Subject: Shape Niagara - Council Strategic Planning

Report to: Regional Council

Report date: Thursday, April 4, 2019

Recommendations

1. That the this report outlining the process for developing the 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan, and which includes the Shape Niagara environmental scan reports "*What We've Heard*" and "*Setting the Stage for Strategy*", as well as the departmental SWOT Analysis, **BE RECEIVED**.

Key Facts

- Typically, before the start of each new term of Regional Council, staff prepares a background report which sets the stage for Council to create their new term strategic plan. For this term of Council, staff have undertaken community engagement and environmental scan efforts through an initiative entitled Shape Niagara. The information has been summarized within a pair of reports: *Shape Niagara - What We've Heard* and *Shape Niagara - Setting the Stage for Strategy*, found in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.
- During Council Orientation in November of 2018, a Council Information request was put forward to put together a departmental SWOT Analysis, this request has been fulfilled and is contained in Appendix 3.
- A strategic planning workshop will be hosted on May 11, 2019. This workshop will be the opportunity for all Council members to come together to identify their collective priorities, and to set the goals and objectives that will become the 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan.
- The results of the workshop will be brought back to Council for final approval and following that, senior staff will put together a project-based implementation plan for Council's consideration, to action the priorities of Council.
- The Shape Niagara reports are available for public viewing and download on the Region's webpage at www.niagararegion.ca/priorities. This webpage is where the final strategy will also be posted.

Financial Considerations

It is the intent that a project-based implementation plan be developed to action the 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan, and timing will be aligned to coincide with the 2020 budget planning process. This will allow Council to make timely decisions to align resource requirements to the projects identified to action the strategic plan.

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Analysis

A strategic plan is an important document, particularly for municipal government, as it is the basis for aligning the work of the organization with the priorities of Council. The strategic plan guides the corporate workplan which allows the organization to dedicate adequate resources to address Council's priorities, and to be transparent and accountable to the results. It is about solving the right problems, to deliver value to the residents of Niagara.

The Strategic Planning Process

A comprehensive strategic planning process follows a four step cycle:

1. Environmental Scan - A typical strategic planning process begins with an environmental scan of internal and external factors, and should include stakeholder consultation. This is followed by a review of an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT Analysis) which provides a clear picture of the current state.

2. Defining the Strategy - Following a review of the current state is the opportunity to identify the vision for the future, and define the goals and objectives that will allow the organization to reach that vision.

3. Implementation Plan – An implementation plan is developed which will identify the actions required to realize the goals and objectives. The Region has had success in the past with a project based plan that allows the organization to focus on tangible, deliberate outcomes, designed to reach the specific objectives and goals of Council.

4. Monitor & Measure Success - The last stage of the strategic planning process is to monitor and evaluate progress towards those goals. The Region enables public transparency in two ways: First, through project progress reporting throughout the term, and second, through the Region's public facing performance measurement dashboard which will be re-aligned to the new Council strategic plan.

1. Environmental Scan – Background Documents

As the end of each term of Council nears, staff typically prepares a background report which serves to inform the new Council on the current state of Niagara, as well as Niagara's position with the provincial, national and global landscape. For the 2019-2022 term of Council, a pair of reports were created to serve this purpose and were branded as Shape Niagara.

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The first report provides the results of an extensive community engagement initiative that captures the priorities as identified by the residents, businesses, organizations and local area municipalities of Niagara, "*Shape Niagara – What We've Heard*", and can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

> Details around the community engagement initiative, including methodology, and results are captured in full within the *What We've Heard* report. The key takeaways from this report is that staff collected qualitative, open ended feedback from which a thematic analysis was conducted to identify common trends that recurred throughout the data. The narrative of these themes, which provides the story and context behind the feedback was also captured. From this analysis, 17 Community Priorities were identified, numbered in rank order with the first priority being identified most frequently.

The second report, *"Shape Niagara – Setting the Stage for Strategy",* provides Council with current state information collected through an environmental scan, and can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

> The focus of this report is to provide data and information to Council to support informed decision making during this critical strategic planning process. Data and information from a global, federal, and provincial lens were captured; as well as an overview of the current state of Niagara as both a place to live, and as an organization. This Niagara-specific snapshot captures a range of information including demographic, social, and economic data. The report also includes a view of the alignment of priorities across Niagara's local area municipal strategic plans (at the time of writing the report). A full matrix which outlines the alignment of strategic themes can be found in Appendix 4 of this report. The last section of the *Setting the Stage for Strategy* report provides a review of departmental initiatives and opportunities which have been linked to the 17 Community Priorities from the *What We've Heard* report. Drawing these linkages will give Council a line of sight into how the community priorities align with the services provided at the Regional level of government.

To complete the environmental scan, a SWOT Analysis was conducted at the organizational and departmental levels, and can be found in Appendix 3 of this report.

2. Defining the Strategy – Council Workshop

Following the presentation of the environmental scan documents, members of Regional Council have been invited to attend a strategic planning workshop. This workshop is set up as a full day facilitated working session where Regional Council will work through the development of their strategic vision, goals and objectives for the 2019-2022 term of Council. Senior staff will be present to lend support, provide context, and participate as required in aligning the goals and objectives to Regional services.

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Following this workshop, staff will consolidate the information collected from Council and format it to create the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan for Council's final approval. It is anticipated that the final strategy will be brought back to Council as quickly as possible following the workshop, and the aim is for the June 20, 2019 Council meeting.

3. Implementation Plan – Project Based

A strategic plan has no true value without an action plan to implement the goals and objectives that it identifies. A project-based plan allows Council to realize tangible successes, assign the correct resources required, and demonstrate measureable results and value for the residents of Niagara. The results of the 2015-2018 Council Strategic Plan are an example of how successful a project-based plan can be. The *2015-2018 Council Strategy: Term in Review* report can be found on the Regional website at www.niagararegion.ca/priorities.

Once the Strategic Plan is finalized, staff will use Council's input to identify potential projects and develop an implementation plan for Council's consideration. It is the intent that the timing of developing an implementation plan will align with the 2020 budget planning process. Aligning to the Region's established budget planning process will ensure the appropriate dollars and resources are identified up front to set the implementation plan up for success.

4. *Monitor & Measure Success – Driving Accountability & Transparency*

A public-facing webpage and dashboard are online tools that the Niagara Region uses to share with residents or other interested parties, the performance of the Region's strategy using well-organized, relevant data. Residents may not be familiar with the high level language that a strategic plan typically contains, but may resonate with the tangible, measureable outcomes of these plans.

In order to foster the trust of residents, the Region must provide transparent information around its performance. Having progress reports and performance measures available for public viewing holds the organization accountable. The current webpage dedicated to reporting on Council's strategy, www.niagararegion.ca/priorities, and public facing dashboard, www.niagararegion.ca/priorities/dashboard, will be re-aligned with Council's new strategic goals to provide progress updates, and performance measures that will hold the organization accountable and show progress on the commitments made.

Once Council's strategic planning process is complete, staff will commit to bringing regular progress reports back to Council on the implementation of the goals and objectives, all of which will be made available publicly on the dedicated webpage.

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Alternatives Reviewed

The feedback received from the previous Council on the background document that was provided to them in 2015, was that the information did not include the voice of the community. Shape Niagara has addressed that gap by conducting a full community engagement initiative, capturing the voice of Niagara's residents, businesses, organizations and local area municipalities for this Council's consideration in the development of their 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report will provide Council with background information and community input that can be considered in the development of the Region's next 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan.

Other Pertinent Reports

- CAO 19-2018 Shape Niagara – What We Heard
- CAO 17-2018 Council Strategic Priorities 2015-2018 Term in Review
- CWCD 128-2018 Shape Niagara Public Open Houses
- CAO 06-2018 Shape Niagara

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Organizational Performance   Enterprise Resource Management
Enterprise Resource Management   Services
Services

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Submitted by:
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Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Sandy Dupuis, Corporate Performance Specialist, with graphical support from Kelsea Cotnam, Graphic Designer. Reviewed by Maciej Jurczyk, Director of Internal Control & Organization Performance, and members of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

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Appendices

Appendix 1   Shape Niagara – What We've Heard

Appendix 2   Shape Niagara – Setting the Stage for Strategy

Appendix 3   SWOT Analysis

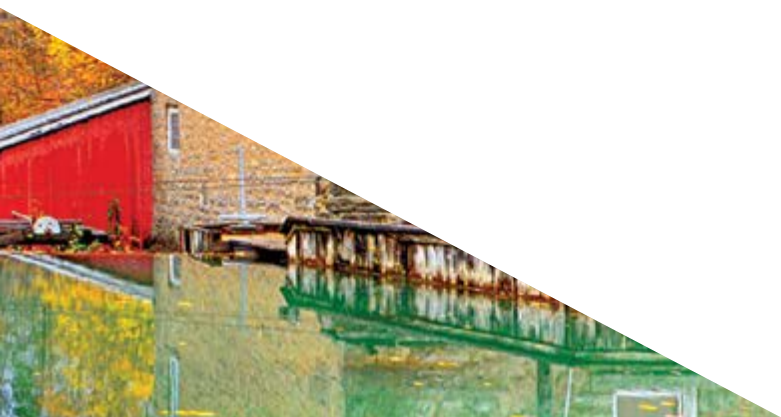Appendix 4   Local Area Municipal Strategy Theme Matrix

SHAPE NIAGARA

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

WHAT IS SHAPE NIAGARA?

SHAPE NIAGARA

Niagara Region is developing a new Council strategic plan for 2019-2022. Visit niagararegion.ca/shapeniagara

SHAPE NIAGARA by submitting your ideas on what you think Niagara Region should focus on across a broad range of areas.

f 🐦 #ShapeNiagara

Shape Niagara is a community engagement initiative focused on collecting feedback from Niagara's residents and community stakeholders on what the next Niagara Regional Council should focus on in the development of their 2019-2022 strategic plan.

Objective of the Initiative

The scope of this community engagement effort was intended to be wide reaching and inclusive. It utilized a variety of methods of engagement (online and in-person) to collect information from a diverse range of community stakeholders (residents, community partners, organizations and businesses).

The Region collects feedback from the community on specific projects and initiatives on a regular basis. Incorporating what was heard from the community throughout the term from relevant past surveys reinforces what was heard through this initiative and assists with the prioritization of what is most important to Niagara's residents.

Council's Strategic Plan

Niagara Regional Council's strategic plan underpins all of the activities undertaken by the organization during the term of Council. The plan guides which projects and initiatives staff will work on, what is considered a priority and how best to resource these activities.

As the end of each Council term approaches, staff typically prepare a background report which serves to inform the incoming Council on the current state of Niagara, providing the relevant information that can be used to create a new strategic plan. In preparation for this background report, relevant information on the current state of Niagara is gathered and is coupled with community feedback. This **What We've Heard** report comprises the community feedback component. A secondary report with the remainder of the background information will go to the new Council at the beginning of 2019, and Council will go through a full strategic planning process at that time.

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, adocacy for Niagara

Environment
Environmental protection, driving sustainable development

Quality of Life
Safely, community planning, walkability, engagement, newcomer supports

WE ARE HERE

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
Gather Data	Stakeholder Engagement	Inform New Council	Develop Strategic Plan	Approve & Implement

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Shape Niagara addresses the importance of incorporating the voice of Niagara's residents and community partners using a multi-modal approach to increase the reach of the engagement initiative.

Why Community Engagement?

Community engagement is vitally important to the development of a strategic plan. Providing Niagara's new Council with what the community sees as priorities will ensure our strategic direction is well informed, and that Council's focus is aligned with the expectations of residents. When residents contribute meaningfully, and are able to see their ideas and feedback represented in the plan, they can take pride in the successes of Niagara.

Principles of Engagement
The following principles underpinned the Shape Niagara initiative:

Accountability

The objective of the initiative was made clear to participants. Summarized feedback will be provided in a final report for Council, for consideration in the development of their 2019-2022 strategic plan.

