niagara’s employment-related incentive programs outside of Niagara region
- Affordable and Attainable Housing Incentives – Advocate and adopt new programs and policy to support affordable and attainable housing and new residential development and subdivisions to alleviate overall housing pressures
- Develop an online inventory of land to promote our investment attraction activities

### MEDIUM

- Work with LAMs to standardize planning application intake, review, commenting, and approval to achieve shorter processing times
- Harmonize planning and development policies at the regional and local municipal levels and zoning at the municipal level for employment lands and areas

### LONG-TERM

- Ensure brownfield incentive programs remain relevant and competitive to attract redevelopment and investment in Niagara

## Performance Metrics

- Report on site selection requests received, report generated from the CRM and included in quarterly updates to PEDC
- Report on employment-related grants and incentives
- Meet with industrial and commercial real estate brokers and agents, report on number of meetings
- Introduce and maintain newly created incentive policies
- Harmonize planning and development policies for employment land uses
- New and existing employment areas are serviced
- Support existing and new business growth with foreign talent acquisition



Aerial View of Port Colborne

# STRATEGY 5

## LAM AND SECTOR SUPPORT

**GOAL:** Strengthen and support the key sectors of Niagara’s economy. Build capacity within LAMs that do not have economic development resources.

### Actions

#### ONGOING

- Facilitate collaboration between local business, economic development and local tourism organizations to support region-wide tourism initiatives that draw visitors throughout the region
- Support to rural municipalities in facilitating enablers to development (i.e. transportation, servicing and broadband connectivity)
- Identify, pursue and report on sector specific sources of funding from other levels of government to support Niagara’s agricultural and tourism sectors
- Funding local economic development initiatives/projects/applications and buy-local initiatives to support business retention and expansion within LAMs

#### IMMEDIATE

- Work closely with collaborative partners across the region to identify and advance the opportunities post-Canada Games to leverage new infrastructure, existing natural assets in the active/sports economy

#### IMMEDIATE/MEDIUM

- Work with municipal and tourism partners to create and support policy that enables value-added agriculture and agri-tourism opportunities and intensification

#### MEDIUM/LONG-TERM

- Support agriculture sector related investment and diversification opportunities for value-add processing, co-location, and higher and better use of agriculture lands
- Showcase the agri-business and agri-food sector in its diversity. It has a unique ecosystem of innovation that is inherent to Niagara including emerging opportunities in vertical farming, support for local food and farm to table culinary.

### Performance Metrics

- Collaborate with partners to support an Active/Sports Economy Strategy to address potential opportunities and event bid administration
- “Grown in Niagara” website identifying assets across the value chain in the cluster, promoting local food to external and internal audiences, encouraging Niagara-sourcing by local governments and businesses, reported through website analytics
- Attend and support agri-business and tourism sector association events and meeting to understand the opportunities and address the challenges for the continued growth of the cluster, number of meetings reported in quarterly update to PEDC
- Continue to build capacity at municipalities without economic development offices resulting in the creation of either economic development or a tourism-related position
- Attend technical funding briefings for federal and provincial programs and promote and support to local business sector organizations, reported though number attended in quarterly update to PEDC
- Reporting on matching funding allocated to partnering local municipalities on their defined initiatives, including buy local campaigns, and metrics as identified within their project scopes, reported to PEDC



Soybean Farm, Wainfleet

## STRATEGY 6

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY

**GOAL:** Achieve the Vision of the Strategy by focusing on projects of regional significance that are aligned with these goals that foster economic and business growth and retention.

## Actions

### ONGOING

- Management of Niagara's 10 Year Economic Development Strategy including its implementation, revisions and reporting to PEDC and Team Niagara. Ensure the Strategy remains current and has continued alignment with municipal economic development strategies and Regional strategic plans
- Liaison with Regional departments/divisions to support the business case for major Regional projects with economic impact and funding applications e.g. National Trade Corridors Fund
- Develop regional and strategic initiatives that will strengthen the economy. These initiatives could include projects to: investigate opportunities in emerging sectors; build local supply chains; develop sector policy and planning; determine the economic impact of Niagara District Airport; and, research the feasibility of a ferry service between Toronto and Niagara.
- Provide an Annual Review on the success of the Economic Development Strategy

### IMMEDIATE

- Liaise with Regional departments/municipal economic development offices to support the business case for affordable and available childcare, affordable housing, comprehensive broadband coverage in the region to support equal employment opportunities and a strong labour force
- Provide business/employer input, particularly from rural communities, as decisions are made about integrated regional transit to ensure it supports a growing labour force
- Support collaborative projects to increase inclusive participation in the labour force, re-skilling and up-skilling and the development of a talent attraction and retention strategy

### MEDIUM

- Work with post secondary institutions and employment organizations to support labour force development and participation, by understanding the labour force
- Explore the concept of a regional forum for employment conversations
- Following the completion of the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games, explore the role for the Region in tourism/sports tourism that complements the existing ecosystem

### LONG-TERM

- Advocacy to upper levels of government for infrastructure servicing to employment areas
- Build relationships with binational organizations to explore collaborative partnerships and projects

## Performance Metrics

- Implement and monitor the Economic Development Strategy which provides direction for policy and initiatives, reported outcomes to PEDC
- Successful funding applications to upper levels of government for infrastructure projects, reported in number of applications and dollar amounts
- Successfully advocate for labour force supports including affordable childcare, regional transit, broadband coverage, etc
- Create a business case to identify the opportunities in tourism/sports tourism and the best approach to securing events



Aerial View of St. Catharines

## APPENDIX 1

Economic Development Long-Term Strategy Advisory Council Terms of Reference (2021)

## APPENDIX 2

Economic Base and Industrial Analysis (July 2021)

## APPENDIX 3

Community and Business Engagement Final Report, Intelligent Futures (2022)

## APPENDIX 4

Niagara Official Plan 2022, Chapters 3, 4 and 5

# APPENDICES

Meridian Community Centre, Pelham

# INSPIRE. INVEST. GROW.

## NIAGARA'S 10 YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2022-2032

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