



WHAT WE  
HEARD

# Presentation 1

Shape Niagara Overview & *What We Heard* Report

# Presentation 2

*Setting the Stage for Strategy Report  
& Strategic Planning Process*

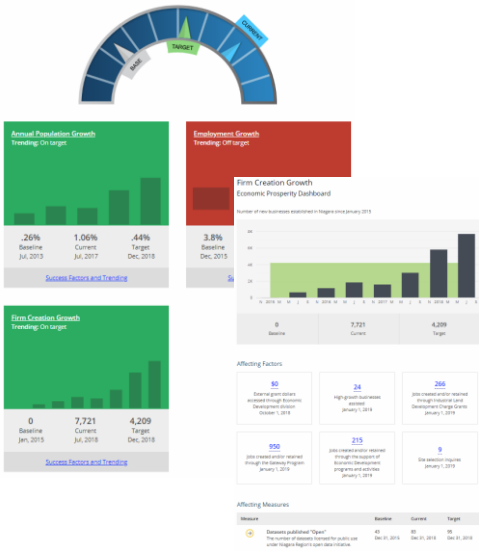
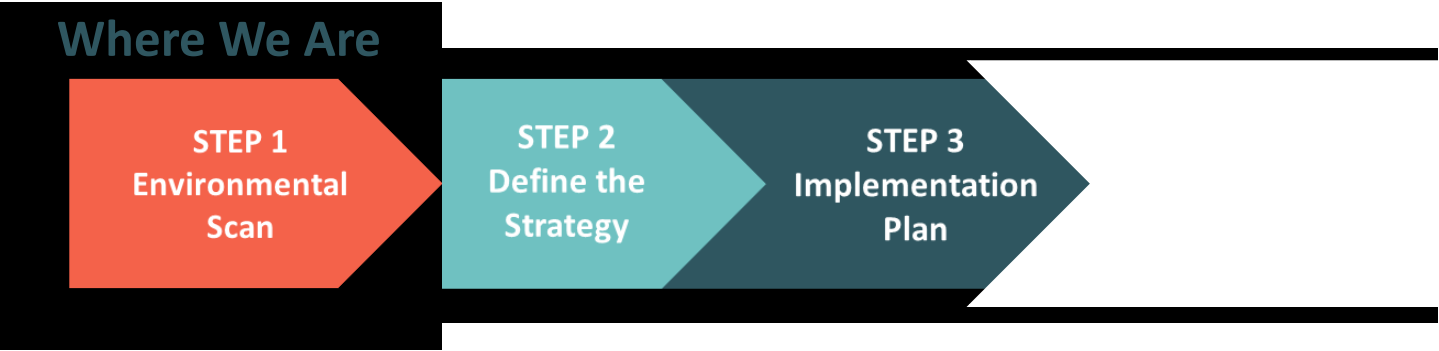
# Shape Niagara Overview

# What is Shape Niagara?



- A municipal strategic plan is the basis for aligning the work of the organization with the priorities of Council
- Staff typically prepares a background study to provide Council a comprehensive collection of information to inform the development of the new strategic plan
  - Community Engagement – what the community has prioritized
  - Environmental Scan – current state and influencing factors
- These reports will serve to inform Council in the development of the 2019-2022 Council strategic plan

# Strategic Planning Process



# *What We've Heard* Report

# Community Consultation Timeline






# Reach



  
**ONLINE SURVEY**  
**1002** Survey Responses

 **Other Relevant Surveys**

 **COMMUNITY EVENTS**  
 **28** Community Events  
.....  
 **85** Unique Quotes  
.....  
Approximately **1500** in-person interactions

**PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES**  
.....  
**5** OPEN HOUSES  
**70** PARTICIPANTS  
**173** UNIQUE QUOTES  


  
**1523**  
Total Participants

 **PARTNER SESSION**  
 **70** PARTICIPANTS  
.....  
**60** Partner Organizations : **16** Topic Areas  
.....  
**8** Local Municipalities : **19** Business Sector  
.....  
**10** Education Sector : **25** Non-Profit Sector  
.....  
**8** Health Sector

# What's in the *What We Heard* Report

- Project Overview
  - Objective of the initiative
- Community Engagement Overview
  - Why community engagement, how feedback was captured, what was done with feedback
- What We Heard
  - What we heard from the community, for each type of engagement by the six areas of focus
- Bringing it All Together
  - Merging everything from What We Heard to identify the priority themes as identified by the community

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# Methodology

## Data Analysis Process



# What Did We Ask the Community

**Residents were asked to provide  
3 words that best describe Niagara**



## What can Niagara Region do to support...

## Six Areas of Focus

Six areas of focus were identified to provide a means for data to be sorted and to gather context around feedback submitted.