Transparent

The story unfolded on the Shape Niagara webpage, and was accessible publicly throughout the initiative. The final report will be made public, as will the resulting strategic plan.
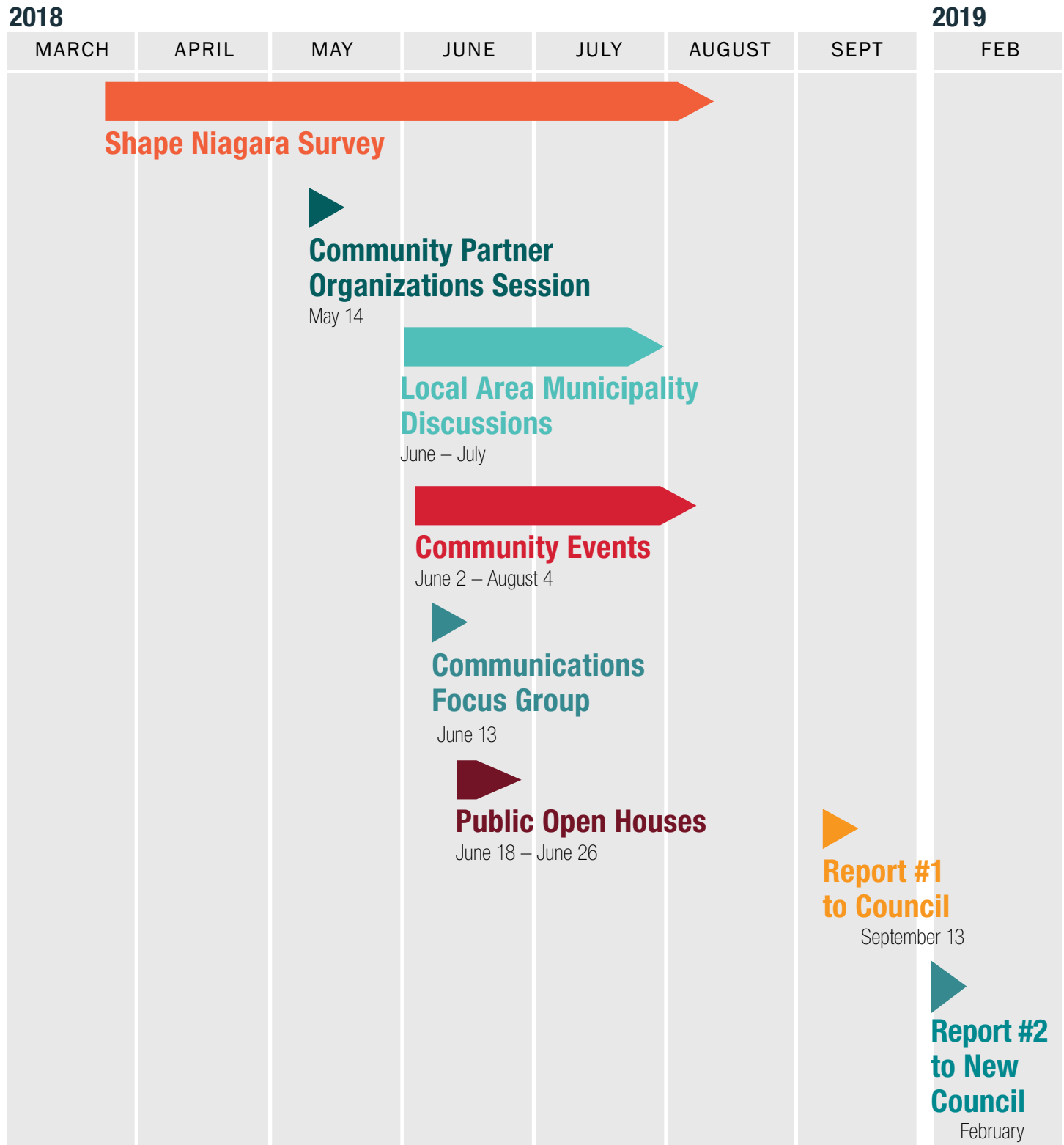
Coordinated Approach

The initiative combines what was heard through Shape Niagara with what the Region has heard throughout the term, incorporating resident feedback collected from other surveys held by the Region.

Inclusive

A multi-modal approach was used to hear from a wide range of residents, businesses, organizations and local area municipalities, using multiple formats including online, and in-person.

Shape Niagara Timeline

The engagement initiative was conducted over the course of a six month period, utilizing multiple types of engagement to ensure a broad reach across the community. Senior Regional staff will be engaged separately in the development of the accompanying background report that will be prepared for early 2019, and again in the planning process with the new Council.

2018

MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPT

2019

FEB

Shape Niagara Survey

Community Partner Organizations Session
May 14

Local Area Municipality Discussions
June – July

Community Events
June 2 – August 4

Communications Focus Group
June 13

Public Open Houses
June 18 – June 26

Report #1 to Council
September 13

Report #2 to New Council
February

Methodology

The community feedback collected through the Shape Niagara initiative is qualitative, text based data, representing the perceptions and ideas of participants to assist the next Regional Council in identifying and effectively addressing the needs of Niagara and its residents.

Data Collection
Data was collected from the community through multiple engagement methods, capturing open-ended qualitative feedback through online and in-person opportunities as outlined in the Types of Engagement section of this report.

Thematic Analysis
A thematic analysis is one that looks across all the data to identify reoccurring themes and summarize the views collected. In addition to identifying the themes that cut across the data, the narrative within each theme was reviewed, to capture the story and context behind the feedback. Themes were identified using a coding scheme, and a frequency analysis of these codes was conducted.

Frequency Analysis
Frequency analysis refers to how often an idea was identified as a priority throughout the data collected. A triangulation method was used to cross-validate findings by comparing themes collected from each type of engagement. For example, concept or ideas collected from a public open house was also heard within the online survey, at community events or within previous Regional surveys. Hearing themes through more than one type of engagement strengthens confidence in having identified the important issues.

Text Mining Software
Text mining software was used to further explore and analyze the data, to validate and confirm the themes and provide context as identified through the thematic and frequency analysis.

# Data Analysis Process

Data Collection	Thematic Analysis	Frequency Analysis	Text Mining	Bringing it all Together

*This report provides a high-level qualitative analysis of the most prominent themes and issues. While it's not possible to include all the detailed feedback received, feedback that was relevant to the objectives of Shape Niagara was analyzed and prepared for consideration in the development of the next Regional Council strategic plan. Feedback relevant to services or projects outside of the scope of the Shape Niagara initiative will be shared with relevant parties as appropriate. The comments collected may not necessarily be extrapolated to the entire population.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY
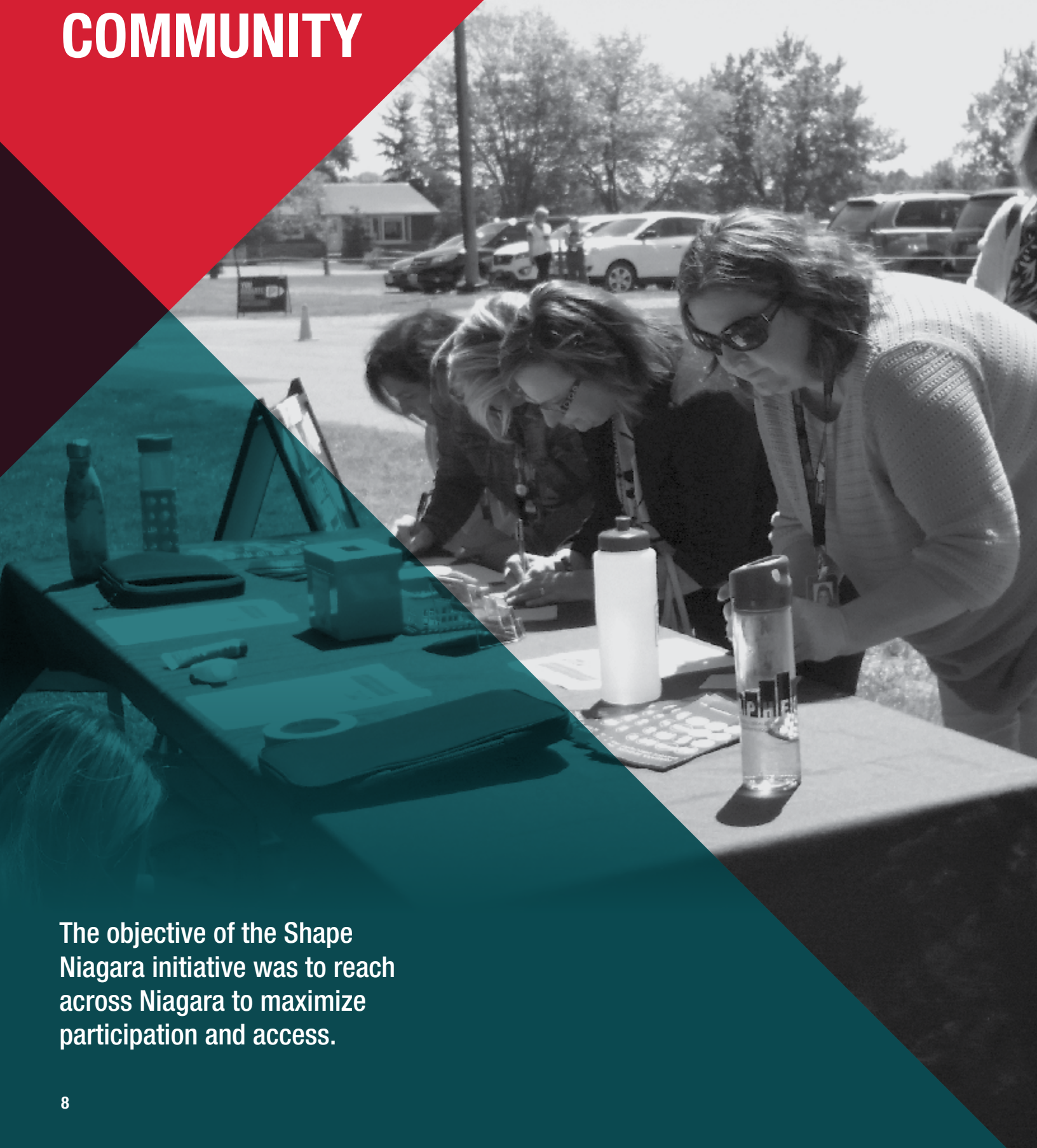
The objective of the Shape Niagara initiative was to reach across Niagara to maximize participation and access.

Community Events

Public Open Houses

Grimsby

Lincoln

West Lincoln

St. Catharines

Niagara-on-the-Lake

Thorold

Pelham

Welland

Niagara Falls

Wainfleet

Port Colborne

Fort Erie

Reach

Recognizing that not all residents are able to attend a scheduled public open house, or may not have access or exposure to the online survey, staff took the initiative to the residents directly, attending 28 local community events, and meeting directly with local area municipal staff (locations shown in the map above). The reach of the engagement initiative was also driven by distribution of business cards, posters, mobile survey access at events (iPads), promotion through our partners and stakeholders, print and online newspaper ads and articles, and through social media platforms including use of the hashtag #ShapeNiagara.

The Shape Niagara initiative received positive traction in the community, stakeholders who saw the importance of the initiative bolstered circulation through grass roots efforts. As an example, one of Niagara's non-profit organizations provided and promoted access to the survey on their premises for clients who may not otherwise have had access to a computer. The initiative was also promoted in a community newsletter that CERF Niagara puts out with distribution to their French speaking networks throughout Niagara. Shape Niagara also received letter and email submissions, validating the recognition by residents and organizations of the importance in being given a voice in this process.

FACEBOOK

👍 **453** LIKES   💬 **104** COMMENTS

291,261 IMPRESSIONS

263 SHARES

21 POSTS

LOCAL AREA MUNICIPALITY

12 MUNICIPALITIES

6 SESSIONS

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

5 OPEN HOUSES

70 PARTICIPANTS

173 UNIQUE QUOTES

3522 UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITS

1523 Total Participants

STAFF FEEDBACK

128 Unique Quotes

3 Channels to submit feedback

TWITTER

47,162 IMPRESSIONS

483 Engagements

56 times #ShapeNiagara

21 Tweets on Region account

COMMUNITY EVENTS

28 Community Events

85 Unique Quotes

Approximately **1500** in-person interactions

5 FACEBOOK EVENT PAGES

42 Responses

3996 People Reached

Newspaper Advertisements

5 ads in district newspapers

9 media articles

ONLINE SURVEY

1002 Survey Responses

304 Infrastructure and Services

359 Economy and Growth

357 Health

433 Environment

242 Governance

337 Quality of Life

# of ideas submitted for each Area of Focus

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

11

WHAT WE HEARD

VISION

Residents were given the opportunity to provide input to be used to inform a refresh of the Region's vision statement.

Residents were asked to provide 3 words that best describe Niagara

Nature Beautiful Tourism Friendly Home Wineries Green Diverse Historic Potential Scenic Safe Clean Growing Falls Fun Lush Aging Culture Quiet Farms Rural Affordable Space Water Warm Unique Canal Exciting Garden Family Pretty Variety Peaceful Vineyards Charming Fruitland Traffic Picturesque Town Fresh Escarpment Community Relaxed Sport Welcoming Busy Local Heritage Destination Development Adventurous Seasonal Agriculture Awesome Border Multicultural Opportunity Central Weather Inviting Recreation Quaint Inclusion Open Attractive Food Serene Location Accessible Small Vibrant Educated Vacation Geographic Spacious Lifestyle Construction Expanding Innovative Greenbelt Niagara Comforting Entertaining Transportation Changing

> I see Niagara known as a region that is multi-faceted and offers residents full-scale, balanced lifestyles where they can feel they have job security, a full spectrum of community supports for young and old, and options to enjoy the benefits offered by the area's geographic location.

> I hope Niagara is known for being a dynamic, environmentally friendly, socially conscious, inclusive city with a thriving and vibrant arts community, world class restaurants and wineries and plenty of things to do. I hope it's a place where young families can stay, make a good living and afford to live.

> I hope Niagara is known as an incredibly progressive, diverse, welcoming community that is known for its abilities to work together, listen to each other and collectively create innovative ways of being a community.

> I see Niagara known for being an inclusive and equitable community who values all members as part of a rich and fair Niagara

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.

What Did Staff Have to Say?

Regional staff were given an opportunity to participate as residents through the online survey. Additionally, staff were asked to comment from a corporate lens with what they think the Region could focus on to better the Region as an organization. Here's what Regional staff had to say:

- Continue to foster cross-departmental collaboration and communication at the Niagara Region to approach issues with a multi-disciplinary focus
- Facilitate opportunities to improve the use of data and idea sharing across departments to ensure evidence informed decision making
- Foster a work environment with a focus on continuous improvement and innovation
- Continue working to improve organizational culture, brand and reputation

Senior Regional staff will be engaged additionally during the strategic planning process and will provide input into the accompanying background report.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY

This section of the report provides an overview of what was heard across each type of engagement method, summarized by the six areas of focus.

Community Partner Organization Session

📅 May 14

Niagara Region works closely with many organizations in the community. These partner organizations were invited to a workshop where participants were asked to provide their ideas around what the Region should focus on from the perspective of their organizations, and more importantly, their clients.

Invitees and participants included local businesses, local area municipal staff, non-for-profit organizations, education sector, health care sector, and community organizations. The Shape Niagara initiative also received written letters of submission from partner organizations, and that feedback has been included in this section.

> " Fostering an environment for jobs and prosperity means more than ensuring employment opportunities are available, it includes encouraging a living wage. "

Here's What We Heard:

Infrastructure and Services

Safe and Affordable Housing
- Affordable housing solutions inclusive of all residents, including young people, single earners and renters
- Capitalize on funding and development opportunities from higher levels of government
- Ensure affordable housing remains a priority of the housing action plan

Navigating Regional Services
- Streamline navigation for municipal and social services across all levels or providers
- Use data to identify top needs and gaps in services
- Access to services - removing barriers (costs, transportation) for those on low incomes

Transportation Connectivity
- Develop and maintain affordable, accessible transportation to support residents getting to work, school, appointments, and amenities; will also support reduction of social isolation

Economy and Growth

Growing Youth and Young Families in Niagara
- Market employment opportunities to attract and retain young families
- Support youth in developing roots in Niagara as active citizens of the Region

Supporting Niagara's Businesses
- Connect local business owners with tools for success
- Transportation to connect municipalities to support region-wide access
- Foster environment & supports for entrepreneurship and small businesses

Economic Diversification
- Shift focus to innovative emerging clusters
- Align economic strategies across municipalities
- Diversify our tourist sector and developing a collective vision for tourism

Fostering an Environment for Jobs and Prosperity
- Ensure employment opportunities are available, and encouraging a living wage to ensure residents experience better quality of life and improved health outcomes

Health and Wellness
Healthy Population

- Address gaps in senior care, palliative care, addiction and mental health services; creation of a region-wide harm reduction strategy and a comprehensive physician recruitment strategy
- Integration of alternatives to traditional health care delivery models
- Adopt a client-centered, equitable approach to the delivery of public health services, programs and emergency services to support people living on a low income and people experiencing homelessness
- Improve transportation and access to health services
- Ensure a social justice and human rights approach for those living in poverty, to address the attitudes, bias and prejudices to help people move beyond poverty

Governance and Advocacy
Engaging the Community

- Consultation and inclusion to give a voice to the community, and hear unique perspectives

Environment
Sustainable Development

- Prioritize environmental protection, encourage recycling, protect greenspace and agriculture in the planning process
- Balance sustainability and meeting current needs of rural issues

Quality of Life
Socially Responsible Procurement

- Support local enterprises for work done through Region's procurement, foster sustainable business practices

Public Open Houses

📅 June 18 – 26

Public open houses were held in five municipalities: Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Welland, Beamsville and Port Colborne. The open houses were geographically spaced out to cover the major population centers allowing for a wider span of participation and access, shown in the map below. As a public participation technique, the open houses provided a formal drop-in event that allowed attendees to provide comments in person. Staff were there to outline the objective of the events, answer questions and capture the feedback provided by residents who attended.

" We need to play off of our current strengths to create a prosperous economy- those strengths being our proximity to the GTHA and border, post secondary institutions and our strong agricultural industry "

Here's What We Heard:

Infrastructure and Services

Transportation Connectivity
- Improve connectivity between Niagara's municipalities and outside of region

Affordable Housing
- Affordable housing and alternative solutions to combat homelessness

Roads and Bridges
- Improve roads, bridges and physical infrastructure to meet demands of increasing population and traffic flow
- Ensure we are adequately prepared for the expansion of GO to Niagara

Grimsby
Lincoln
Niagara-on-the-Lake
St. Catharines
Thorold
West Lincoln
Pelham
Niagara Falls
Welland
Wainfleet
Port Colborne
Fort Erie

Legend
- ● Open house location

Population Density (sqkm)
- ● High Density
- ● Medium Density
- ● Low Density
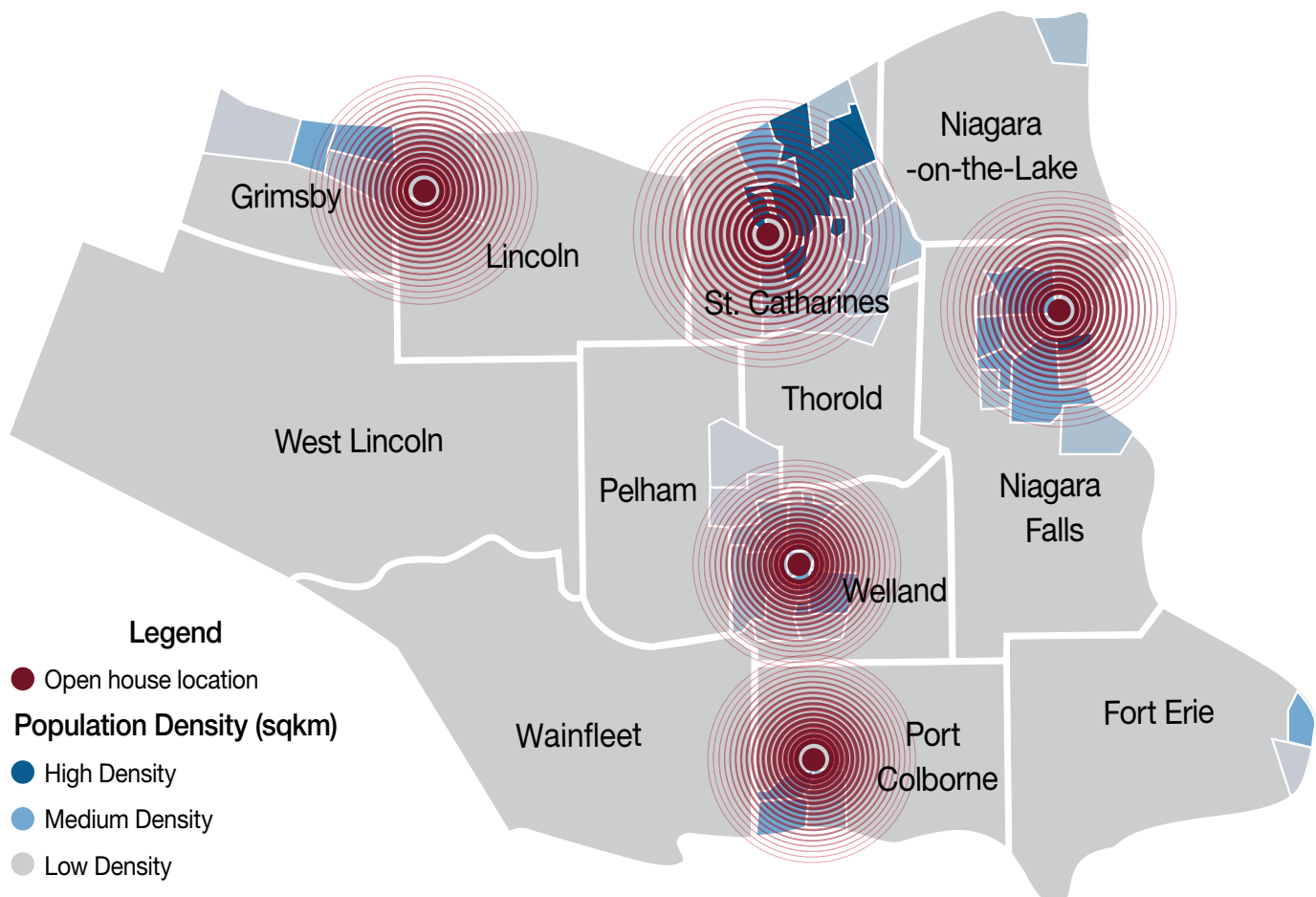
5 Open Houses | 70 Participants

Economy and Growth

Socially Responsible Business
- Stimulate our economy through the use of local companies for Regional projects

Marketing Niagara
- Utilize our strengths to attract diverse industry

Business Retention
- Streamline support for development and Niagara's businesses

Youth Retention
- Leverage partnerships with post-secondary institutions to increase youth retention

Health and Wellness

Access to Heath Services and Preventative Care
- Improved centralization and access to necessary health services
- Supports for increasing effectiveness of emergency services within our communities
- Integration of public health services; including school outreach, senior services, mental health and addiction support

Active Transportation
- Bike lanes and sidewalks to encourage active transportation

Governance and Advocacy

Accountability
- Open, transparent and accountable governance following a set of standards for conduct

Community Engagement
- Engage residents on boards and committees, as well as throughout decision making processes

Advocacy
- Streamline advocacy efforts to best serve all Niagara residents

Environment

Protection of Natural Assets
- Protect our greenspaces and natural resources

Sustainable Development
- Ensure developments follow sustainability guidelines

Environmental Education
- Increase educational initiatives to ensure residents understand the importance of environmental conservation

Community Engagement
- Consultation with stakeholders to capture voice for preservation of natural assets in Niagara
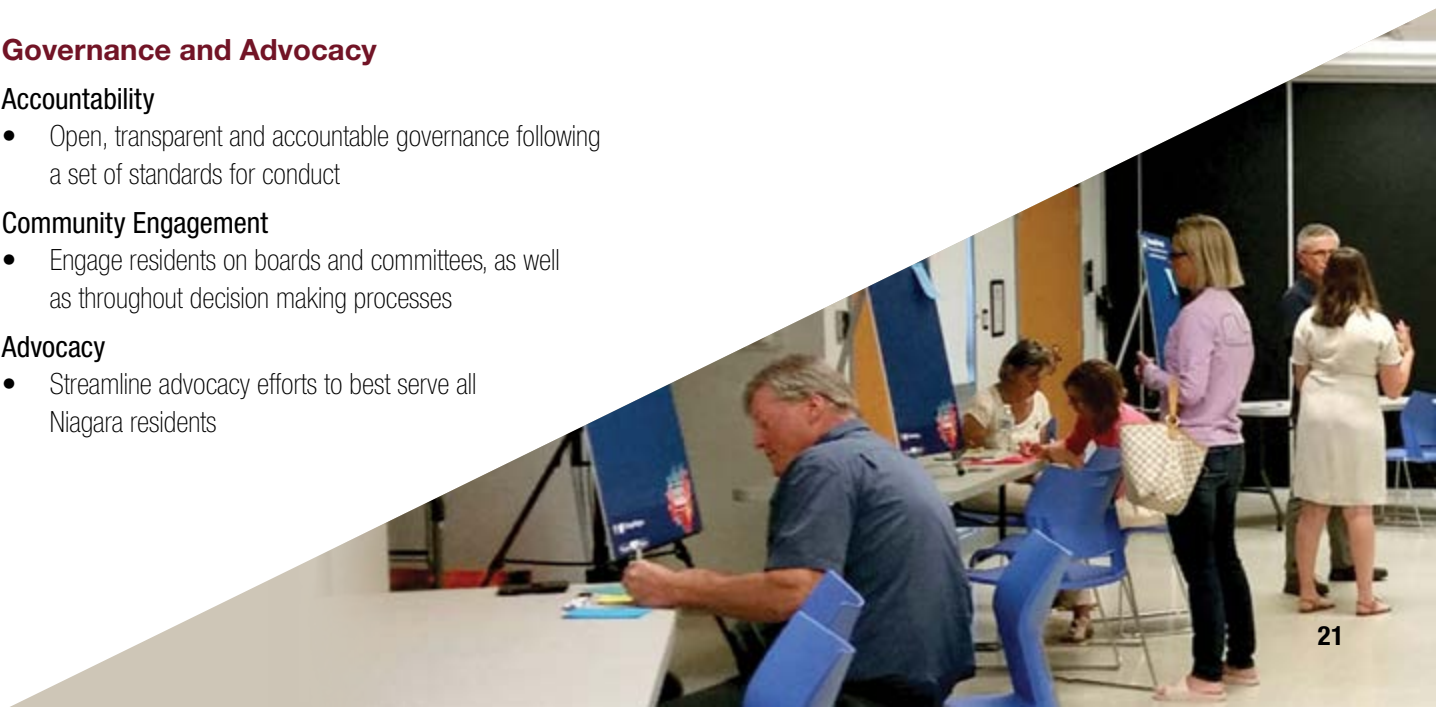
Quality of Life

Safety
- Police visibility within our communities and at events

Supports for Populations in Need
- Work to support our multicultural growth, supporting newcomers and marginalized populations in Niagara

Sense of Belonging
- Vibrant culture, entertainment opportunities

Community Events

📅 June – August

One of the keys of successful engagement is to make it easier and more convenient for people to participate. The project team took the initiative to places where people were already gathering, setting up at community events and popular destinations. This made it easier for community members to provide their comments and guidance without having to attend a separate meeting, and allowed the initiative to reach more residents and cover more geographic area.

The project team attended a total of 28 community events. Examples of event locations included: Niagara VegFest, Niagara Falls Ribfest, Canada Day celebrations, Pelham Supper Market, Ridgeway Summer Festival, Niagara on the Lake Lavender Festival and Farmers Markets, etc.

> " We need one sustainability framework and goal for the whole region. We need united action to protect the environment. "

Here's What We Heard:

Infrastructure and Services

Transportation Connectivity
- Comprehensive Region-wide public transportation system, including active transportation options

Roads and Bridges
- Improve quality of Regional roads to match increases in growth

Navigating Regional Services
- Easier access to Regional services and information

Economy and Growth

Youth Retention
- Increase youth retention by providing employment opportunities for recent graduates

Supporting Business
- Increase in support for small businesses, entrepreneurship and existing businesses in Niagara

Diverse Industry Sectors
- Diversify our economic clusters in order to promote economic prosperity, increase average income, reduce precarious employment

32 events | Approx. 1500 in person interactions

Health and Wellness

Mental Health Supports
- Increase access to mental health services for all ages, working to reduce stigma within the community

Preventative Health Care
- Address social determinants of health such as addiction, social services and job stability services, understanding that a healthy social community leads to improvements on a population's physical health

Senior Services
- Improve connectivity between health services for seniors

Governance and Advocacy

Openness and Trust
- Openness, accountability, transparency and trustworthiness on Regional Council

Community Engagement
- Ensuring Council represents their residents by increasing community consultation on important issues, and keeping residents informed

Environment

Sustainable Development
- Better balance between development and sustainability, ensuring experts are consulted prior to development

Education
- Improve education regarding proper recycling and environmental sustainability practices

Protection of Natural Assets
- Protection of wildlife and their habitats, waterfronts and greenspace

Quality of Life

Smart Land Use Planning
- Improve community planning to ensure communities serve their residents across the life course
- Ensure developments are designed with walkability in mind

Support for Populations in Need
- Increase accessibility for newcomers and immigrants, including literature and outreach in multiple languages

Local Area Municipalities
🗓 June – July

Niagara's local area municipal (LAM) staff were engaged in a number of ways including an invitation to the community partner organization session, and through attendance at area planners, economic development, treasurers and CAO meetings. All local area CAOs were invited to a facilitated session to capture feedback and generate fulsome discussions, fostering collaboration between upper and lower tier governments.