## Infrastructure and Services

Transportation, roads and bridges, waste, water, senior services, child and family services, housing and homelessness



## Economy and Growth

Fostering an environment for jobs and prosperity, development supports.



## Health and Wellness

Public health services, bike lanes  
and pathways, ambulances and  
emergency services



## Governance and Advocacy

Proactive leadership, fiscal responsibility,  
open government, advocacy for Niagara



## Environment

Environmental protection,  
driving sustainable development



## Quality of Life

Safely, community planning, walkability,  
engagement, newcomer supports

# What We Heard

## Here's What We Heard:



### Infrastructure and Services

#### Roads and Bridges

- Improving road maintenance (new and existing)

#### Transportation Connectivity

- Expansion of GO trains coming into the region
- Improved public transit system functioning as a single system with one schedule and one fare

#### Affordable Housing

- More housing for seniors and affordable housing

#### Navigating Regional services

- Increasing accessibility of services across the region



### Environment

#### Balancing Growth with Sustainable Development

- Concern for loss of greenspace and protecting the rural character of the Region
- Improved planning to match infrastructure with development and community needs



### Economy and Growth

#### Economic Prosperity

- Niagara needs to be a place to not only live but to work in as well, with quality jobs to ensure Niagara is not a bedroom community for GTA and Hamilton
- Secure employment opportunities) Priority for the region is job creation, jobs for youth, and bringing jobs (with higher pay) to the region.



### Governance and Advocacy

#### Fiscal Responsibility

- More accountable spending at the region and the municipalities

#### Collaboration

- Improved communication between the Region and LAMs with common goals

#### Community Engagement

- Ensuring more transparency in development plans for residents across all local municipalities



### Health and Wellness

#### Health Care Services

- Improving and expanding mental health services for children and adults
- Increased support for Public Health Services

- Captured by categories to provide context
- Organized by who said it



# What do you hope Niagara is known for in 10 years?

Niagara will be a thriving economic hub, with a focus on supporting local businesses, and actively recruiting new, diverse industries with a focus on secure and stable opportunities. Niagara will leverage our proximity to major cities in order to create a strong, prosperous economy.



Residents hope to see Niagara maintain its unique traits, focusing on celebrating history, protecting our environment and land assets, and further marketing our natural features. Niagara will leverage our ample greenspaces to increase eco-tourism and become a leader in green industry.



Niagara residents will feel a sense of belonging, and have a high level of engagement regarding local issues. Residents of Niagara will have their voices heard, and together we will shape Niagara into a community we are all proud of.



Niagara will be welcoming and inclusive for all, with superior services with ease of access for all ages and social status; including transportation, community and health services, and opportunities for leisure. Niagara will be an affordable place to live, attracting and supporting diversity.



Niagara will be a vibrant community with ample employment opportunities, allowing youth and young families to plant roots. Niagara will place an emphasis on ensuring urban amenities are available for residents, access to natural space, connectivity and a vibrant arts and culture scene.



## SHAPE NIAGARA



## Bringing It All Together

From the analysis of the feedback and data collected, 17 top themes were identified by Niagara's residents, businesses, organizations and local area municipalities. They have been summarized and presented in order of priority, beginning with the most frequently cited.

### 1 Jobs & Economic Prosperity

- Advocate for, and rebrand Niagara as a whole, create a clear vision in attracting new industry; market Niagara's strengths to attract business through various media channels
- Actively solicit businesses to locate in Niagara through incentives and supports; ensure this business growth is across a wide range of industry; attract businesses that provide non-precious employment and socially responsible businesses
- Encourage economic growth in downtown cores, brownfields and municipalities that may not traditionally attract industry
- Support small businesses and entrepreneurs to help them thrive
- Use of local companies for Regional projects; i.e. Those hiring local talent
- Partner with community organizations, post-secondary institutions and the business community to strategize economic development opportunities
- Move away from investment in part-time, seasonal and low-paying employment, move towards secure jobs that pay a living wage
- Better understand the link between sustainability in the job market and quality of life of employees (i.e. health care, housing)
- Focus on diversifying our economic clusters (away from tourism and service industries) and shift towards emerging industries, or those with proven longevity (i.e. health, technology)
- Work to consolidate economic focus and drivers across all local municipalities to better refine our economic strategic planning
- Work to ensure all necessary supports are in place to foster an environment for economic prosperity and success through streamlined processes, right-sized taxes, smart incentives directed towards results