Here's What We Heard:

Infrastructure & Services

Transportation
- Support growth through effective transportation network, corridors to ease congestion (North / South escarpment, mid-pen corridor, integrate existing infrastructure with GO), complete the big tasks we've started: close on GO and airport initiatives
- Effective planning for connectivity - people and goods movement strategy, improve transportation and mobility hubs, transportation and connectivity coordinated amongst all partners, linking active transportation across municipalities (i.e. circle route), explore opportunities with ports in Port Colborne and St. Catharines

Economy & Growth

Planning for Growth
- Integrate diversity into the strategic growth plan, coordinate to attract residents across all of Niagara's LAMs, proactive planning rather than reactive
- Be visionary with land-use planning, using successful cities as an example. A coordinated growth and development plan, growth in the right places, intensification, advocate province to properly designate lands, protect the future of agriculture, educate public / developers on topics such as smart growth and affordable housing
- Recognize LAM differences to meet the needs of municipalities that are growing and also those that are not growing. Working with LAMs on official plans to build a region-wide approach
- Assessment base growth needs to grow away from reliance on residential. Plan and address building stock, inventory, land restriction issues (i.e. wetlands), re-zoning of industrial to residential is affecting future needs

Economic Prosperity
- Re-branding of region as a whole to attract new residents and business investment, foster working together to ease competition issues between local municipalities, rural / urban approach such as Durham Region, focusing not only on pushing big sites, but pockets of sites, emulate successes of like-regions, effective incentives with criteria to meet objectives and drive marketability (i.e. we don't need to incentivize where growth is already happening, focus incentives to where the impact will be the greatest)
- Focus on future job market, position Niagara for a new economy, fostering entrepreneurship, diversified economic activity, look at how to increase Niagara's employment participation rate
- Preserve affordability, effective transportation, appropriate servicing to potential areas such as Seaway lands, broadband opportunities
- Partnerships – leverage strengths of neighbouring municipalities (City of Hamilton, GTA, Buffalo), build a labour force for new economy through relationships with post-secondary institutions (i.e. advocate for engineering, advanced manufacturing programs)
- Expand cooperative economic development approach, unified economic development strategy and action plan across the two-tiers, need a business retention and expansion strategy, define role in tourism to reduce confusion and be inclusive of all municipalities

Governance & Advocacy

Inter-Municipal Relations
- Alignment between upper and lower tier priorities, co-operation and / or support between upper and lower tiers, strong inter-municipal relations, align strategic plans to focus on working together to get things done, opportunity for a common or complementary strategic pillar(s)
- Better communication with Regional Council at LAM Councils, fostering working relationships between Region and LAM staff and ensuring alignment of documentation and strategies between the two levels
- Ensure aligned customer service and ease of navigation for residents and staff, warm handoffs between tiers
- Come together with one voice to higher levels of government, collective strategy, approach and advocate as one, all go together
- Asset management planning, investment policies, cooperation between local municipalities and Region mean we can come together to find solutions that all municipalities can use

Communications Focus Group

📅 June 13

The Region's Strategic Communication & Government Affairs division conducts a resident survey with a focus on communication preferences. The 2018 survey aligned well with the launch of the Shape Niagara initiative, and questions that would specifically benefit the Shape Niagara initiative were included in the focus group portion of the initiative.

> " [Transit] brings people together, makes jobs, improves business and improves tax revenues, and that will make more money available for other improvements. "

😊 28 participants over 3 focus groups

Here's What We Heard:

Infrastructure and Services

Roads and Bridges
- Improve road maintenance for new and existing assets

Transportation Connectivity
- Improve public transit system functioning as a single system with one schedule and one fare, incorporation of GO trains into regional system

Affordable Housing
- Housing for seniors and affordable housing

Navigating Regional Services
- Increase 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
- Improve 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 greater Toronto and Hamilton
- Secure employment opportunities - priority for the region is job creation, for youth and young families, with higher pay

Governance and Advocacy

Accountable Spending
- Accountable spending at the Region and the LAMs

Collaboration
- Communication between the Region and LAMs with common goals

Community Engagement in Development
- Ensure transparency in development plans for residents across all local municipalities

Health and Wellness

Health Care Services
- Improve and expanding mental health services
- Increase support for Public Health services

Online Survey

📅 March– August

The primary tool to collect community feedback was through an online survey accessed through the Shape Niagara website. Participants ranked their top three Areas of Focus, and asked participants to elaborate and identify how they might leverage Niagara's strengths and weaknesses as opportunities.

> " Improving transportation is necessary. Niagara's communities will be better connected, which will improve everything from employment rates, to the local economy, to health. "

👍 1002 survey responses

Here's What We Heard:

Infrastructure and Services

Infrastructure
- Ensure roads and bridges are adequately maintained for safe and timely travel
- Ensure roads and transit system are prepared for the influx of usage with future GO service
- Connective corridors to mitigate the increasing levels of traffic on major arteries

Services for Populations in Need
- Look for innovative strategies to support residents finding safe, affordable places to live
- Supports for homeless population, including housing, health care, addiction support and jobs

Services for Families
- Increase child supports to make Niagara an attractive place to live for young families; lobbying upper levels of government for increased affordable childcare options and public health supports for the early years

Waste Management
- Increase education initiatives to increase organics and recycling, more waste sorting bins in public facilities

Water Quality
- Ensure drinking water resources are adequately protected, maintain current quality; explore solutions to improve water cleanliness at beaches for safe swimming
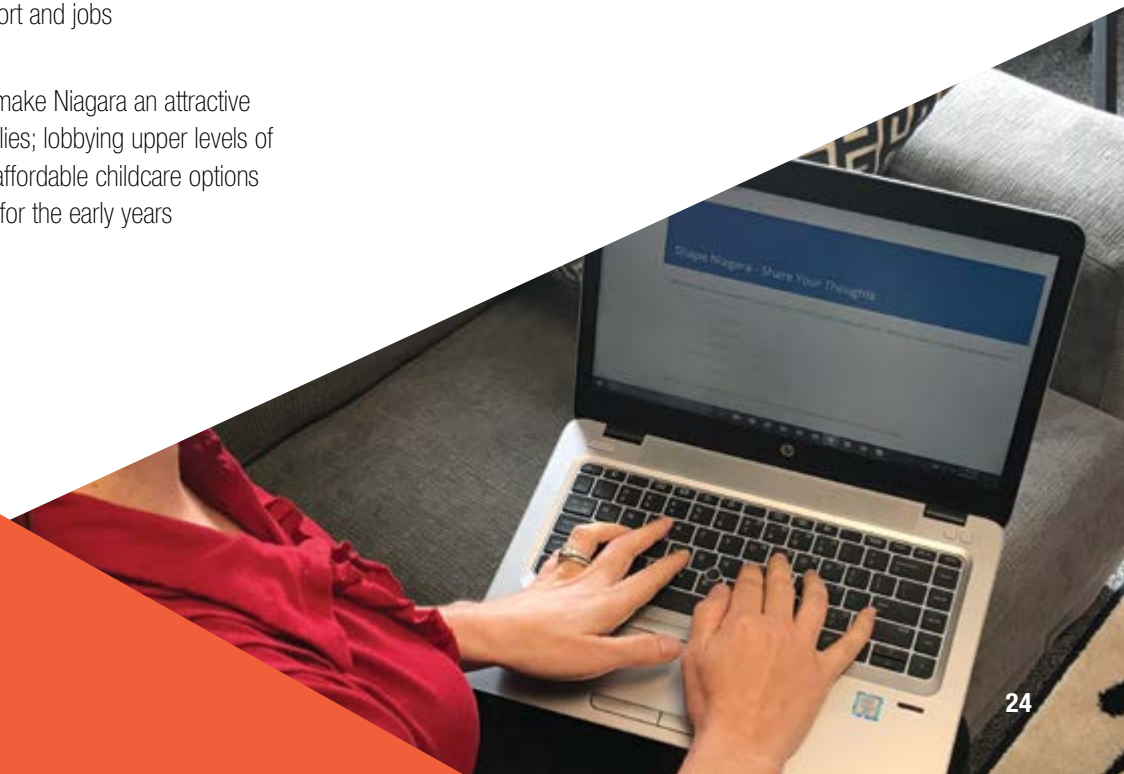
Economy and Growth

Diverse Industry Sectors

- Attract new and diverse industry to Niagara; use of targeted incentives, and matching businesses with vacant properties
- Drive growth in downtown cores, adjacent to our waterfronts and repurpose brownfields
- Focus on attracting industry in sectors with proven longevity and a high rate of growth

Secure Employment Opportunities

- Need to move away from part-time, seasonal employment; work with higher levels of government to attract secure employment opportunities and reduce precarious employment

Business Retention

- Centralized support for businesses; established lasting connections

Marketing Niagara

- Market Niagara's strengths, such as greenspace, high quality of life and proximity to higher education, to attract both businesses and potential employees.
- Utilize traditional and innovative media channels; create comprehensive region-wide marketing strategy to attract more tourists, investors, future residents and businesses

Youth Retention

- Comprehensive youth retention strategy, fostering strong partnerships between post-secondary institutions and business sector to match local graduates with employment opportunities and ensure education programs fill gaps in the workforce

Collaborative Government

- Create a defined economic focus across all local area municipalities to attract industry, create one set of economic development procedures across all municipalities

Tourism

- Work to expand tourism industry across all municipalities; continue to invest in alternative forms of tourism, such as eco-tourism and sport tourism; and leverage Niagara's strengths

Transportation Connectivity

- Transportation plays an important role in economic growth; centralize future development along highways and the future GO route, and in areas with existing services

> "[Success is] realized when communities work together, and should not be one-off's. It should be the result of deliberate and consistent effort of key strategic alliances between communities, as well as with the private, education and healthcare sectors.

Health and Wellness

Active Transportation

- Increase in trail systems, cycling paths; ensure safe active transportation opportunities

Preventative Healthcare

- Continued focus on preventative health care to reduce stress on our health system
- Increase focus on social determinants of health such as income equity, homelessness, employment rates, supports for marginalized populations, addiction services and supports and harm reduction strategy
- Respondents indicated that the public is not aware of all of the services provided by Public Health, and suggest improved marketing towards target audiences to increase usage and increase education on important health concerns
- Shifts towards medical centres of excellence require an increase outreach services such as increase in home care, outreach to outlying communities and a stronger network of community organizations to connect residents with available services in their area

Caring for Seniors

- Increase supports for Niagara's aging population: localized health services, affordable senior housing and outreach for older population

Transportation Connectivity

- Work towards a unified transit system to allow all residents to access needed health services, regardless of what municipality they reside in

Mental Health Supports

- Continued focus on mental health issues through services, early intervention and education in schools for youth

"

Income equity is the key to all wellbeing measures. We need to create a sense of belonging for all citizens, no matter their age, cultural background, or socio-economic background. We need to create opportunities for diverse populations to interact in the community by how it is planned and structured.

"

Governance

Advocacy & Collaborative Government

- Advocate for Niagara as a whole, attract businesses and new residents by unifying LAM and Regional priorities; Niagara is stronger working together with a common vision, where all viewpoints are valued in decision making
- Increase collaboration between levels of government including collaborative strategic planning
- Regional Councillors co-operating with one another, reducing inner conflict to accomplish all tasks efficiently with integrity

Accountability

- Accountability for Regional Council through the establishment of a clear code of conduct and rules of governance
- A more responsive government, easily accessible to discuss issues with constituents
- Increase presence of Regional politicians at community events, to help build a stronger rapport between residents and their representatives

Community Engagement

- Increase opportunities to have residents voices heard; prior to each major decision or plan, residents would like community consultation sessions where residents, politicians and organizations can have meaningful discussions
- Diverse representation on Regional committees, engage subject matter experts to sit on appropriate committees

Fiscal Responsibility

- Keep residents informed regarding budgets, spending, decision-making and timelines for Regional projects
- Ensure responsible spending by reducing inefficiencies and duplication. Explore alternatives to our current governance model to reduce overlap of services
- Transparency in spending, with guidelines on appropriate expenses for elected officials

> **Be honest and open with citizens about the tough decisions that need to be made for our benefit.**
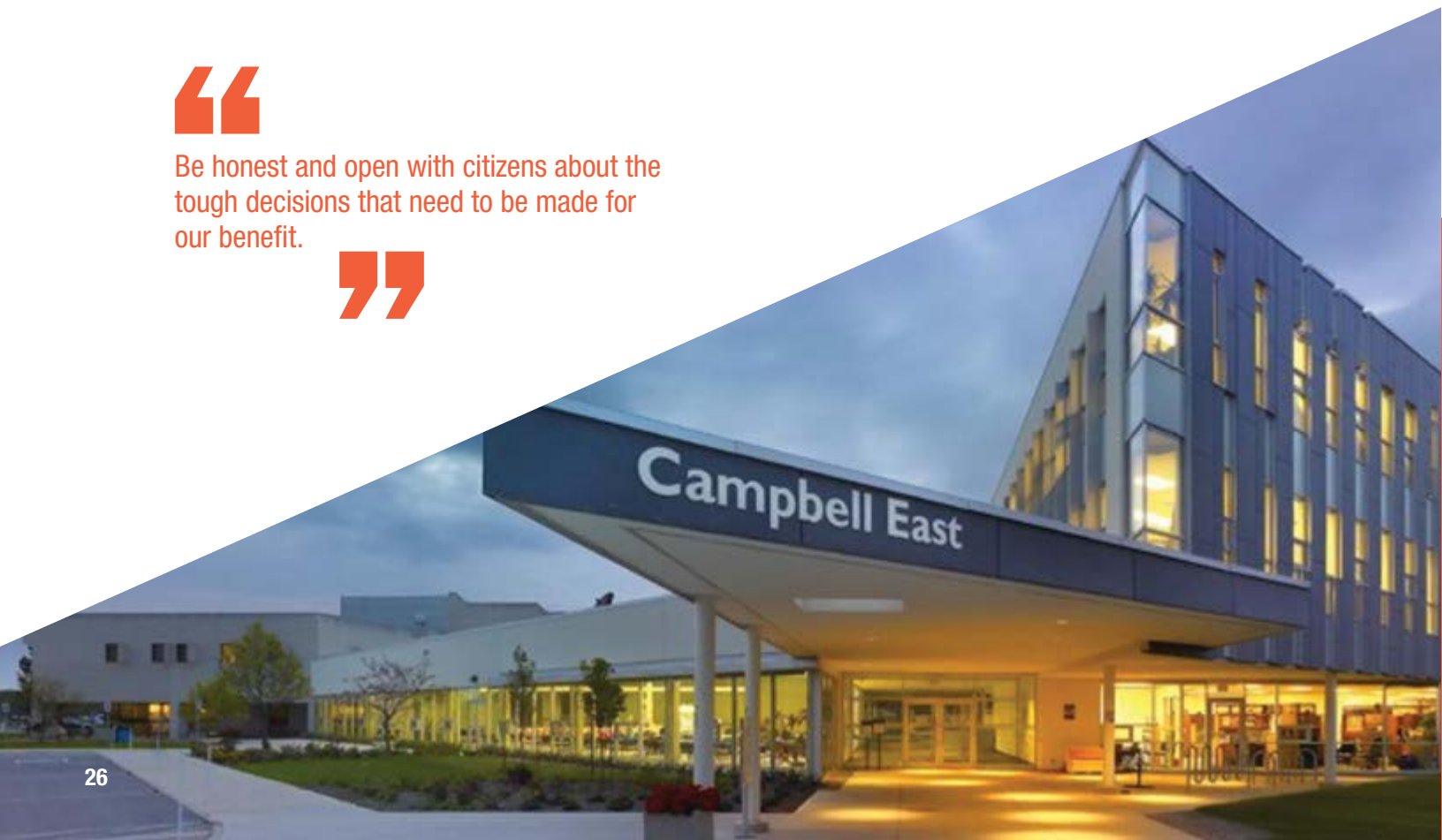
Environment

Protection of Natural Areas

- Respondents were passionate about the protection of Niagara's environment; including wetlands, farmlands and greenspaces; ensure these lands are not subject to zoning changes
- Ensure Niagara's wildlife and ecosystems are protected through the creation of a natural heritage system
- Opportunities to utilize natural areas within the region, including improved access to the waterfront, and an increase of natural areas for physical activity
- Ensure all new developments provide ample park space and green space in their plans

Sustainable Development

- Ensure future developments are sustainable, focus on infill and developing brownfields as an alternative to urban sprawl
- More stringent rules for developers that plan to build on sensitive lands; focus incentives towards developers that are repurposing current vacant land, and developers that are passionate about preserving our heritage and the environment

Environmental Protection

- Explore alternative energy options to maintain Niagara's clean air; limit the use of fertilizers and pesticides, educate the public on environmental issues, such as recycling, endangered species and composting
- Connected public transit system, to reduce reliance on vehicles and reduce carbon footprint

"

We need both the protection and the sustainable development. It can be done with embracing the gifts we have, and opening our minds to safe, clean, healthy and attractive development, that has a sustainable future.

"

Quality of Life

Transportation Connectivity

- Create a comprehensive inter-municipal transit system, integrated with the future GO route, to support travel of residents and tourists. Niagara's large geographic area can be a challenge for transit, explore alternative transportation to reach outlying communities
- Improve access and use of active transportation modes, such as walking and cycling

Community Engagement

- Opportunities for residents to provide input into decisions that affect their community

Sense of Belonging

- Foster a greater sense of belonging through community hubs, local tourism opportunities to support interactions between community members, and foster Niagara's unique culture

Responsible Development

- Residents are passionate about the unique features that make Niagara home, ensure natural features such as waterfronts and the environment are protected from over development
- Increase consultation prior to major developments to ensure greater sustainability and the voice of residents is captured

Safe Community

- Safe neighbourhoods greater police visibility, increased lighting, improved monitoring of roads and highways

Supports for Populations in Need

- Ensure the most vulnerable populations such as newcomers, the homeless and those struggling with addiction are adequately supported

Balanced Services

- Balance services to meet the needs of families, business owners and professionals
- Balance of rural and urban priorities to drive a high quality of life

Arts and Culture

- Increase support for arts and culture, including community festivals, galleries and museums
- Protect and restore historic towns and villages to make Niagara more attractive to new and current residents
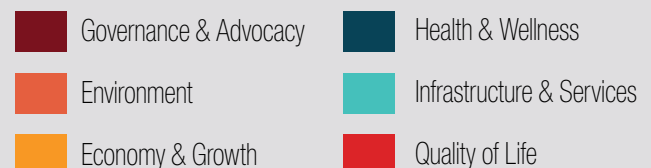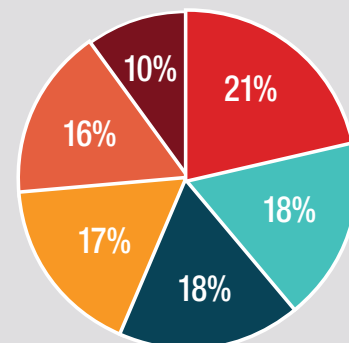
"

We need to build a better sense of community in Niagara, where people feel they are encouraged to contribute their skills to make life better for everyone.

"

Selected as Top 3 Priority

Participants were asked to rank the Areas of Focus, this chart shows the proportion of times each Area of Focus was selected as a top 3 priority.

- 10%
- 21%
- 16%
- 18%
- 17%
- 18%

Governance & Advocacy

Health & Wellness

Environment

Infrastructure & Services

Economy & Growth

Quality of Life

WHAT ELSE THE COMMUNITY TOLD US

A review of recent and relevant surveys hosted by the Region was conducted and pertinent responses were incorporated into the Shape Niagara results to validate what was heard.

Surveys Included:

- Smart Cities Survey
- Niagara Employer Inventory Survey
- Go Hub and Transit Station Survey
- Joint Strategy on Youth Retention Survey

Other Relevant Surveys

Here's What We Heard:

Smart Cities Survey

This survey was conducted to gather insights from Niagara residents about the greatest challenges affecting Niagara that may be improved through data and technology. This data helped to inform Niagara's submission to Infrastructure Canada's Smart Cities Challenge in 2018.

Infrastructure and Services

- Police visibility to foster a sense of safety
- Explore innovative solutions to the housing crisis
- Road and infrastructure to accommodate population growth
- Inter-municipality transit with consideration around jobs and those accessing the service Example: those working in the service industry, with schedules based on demand / usage
- Active transportation opportunities
- Leverage technology to improve maintenance of Regional roads

Economy and Growth

- Focus on attracting new employers to the Region to improve job prosperity
- Support for small and medium sized businesses through a technology hub
- Advocate post-secondary industry to match programs to emerging economic clusters, with a focus on leveraging technology and connectivity
- Support employment opportunities for individuals to work from home in remote locations

Health and Wellness

- Mental health care for all residents, of all ages
- Access to health services for pocket communities
- Support for innovative health services to treat addictions
- Focus on preventative medicine to alleviate stress on the health system and physician recruitment
- Adapt to meet the needs of an aging population through technology

Governance and Advocacy

- Increase opportunities for residents to provide feedback to Regional Council
- One Niagara - unifying strategies across municipalities
- Focus on bottom-up leadership, where government leads from behind to build capacity

Environment

- Focus on sustainable development within the planning process

Quality of Life

- Embrace multiculturalism
- Community engagement and fostering a sense of community belonging for all ages
- Local community hubs
- Improve digital connectivity
- Community planning focusing on proximity between commercial and residential areas

Employer Inventory Survey

The Region conducts annual in-person surveys with businesses across Niagara. Results from the survey contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Niagara's current employment landscape by providing reliable data on employment numbers, types of employment and job / industry locations. Businesses were also asked what the Region could do to support them.

Infrastructure & Services

- Include online information about regional small businesses in the form of a business directory
- Expand public transit service to support employees
- Expand bike lanes in the Region to allow for greater access to stores and workplaces

Economy

- Encourage inter-business networking
- Highlight employment opportunities across the region
- Assist in keeping and attracting business in Niagara

Health & Wellness

- Increase funding for mental health services
- Support cycling and sporting events that will attract tourists, encourage healthy living and increase economic spinoff

Governance & Advocacy

- Continue to promote Niagara as open for business
- Remain politically active in ensuring procurement stays open and transparent
- Promote and support a "buy local" campaign in order to increase public awareness of the importance of Niagara agriculture and farmers
- Streamline permits and approvals

Environment

- Educate and promote usage of garbage and recycling programs

GO Hub and Transit Station Survey

This Regional infrastructure project included a resident survey to capture feedback surrounding the development of GO hubs and transit stations in Niagara. Relevant feedback as it aligns to the objective of Shape Niagara has been captured below.

Infrastructure & Services

- Prioritize active modes of transportation to support increase in density within municipalities

Economy

- Expand business options and create well-designed transit in order to achieve economic success and regional growth
- Increase development in the older parts of the Region to take pressure off of urban sprawl

Health & Wellness

- Encourage active transit to foster a healthy community

Governance & Advocacy

- Integrated transit and infrastructure attractiveness can be used as a way to promote the region to residents and tourists.

Environment

- Consider protection of land and environment when developing transit and infrastructure

Quality of Life

- Support connectivity through integrated transit, pedestrian-friendly communities and mixed-use work and living spaces

Joint Strategy on Youth Retention with Post-Secondary Institutions

This project focused on the creation of a comprehensive, multi-partner strategy with Niagara's post-secondary institutions aimed at retaining and attracting youth.

Infrastructure & Services

- Smart transportation supported by technology solutions; advocacy for active transportation

Economy

- Support for partnerships promoting technology and innovation in the education sector, supporting business and investment attraction
- Support for skill development of Niagara's labour pool
- Promotion of Niagara's health care industry with linkages to other partners and regions

Governance & Advocacy

- Council can continue to encourage the collaborative approach to services and community prosperity Niagara has seen as a result of working across municipalities
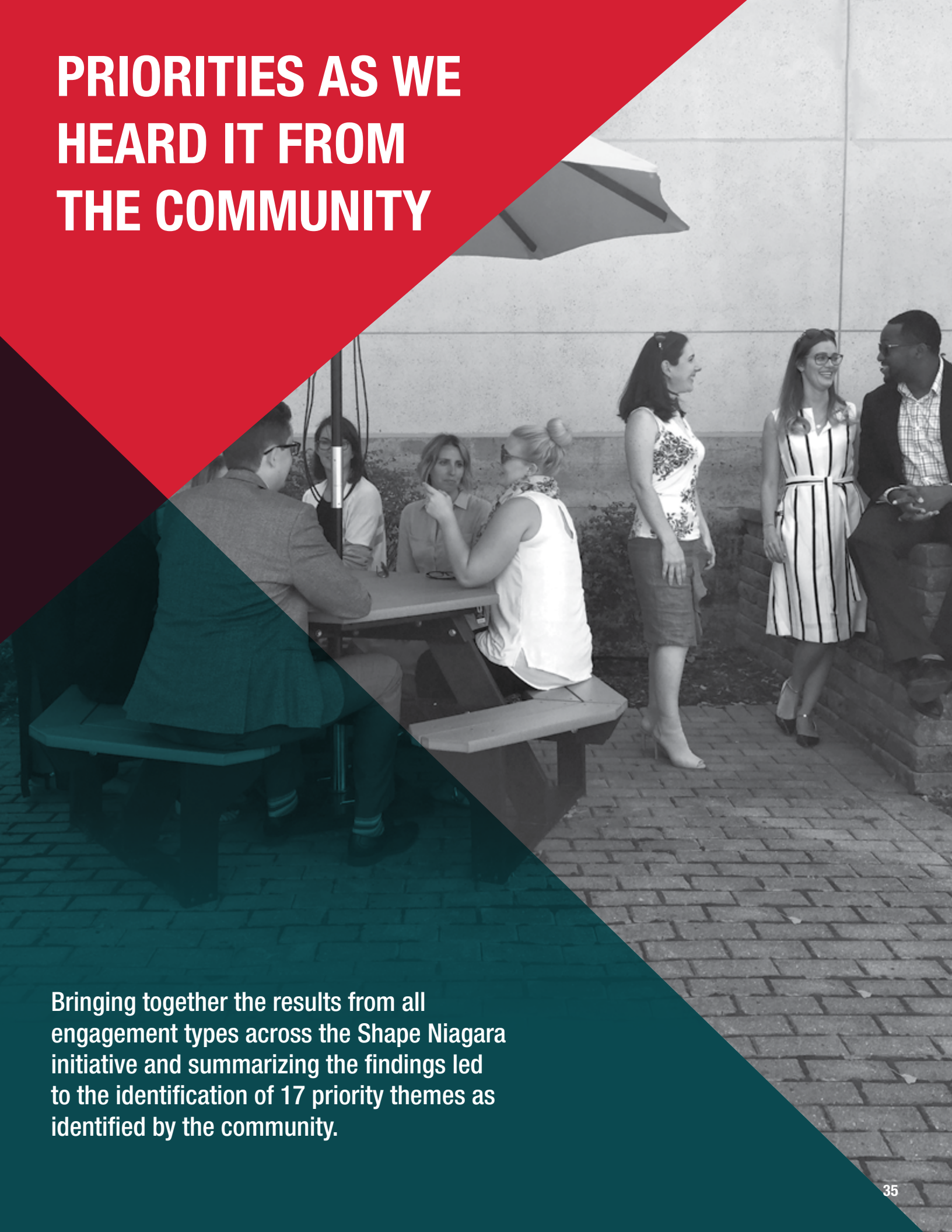
Quality of Life

- Rebrand Niagara to tell the positive stories to improve our image, promote attractions and benefits of living in Niagara

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

PRIORITIES AS WE HEARD IT FROM THE COMMUNITY

Bringing together the results from all engagement types across the Shape Niagara initiative and summarizing the findings led to the identification of 17 priority themes as identified by the community.