### 2 Transportation Connecting People to Jobs & Services

- Recognize and promote secondary benefits that come with a unified transit system; improved access to health care, improved access to job opportunities across municipalities, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, improved social engagement and reduction in congestion on major arteries
- Continue with the creation of a comprehensive inter-municipal transit system, integrated with the future GO route
- Ensure current and future transit is accessible, frequent and affordable, routes and schedules matched to needs of users
- Explore transportation alternatives, beyond buses, such as high-speed inter-city rail, ferry services and increasing usage of Niagara's airport

### 3 Supporting Populations in Need through Employment, Affordable Housing, Transit

- Support populations in need by ensuring necessary services are provided including affordable housing and transportation options, that services such as health care are accessible and that affordable housing needs of the community are met
- Adapt services to meet the needs of Niagara's aging population
- Innovative solutions to address homelessness, unemployment, and addictions
- Populations in need as identified by respondents include seniors, homeless, new residents, immigrants, those experiencing addictions, and vulnerable / marginalized

### 4 Environmental Responsibility & Sustainable Development

- Environmental protection and sustainable development go hand in hand
- Protect Niagara's greenspace, greenbelt lands, farmland, wetlands by reducing development or sprawl on these lands
- Ensure future developments are sustainable by building on brownfields rather than greenfields; more stringent rules for developers that plan to build on sensitive land; offer incentives and prioritization for developers that are repurposing current vacant land, and to developers that are passionate about preserving our heritage
- Be visionary in response to growth for land-use planning across Niagara, ensuring planning policies and approvals protect Niagara's natural assets and are tied to resident's needs and feedback

### 5 Accountable & Collaborative Government

- Better collaboration between levels of government, Niagara's needs are best met through a common vision; working together with lower-tier municipalities to create a defined strategic focus for key industries (i.e. economic growth, tourism)
- Continue to advocate for Niagara's needs to upper levels of government, all municipalities advocating together as one, for the needs of Niagara as a whole
- Improve representation of resident needs by ensuring Councillors do not allow partisanship or professional interests to guide decision making
- Work to repair relationship with media and press; restore credibility of Regional Council by acting with integrity and respect
- Improve cooperation between Councillors to accomplish tasks in a timely fashion; implement a clear code of conduct and ethics guidelines; ensure there are repercussions for behaviour that deviates
- Increase diverse representation on Regional Committees by including subject experts
- Increase presence of Regional politicians at community events to foster a sense of two-way communication



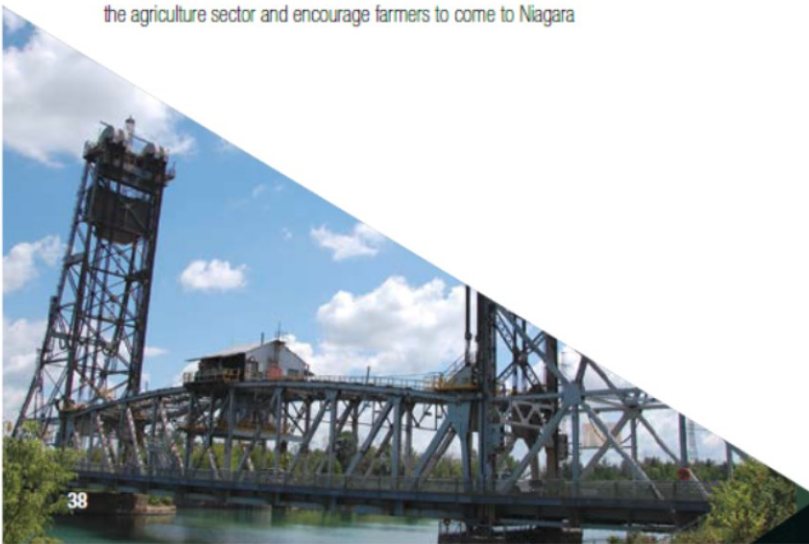


## 6 Active Transportation

- Promote utilization of active transportation through the creation of a transit supportive community with bike lanes, pathways, and trail networks integrated with public transportation
- Support connectivity between neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces to ensure residents can safely travel to daily destinations using active transportation
- Design future developments with a community planning lens; ensure new developments have sidewalks and community space

## 7 Preserving Niagara's Natural Assets

- Concern for loss of greenspace and protecting the rural character of the Region
- Educate and provide incentives for green initiatives and green technology
- Protect and preserve key natural assets including: waterways, farmland, beaches, wetlands, parks and trails, green spaces, wildlife, tender fruit
- Preserve agricultural land and foster sustainable farms; advocate for the agriculture sector and encourage farmers to come to Niagara



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## 8 Infrastructure In Support of Growth