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-precarious 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

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

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

SUMMARY

Concluding Remarks

This report is the first of two that will be provided to the next Regional Council. This first report provides Council with a summary of What We Heard through the Shape Niagara community engagement initiative. It will be accompanied by a second report, a background report, which will provide an overview of the current state of the Region and current influencing factors such as provincial, federal and global considerations. With this information in hand, the next Regional Council will develop their strategic plan for the 2019-2022 term of Council, and an implementation plan will be created which will identify how the Region will accomplish the objectives set out for themselves.

Where We Go Next

| PHASE 1 Gather Data | PHASE 2 Stakeholder Engagement | PHASE 3 Inform New Council | PHASE 4 Develop Strategic Plan | PHASE 5 Approve & Implement |

Following this report, the second background report will go to the new Council in 2019 to inform the development of their strategic plan. Once the new Regional Council develops this plan, it will be made available to the public on the Niagara Regional website: **www.niagararegion.ca/priorities.**

"

I would like to see the region known as a place where you can live anywhere within it and be able to stay there for your entire life because the job opportunities, transportation, public facilities, and living accommodations will meet your needs.

"

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in the Shape Niagara community engagement initiative. An accompanying background report will be provided to the new Regional Council in early 2019, and will inform the development of the 2019-2022 Council strategic plan.

Once the plan is developed, it will be available along with progress reports throughout the term at:

niagararegion.ca/priorities

Niagara Region

SHAPE NIAGARA

SETTING THE STAGE FOR STRATEGY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

OBJECTIVE OF SHAPE NIAGARA

Shape Niagara will serve to provide background information combined with stakeholder feedback to inform the development of the 2019-2022 Regional Council strategic plan.

This report is the second of the two Shape Niagara reports, and presents background information collected through an environmental scan, and provides a review of upcoming departmental initiatives as they relate to the priorities as identified by Niagara's community through the first Shape Niagara report *What We've Heard*.

Shape Niagara –
Setting the Stage for Strategy

The second of two Shape Niagara reports, *Setting the Stage for Strategy* presents background information collected through an environmental scan and data such as Global, Federal and Provincial trends. It provides a review of departmental objectives and initiatives linked to the 17 community priorities captured in the first report, *What We've Heard*.

The combination of the two Shape Niagara reports will act simply to inform Niagara Regional Council as they embark on the development of their own priorities and goals.

The release of this second report captures PHASE 3 of the process outlined below:

WE ARE HERE

PHASE 1 Gather Data	PHASE 2 Stakeholder Engagement	PHASE 3 Inform New Council	PHASE 4 Develop Strategic Plan	PHASE 5 Approve and Implement

2018   2019

Methodology

As part of this background report, an environmental scan was conducted, including but not limited to a review of the items outlined below:

- Discussions with senior leaders across the organization
- Key internal corporate priorities, plans and documents
- Key documents released by local, national and global agencies, organizations, post-secondary educators (Including, Chambers of Commerce, Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Living in Niagara)
- Strategic plans of Niagara's local area municipalities (where available)
- Discussions and document reviews of other Ontario municipal strategies
- Provincial activity and discussions with local Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP)
- Federal government documents and policy briefs

What Comes Next?

Armed with the information from the two Shape Niagara reports, Regional Council will work through the process of developing their 2019-2022 strategic plan in the first quarter of 2019, and a resulting implementation plan.

Re-Cap of First Shape Niagara Report – What We've Heard

The first of the two Shape Niagara reports, *What We've Heard*, focused on input as heard from Niagara's residents and organizations through an extensive community engagement initiative, which began in March of 2018 and concluded in August of 2018. The initiative utilized online and in-person methods to collect information from a diverse range of community stakeholders including:

- Residents
- Community Partners
- Organizations and
- Businesses

We spoke directly with all 12 of Niagara's local area municipalities through:

- Area Economic Development Officers meeting (Team Niagara)
- Area Planners meeting
- Area Treasurers meeting
- Workshop with local Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) / General Managers (GMs)
- A Partner Organization facilitated workshop (businesses, non-profits and organizations, post secondary institutions, local area CAO's)

Reach

Community Events
Public Open Houses

Grimsby
Lincoln
St. Catharines
Niagara-on-the-lake
West Lincoln
Pelham
Thorold
Niagara Falls
Welland
Wainfleet
Port Colborne
Fort Erie

ONLINE SURVEY
1002 Survey Responses

1523 Total Participants

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

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES
5 OPEN HOUSES
70 PARTICIPANTS
173 UNIQUE QUOTES

PARTNER SESSION
70 PARTICIPANTS

60 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
16 TOPIC AREAS
25 EDUCATION SECTOR
8 LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES
19 BUSINESS SECTOR
10 EDUCATION SECTOR
8 HEALTH SECTOR

Staff collected information from over 1500 members of the community, including input from non-profit organizations representing the broader voice of their clients. The *What We've Heard* report identified 17 community priorities, ranked in order of frequency (Priority 1 being the most frequently identified). A full summary of the 17 community priorities can be found in the *What We've Heard* report, which can be downloaded at **niagararegion.ca/priorities.**

Residents were asked to provide three words that best describe Niagara:

Picturesque Niagara Fresh Comforting Entertaining Town Escarpment Transportation Busy Community Friendly Welcoming Relaxed Sport Development Adventurous Local Culture Home Heritage Unique Destination Seasonal Farms Agriculture Recreation Quiet Awesome Inviting Green Garden Multicultural Opportunity Central Scenic Border Exciting Diverse Falls Fun Canal Weather Water Beautiful Lush Warm Aging Inclusion Quaint Open Food Serene Space Family Attractive Variety Potential Pretty Historic Changing Location Safe Tourism Rural Educated Accessible Clean Small Vibrant Vacation Geographic Spacious Affordable Growing Wineries Fruitland Construction Traffic Lifestyle Expanding Innovative Vineyards Charming Peaceful Greenbelt

WHAT'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE OF NIAGARA

GLOBAL TRENDS

Municipalities are easily influenced by opportunities or changes that are happening at a global level. Particularly with Niagara's location, global activities such as trade corridors, or the changes currently happening in the United States can have an impact.

Global Priorities and Trends

A comprehensive summary of current global themes were recently presented at the 2018 Niagara Economic Summit. Relevant themes include opportunities in technology advances, SWIFT broadband, innovations in policy and services, and a review of how communities are evolving across the globe.

Digital Economy

The "digital or gig economy" is a term for economic transactions, interactions and activities that are based on digital technologies. With the rise of companies like Uber and Airbnb, there has been an increasing shift towards these temporary employment opportunities. While the gig economy allows workers to easily obtain jobs, it also creates a decline in traditional jobs, moving towards more precarious employment lacking permanency, consistency or health care benefits.

Increased Quality of Life

Quality of life is defined as the degree to which an individual is healthy, comfortable, and able to participate in or enjoy life events. Residents are more often looking for ways to feel connected to their communities and strive for a high quality of life.

Emerging Anti-Social Society

Social media has brought a new-found level of connectivity, while simultaneously creating an anti-social society. It is changing the way people interact with each other and gives people a brush to paint themselves as they wish to be seen.

Contamination Of The Natural Environment and Climate Change

With increased recognition of the effects of climate change including drought, severe weather, and extreme heat, there is a movement to mitigate the effects. Mitigation techniques can range combinations of land use and technological change, reforestation and carbon capture efforts. Resiliency planning is emerging with weather changes as they affect municipal services.

Shifting Dynamics in Privilege and Marginalization

Supporting marginalized populations, building an inclusive society that empowers and supports marginalized groups and individuals is something that is becoming an emerging priority globally.

Erosion Of Culture And History

With globalization comes a blending of cultures and dilution of traditional history. Remolding has positives and negatives, and stems from the intent of improving living standards of all citizens.

What's Happening in the United States

Recent trade negotiations between Canada and the United States have led to a replacement of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) agreement, leading to the negotiation of the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA). The close proximity of the Niagara Region to the United States means that trade has a profound impact on our Region. The new trade agreement affects multiple sectors:

Manufacturing

Changes have been made to provisions in manufacturing to discourage the outsourcing of work to areas with more affordable labour costs, changes to the minimum part requirements made within a region, and minimum wage requirements.

Agriculture

The USMCA grants American dairy farmers a percentage of Canada's market; these concessions will have negative impacts on the Niagara Region's dairy farmers.

Retail

The USMCA raises duty-free shopping limits when entering Canada from the United States. This increase in allowance may have impacts for local Niagara Region businesses, as it promotes cross-boarder shopping.

Steel and Aluminum Suppliers

The imposing of tariffs on steel and aluminum imports into the United States from Canada are an area of which the Federal government aims to re-negotiate. These tariffs will affect Niagara by increasing supply costs for local construction projects, and could negatively affect local businesses producing these materials.

NATIONAL TRENDS

Niagara can mimic or be influenced by national trends, just as any local community across Canada. The following section provides a summary of what is happening at the federal government level, as well as some Canadian economic trends.

Federal Government Priorities

The current Federal Government has identified their top priorities for Canada, and a summary of relevant priorities are outlined below:

Economic Growth

Encourage innovation, trade and the growth of Canadian businesses, focus on research-based decision making for agricultural and traditional fields. Promote global trade and investment by strengthening the Canadian brand.

Supporting Canadians

Support Canadians by making post-secondary education more affordable and increasing the number of good paying, high quality jobs for young workers. Enhancement of federal income support programs for parents and families, and in support of affordable housing.

Fighting Climate Change

Work to protect our natural assets including our freshwater, oceans, coastal areas, marine life, national parks, and endangered species. Work collectively to make Canada a leader of international efforts to combat climate change.

In addition to these major priorities, the federal government is focusing on:

- Improving the sustainability of infrastructure
- Ensuring a diverse and inclusive Canada
- Supporting the mental and physical health of Canadians
- Improving government services and operations with a fair and open lens
- Ensuring Canada's support of human rights and equality worldwide

Canada at a Glance

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce released a report that outlines ten ways to boost Canada's economy, many of which align with Niagara's strengths or opportunities. Relevant goals include:

Ways to Build a Canada that Wins (2018)

Make Canada a magnet for business investment

Ensure a globally competitive North America, make Canada a global innovator

Make Canada an agri-food powerhouse

Develop agile workforce strategies

Make all of Canada an Export Gateway

Ensure the unrestricted movement of goods and people across Canada

Help Small-Medium-Enterprises trade and grow

Canadian Chamber of Commerce, "Ten Ways to Build a Canada that Wins" (2018)

Canada Ranked
#1 in Quality of Life

U.S. News and World Report, Best Countries Report (2019)

PROVINCIAL TRENDS

The Provincial government has a clear focus on reducing the budgetary deficit that currently exists in Ontario. However, this government has not yet made clear the exact programs, funding streams and initiatives that may be cut to achieve this reduction. These changes will have direct impacts on the Region's services and will be identified as more information is rolled out.

Provincial Government Priorities

A preliminary detailing of the PC provincial government's platform and an action plan entitled The Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review 2018 was reviewed, and the identified priorities and actions that may be relevant are outlined below:

Repeal of the Green Energy Act, cancellation of renewable energy projects

Cancellation of the cap-and-trade carbon tax, and a commitment by the province to join a coalition of provinces opposing the Federal carbon tax framework

Repeal of Bill 148 on minimum wage, and shutting down the Ontario College of Trades

Creation of 6,000 new long-term care beds across Ontario, promise of 9,000 additional beds

Development and implementation of a Housing Supply Action Plan to address barriers in home ownership and rental housing

Reduction of red tape for businesses

Expansion of natural gas and broadband networks to rural and remote communities

As more details of the decisions and impacts made at the Provincial level are released, affected departments will discuss these impacts with Council directly.

Comments from Niagara's MPP's

Regional staff spoke with three out of four of Niagara's Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP), all provincial parties recognize a need for a renewed focus on job creation and economic development. Niagara's MPPs have suggested that Regional Council work collaboratively with them to advocate for Niagara's unique needs. Opportunities where collaboration with MPPs would benefit Niagara include increasing long term care funding, finding solutions for Niagara's affordable housing needs, and ensuring adequate environmental protection for Niagara's unique biosphere. MPP's welcomed the idea of increased collaboration efforts through regular local meetings, improved data sharing, more frequent joint meetings with Ministers, press conferences or letters of support. They drive home the message that by working together with a Niagara-first mindset, elected officials can best serve all constituents.

Comments Received From: Jeff Burch, Wayne Gates, Sam Oosterhoff

Ontario at a Glance

According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, expected movement in the Ontario economy include increases in business investment, industrial and commercial activity, machinery and equipment spending. The labour force skill gap still exists, and companies are unable to find the right people to do the jobs. This issue is not expected to change in the near future, and it is a priority for many organizations and levels of government.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN NIAGARA

NIAGARA AT A GLANCE

This section provides an overview of Niagara's current state through an environmental scan, and provides a review of relevant Niagara-specific information.

Local Area Municipal Priorities

With Niagara's 12 local area municipalities (LAMs), there are a diverse range of community needs and expectations. Throughout the Shape Niagara initiative, it has been heard that the Region needs to work collaboratively, and Niagara's LAMs are significant partners.

Key priorities of senior leaders at the LAMs include:

• Alignment between upper and lower tier priorities
• Cooperation and support across levels of government in Niagara
• One voice and a collective focus

In addition to speaking directly with local municipal staff, the most current LAM strategic plans were reviewed (as available at the time research was conducted). Ten out of 12 LAM strategic plans were available for review, and although local municipalities have different mandates and services than the Region, there is alignment in key areas between the two levels of local government. The following alignments between local and regional government were identified:

> "
> We need to ensure we are using a unified approach between the Region and municipalities, building on our prior successes. A multi-level approach will lead to a stronger voice for Niagara.
> "

Strategic Priority	Number of LAMs that have Priorities Aligned with Region
Economy	10/10
Resident Life	10/10
Service Delivery	10/10
Transit Active Transportation	7/10

Local Area Municipal Strategic Plans (2018)

Population Growth

Niagara saw more population growth than it has seen in over a decade as it increased by 4,829 people (1.06%) to 458,986 residents between 2016 and 2017 (Niagara Region End of Year 2017 Growth Monitoring Report, May 2018). While Niagara is seeing progressively better growth over the last several years, it is happening at a rate much slower than the province (4.6%) and country (5.1%). Niagara's immigrant population has decreased from 18.1% to 16.6% between 1996 and 2016; between those two time periods, Niagara has only attracted 700 immigrants to the region (Statistics Canada, Niagara Region Census, 2016).

Growth in Niagara over the next 25 years is projected to be an additional 150,000 people (from 447,000 (2016) to 597,000 (2041), (Municipal Comprehensive Review Phase 4 forecast, 2018). Niagara will need to identify a sustainable path forward that will ensure affordability to residents while being prepared for the growth ahead.

Population and Growth Rate
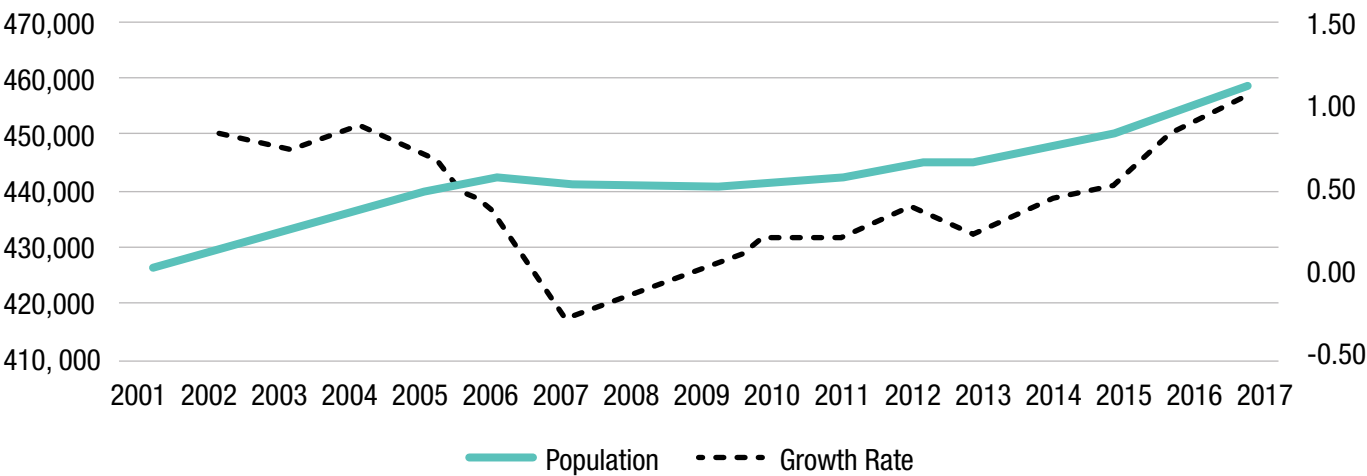
Statistics Canada, Annual Population Estimates (2001-2017)

Aging Population

Niagara's population of seniors is expected to more than double by 2041 (Niagara's Transportation Master Plan, 2017). Niagara has one of the oldest populations in Canada with more elderly than youth (Statistics Canada, Niagara Census Profile 2016) and is noticeably higher than the province overall. Over the last twenty years, the 30-44 and under age cohort has decreased significantly while the 45-64 and 65+ age cohorts have increased across Niagara and the province. There will be a need to focus on increasing Niagara's working age population, particularly the 30-44 cohort. Niagara will also need to continue to adapt to the needs of the aging population through services offered at the Regional level.

Population's Median Age

Niagara Region	Ontario	Canada
45.7 YEARS	41.3 YEARS	41.2 YEARS
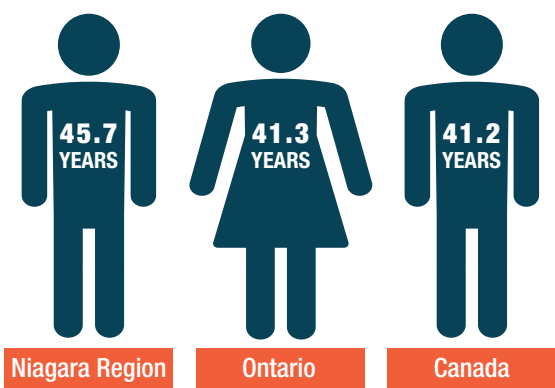
Statistics Canada, Median Age (2016)

Then and Now, Niagara vs. Ontario

Niagara - 1996   Niagara - 2016   Ontario - 1996   Ontario - 2016
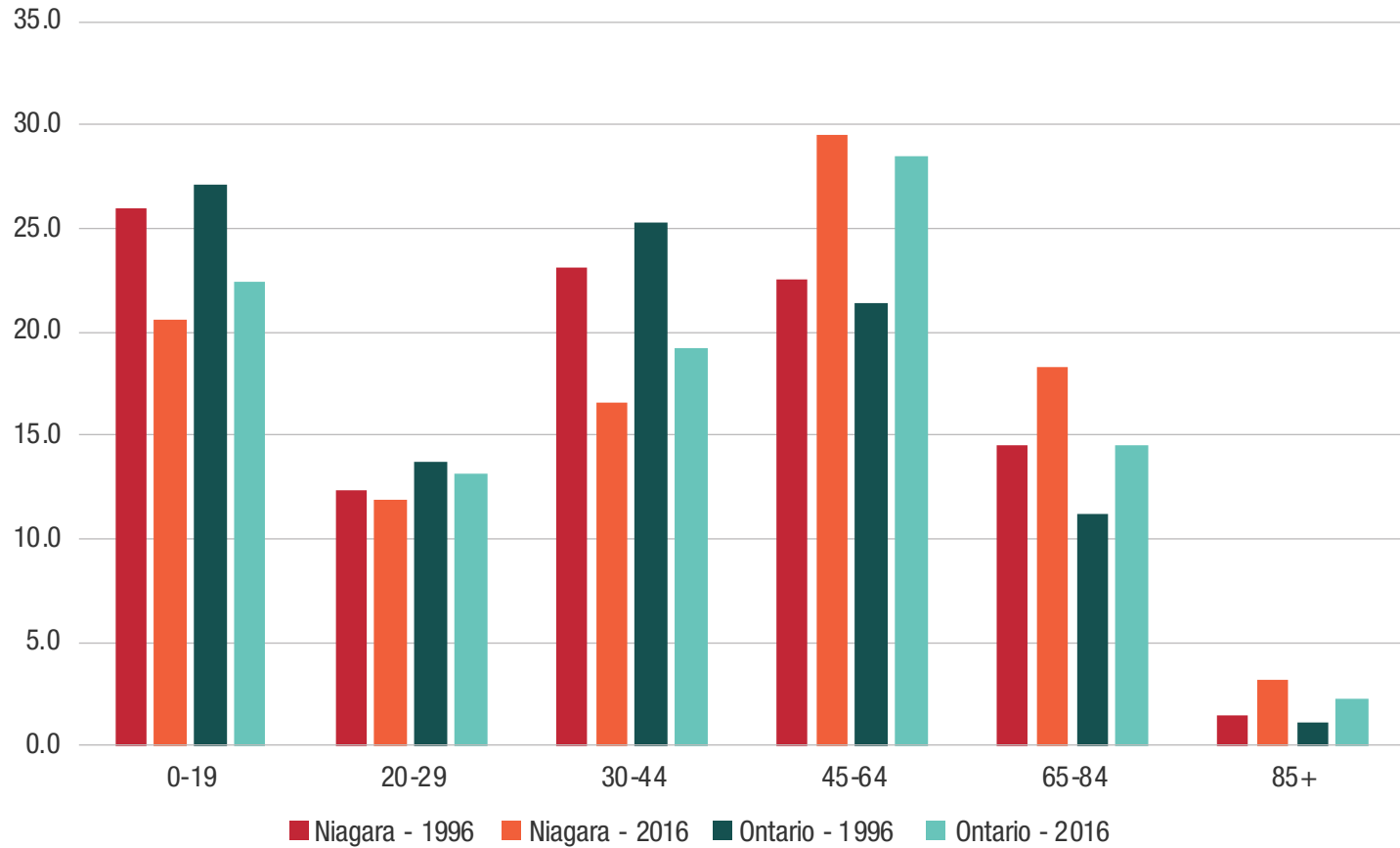
Statistics Canada, Niagara Census Profile (1996, 2016)

Physical Environment

Housing Starts

Similar to trends in population, housing starts have been rising since 2009, reaching a 26 year high in 2016 of 2,530 units. While 2017 was slightly lower than 2016, housing starts have been occurring at much higher rates when compared to just five to ten years ago. Housing starts will need to increase to meet Provincial forecasts and average out to over 2,600 units per year (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2018).

Housing Starts
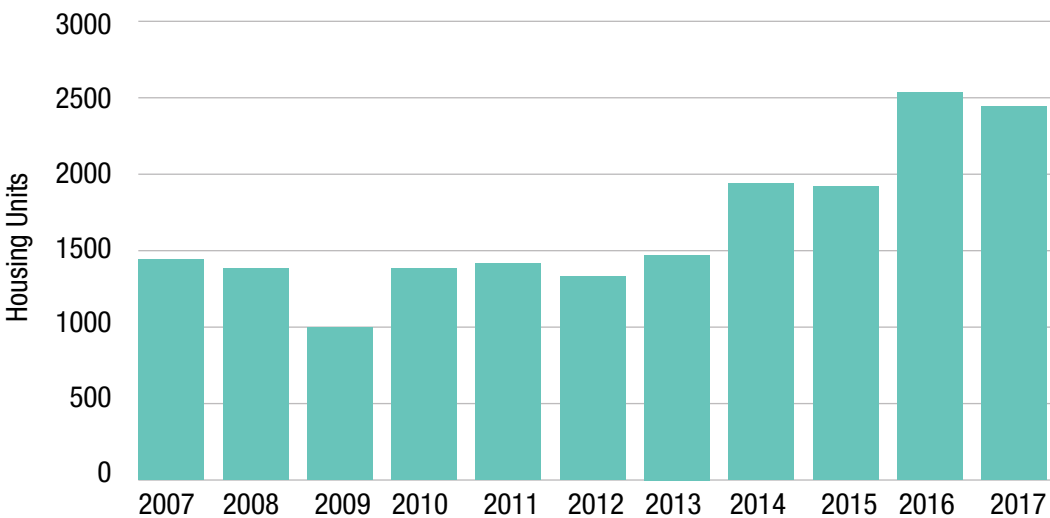
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Housing Now Tables (2018)

Land Supply

Quantifying vacant developable land is a core component of growth management and ensures that Niagara's municipalities have an adequate supply of designated urban land to develop. As of the end of 2017, Niagara Region had 2,002 hectares of vacant and developable residential land and 1,553 hectares of employment land. The vast majority of developable land is in municipalities outside of the Greenbelt (Niagara Region Planning and Development Services, 2017).