- Improve connective corridors to mitigate increasing levels of traffic on major arteries during peak hours
- Ensure roads and bridges are adequately maintained for safe and timely travel to meet increased usage due to growth
- Ensure infrastructure is matched to growth and development to support upcoming residential, commercial and industrial development (i.e. road expansions, sewage systems, bridges, traffic lights)
- Incorporate new technologies and quality infrastructure (road, bridge, facilities) to ensure infrastructure lasts longer

## 9 Affordable Housing

- Respondents recognize many issues stem from a lack of affordable housing and want innovative strategies to increase access to safe, affordable places to live for all; a disconnect between available housing prices / rent and earnings is identified
- Affordable housing solutions need to be inclusive of all residents of Niagara (youth and young families, seniors, single / low income earners, those with disabilities, and renters)
- Alternative solutions in connection with affordable housing to combat homelessness, which is perceived as a problem in Niagara

## 10 Quality of Life and Public Safety

- Quality of life is defined by respondents as being connected to their community, having access to housing, and feeling safe
- Respondents feel strongly about creating a sense of belonging for all residents and highlighted the need for inclusivity and empowering diverse populations
- Increase community belonging for residents and tourists through community and cultural events, festivals, supporting the arts, and preserving the cultural history of Niagara
- Police visibility and upstream police interventions to foster a feeling of safety
- Modifications such as lighting, increasing walkability and transit options will make people feel safer and more connected to their community

## 11 Equitable Access to Regional Services

- Improve centralization and access to services across the entire region, services distributed with consideration of means of getting to services
- Continue to focus on preventative programs and services that support equity
- Consider integration of alternatives to traditional health care delivery models including outreach services; advocate for increased funding for our health care system and develop a comprehensive physician recruitment strategy; promote and invest in Public Health and Emergency Services



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## 12 Water & Waste Management

- Protect natural environment through responsible waste diversion and water treatment; educating public on these matters
- Use technology to be the leader in recycling and water conservation
- Increase uptake of recycling by allowing for more items to be recycled and identify ways to reduce or ease sorting requirements by households

## 13 Tourism as an Economic Driver

- Respondents are proud of Niagara's strong tourist sector; expand this industry across all municipalities utilizing a collective vision and defined roles
- Promotion and preservation of natural, agricultural, and historical sites which bolster Niagara's quality of life and attractiveness
- Leverage strengths by continued investment in alternative forms of tourism, such as eco-tourism and sport tourism
- Tourism and transportation are intrinsically linked; better transportation infrastructure supports tourism

## 14 Communication and Engagement with the Community

- Increase opportunities for residents to have their voices heard; respondents want to see their input being incorporated and the impact of their voice
- Ensure Regional government is transparent; open communication and engagement with residents and stakeholders on decisions that affect their community with consideration for all the different needs of the community (marginalized or specific population segments, wildlife, natural assets, rural and urban needs)
- Easier access to Regional and municipal information and services including physical access and improved navigation; align customer service and ease of navigation between Region and LAMs
- Increase opportunities to create a sense of community



## 15 Youth and Young Family Retention

- Support a comprehensive youth retention strategy to retain a qualified labour force, meeting future needs of industries and economic growth.
- Retain youth and young families by fostering strong partnerships between post-secondary institutions and business sector to match local graduates with employment opportunities; ensure education programs fill gaps in the workforce; foster creation of new, quality jobs in emerging sectors such as technology; create an entrepreneur and technology friendly region
- Attract youth and young families through marketing of employment opportunities; provide supports and promote reasons for young people to start or bring families here
- Ensure that input from youth and young families is used to focus retention efforts and validate the needs of the generation

## 16 Responsible Spending

- Respondents would like to be better informed on where their tax dollars are going through increased transparency in government spending, budgets and decision-making
- More stringent guidelines as to what are appropriate expenses for elected officials, and what are appropriate expense amounts
- Ensure the reduction of inefficiencies and duplication is a priority; re-evaluate the current governance model to reduce duplication between Regional and LAM services

## 17 Mental Health Services

- Ensure comprehensive mental health services are available in a timely fashion; targeted services for seniors, children and young adults
- Improve accessibility to mental health services through localizing services in community hubs, allocate mental health staff to outreach programs, programming in schools
- Work with all levels of government to create a comprehensive mental health strategy in provision of services and to reduce stigma
- Foster improved collaboration between organizations that provide mental health services to best service all residents; Region can act as a leader in forming a network and marketing available supports



# Next Presentation Deck

- “Setting the Stage for Strategy”
  - Overview of content from Environmental Scan
- Strategic Planning Process & Timeline
  - Council Strategy Workshop
  - Anticipated Timelines

Questions?