Greenbelt

The Niagara Escarpment is part of the Greater Golden Horseshoe's most ecologically significant natural environments. The Greenbelt Plan is an overarching strategy to provide clarity regarding urban structure, where and how future growth should be accommodated, and what land must be protected. The Greenbelt Plan protects land and provides guidelines for the following purposes:

- Agricultural viability and protection
- Environmental protection
- Culture, recreation and tourism
- Settlement areas
- Infrastructure and natural resources

Greenbelt Plan
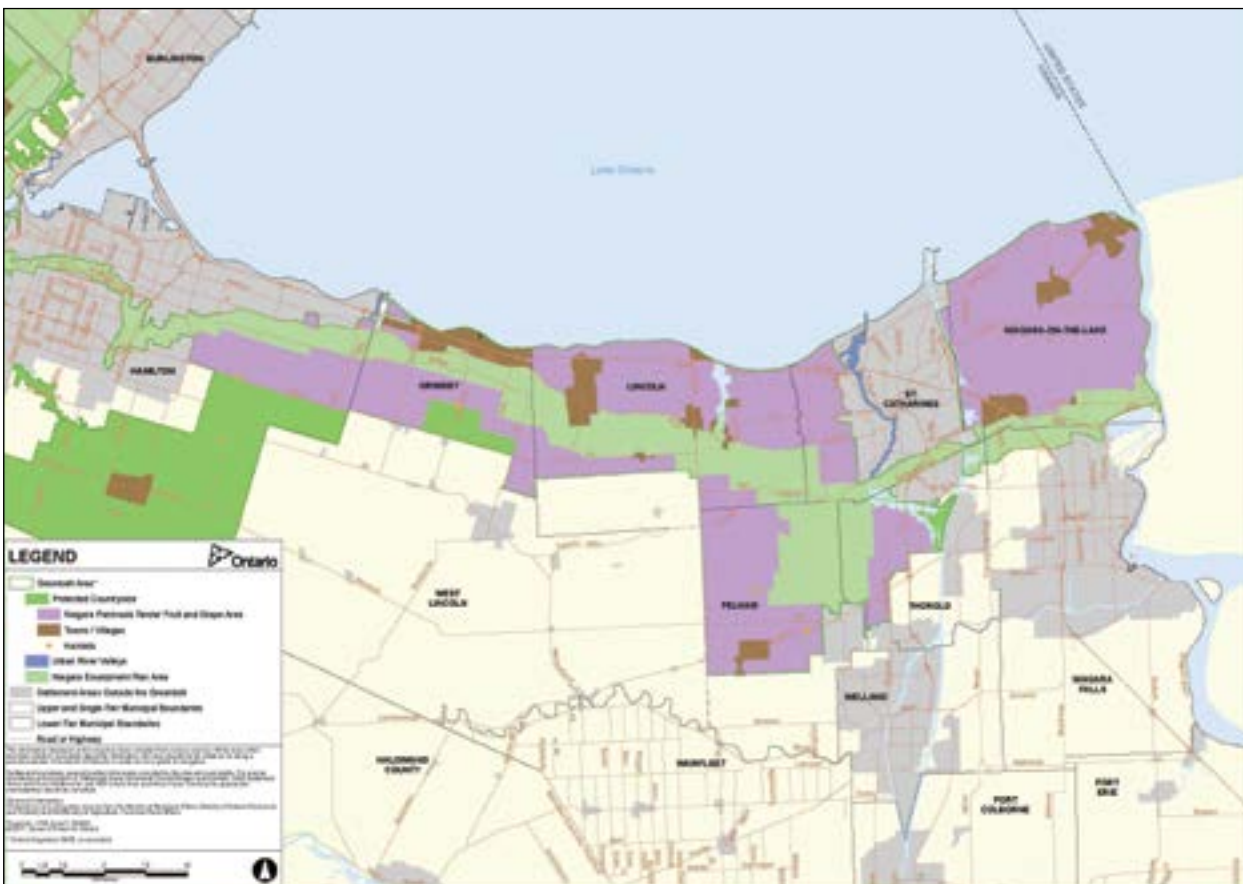
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Greenbelt Plan (2017)

Brownfields

Brownfields are vacant or abandoned lands within an urban area where past industrial or commercial activity occurred, and that have potential for redevelopment. Redevelopment or restoration is complicated by real or potential environmental contamination, building deterioration or inadequate infrastructure. Encouraging brownfield development has been an ongoing priority for Niagara.

Agriculture

Agriculture is a fundamental pillar of Niagara's economy due to climate, land and soil makeup, experienced operators and research capability. In 2016, agriculture in Niagara contributed 19,900 jobs, and is home to over 1,800 farms and agricultural operations. Niagara is responsible for 90% of grape production in Ontario, and is the largest wine producing region in Canada. Between 2011 and 2016, average farm revenues have increased by 47%. (Statistics Canada, 2016)

Agricultural Land Base
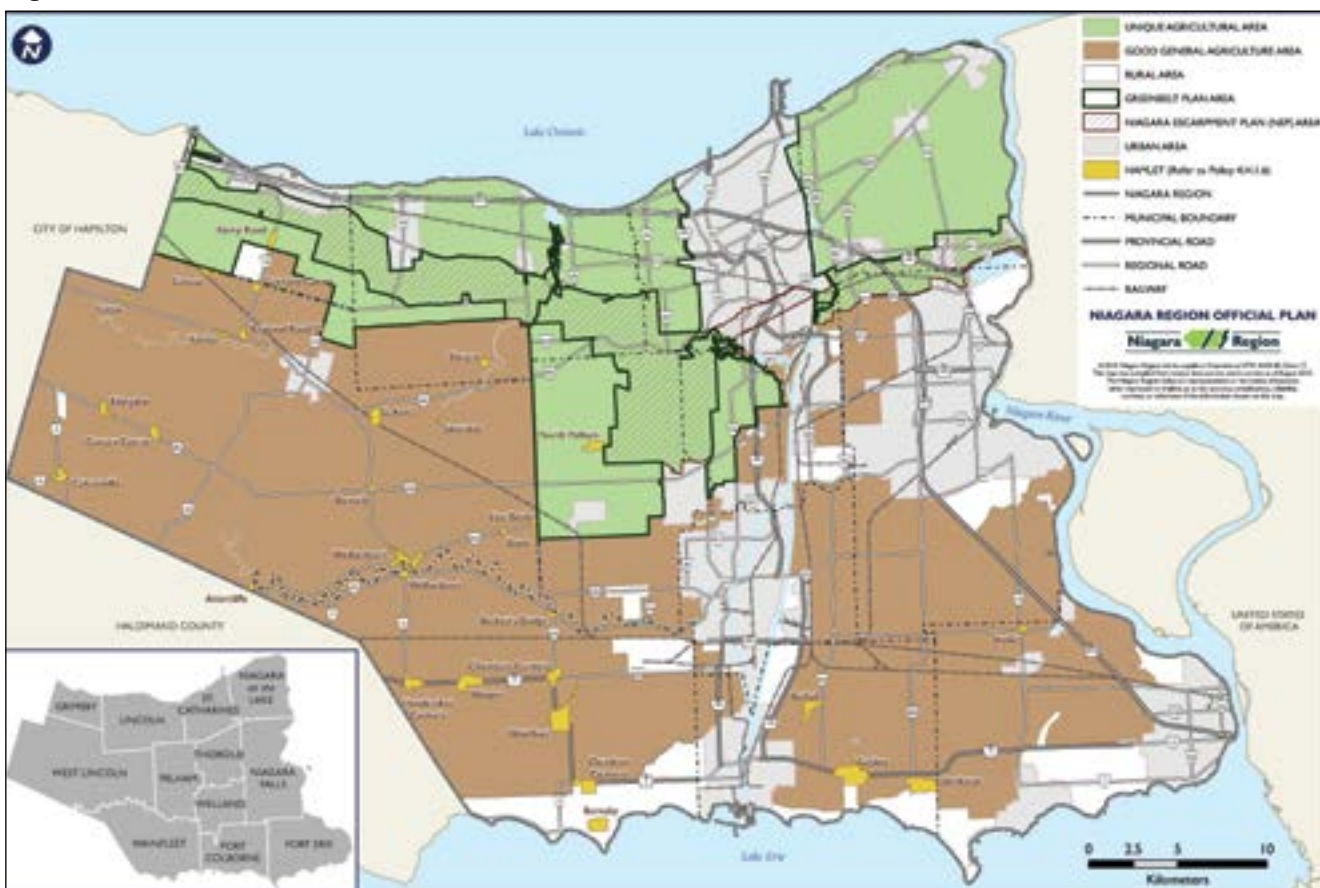
Niagara Region, Official Plan (2014)

Employment and Jobs

Workforce Participation

As Niagara's working age population continues to increase, the number of residents actively participating in the workforce has changed very little. In 2014, Niagara had a 62% employment participation rate and within four years it currently sits at 61.1%. Perhaps this could be explained by a growth in part-time or precarious job opportunities.

Top Job Sectors

The top job sectors in Niagara have changed over the past 20 years quite significantly. The following table describes the percentage of jobs in the region by employment sector from 1996 to 2016, 20 years later.

209,890 people employed in the labour force

80,000 projected new people employed by 2041

Municipal Comprehensive Review, Phase 4 Forecast (2018)

Job Sector Changes in Niagara

	Top 3 in **1996**				Top 3 in **2016**	
Manufacturing	19.8%		**1**		29.1%	Sales and Service (included retail)
Retail Trade	13.6%		**2**		14.9%	Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators
Health and Social Science	10.0%		**3**		13.1%	Business, Finance and Administrative

Statistics Canada, Niagara Census Profile (1996, 2016)
Note: Industry classification code description for job sectors have changed slightly from 1996 to 2016

Tourism in Niagara

There are many unique traits that Niagara can boast of in the tourism industry, including, Niagara Falls, Shaw Festival, Niagara Wine Route, Casinos. Niagara's tourist attractions, festivals and special events make Niagara an attractive destination for tourists from all over the world.

Tourism in Niagara

13,000,000
VISITORS TO NIAGARA

$2.4 BILLION
Generated by tourism
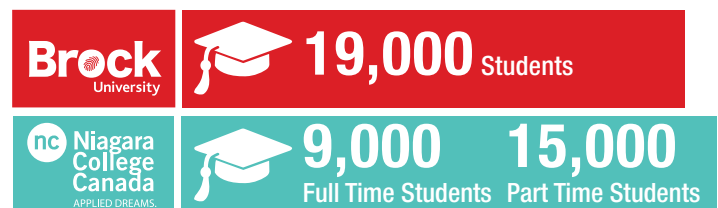
33% Of Visitors are from outside of Canada

40,000
People work in hospitality and tourism industry

Ontario Ministry of Tourism (2016)

Post-Secondary Institutions

Niagara's post-secondary institutions are key contributors to our local economy and provide opportunity for talent retention and for growth of young professionals in the region. Niagara's post-secondary institutions also provide a significant opportunity for partnerships and strategic alignment with Niagara Region. Brock University and Niagara College have provided opportunities for collaboration in supporting the development of Niagara's labour force, working to support the labour skill gap, economic development and research in Niagara. Continuing partnership opportunities with these institutions and other community organizations in Niagara to leverage their strengths will serve to benefit Niagara as a whole.

Post-Secondary Institution Enrollment

Brock University **19,000** Students

Niagara College Canada APPLIED DREAMS. **9,000** Full Time Students **15,000** Part Time Students
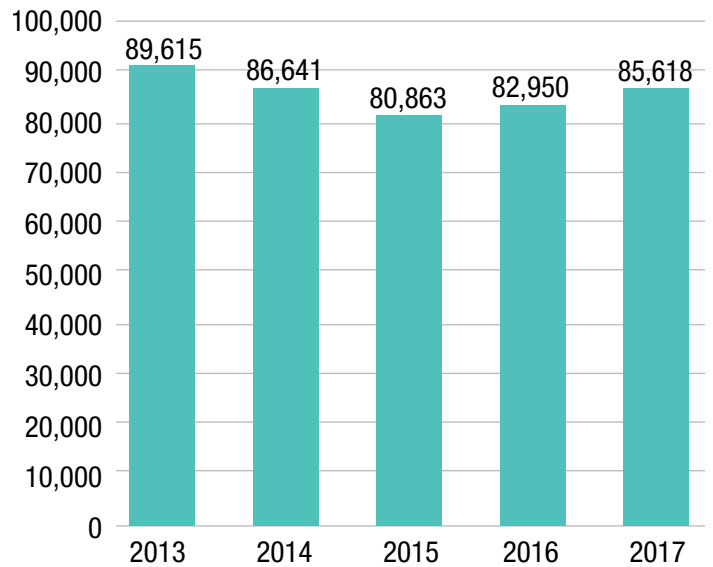
Cost of Living

Household income is a measure of a community's ability to pay for services. While a higher relative household income is a positive indicator of the overall local economy, it may lead to a greater expectation for quality programs and additional challenges in balancing desired levels of service with a willingness to pay for programs and services.

In 2017, Niagara's average household income was reported as $85,618 (Weighted BMA Study, 2017). Over the course of the last five years, nominal differences were seen. The BMA study also provides an average household income across the province, which can be used as a proxy for an average household income for Ontario. In 2017, the provincial average household income was reported as $101,143, significantly higher than Niagara.

Average Household Income in Niagara

Municipal Tax Study, BMA Management Consulting Inc. (2013-2017)

Cost of Living

Family of four in 2017
## $71,294

8.9%
Increase in just one year
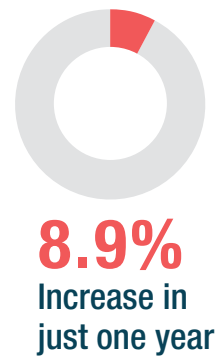
Niagara Poverty Reduction Network (2017)

Niagara's reliance on residential tax base continues to be a consideration for affordability planning. Niagara's employment related tax assessment has not seen any significant change over the last decade. With the anticipated growth outlined in the previous section, Niagara will have to identify sustainable ways of providing services to the residents of Niagara, while meeting the growth needs.
The percentage of household income that goes to Niagara Region's residential taxes has changed very little over the last four years. In 2014, the value was 1.74% compared to the 2018 value of 1.64% (Municipal Tax Study, BMA Management Consulting Inc.).

Housing prices continue to increase with an average list price of $391,030 in 2017. The residential sale price in Niagara has increased by 21.7% in just one year from 2016 (Niagara Realtor News and Statistics, 2017).

Percentage of household income that goes to Niagara Region's residential taxes
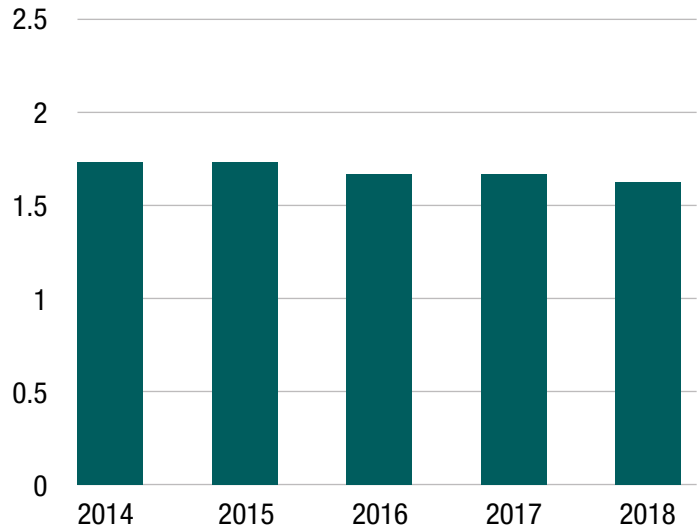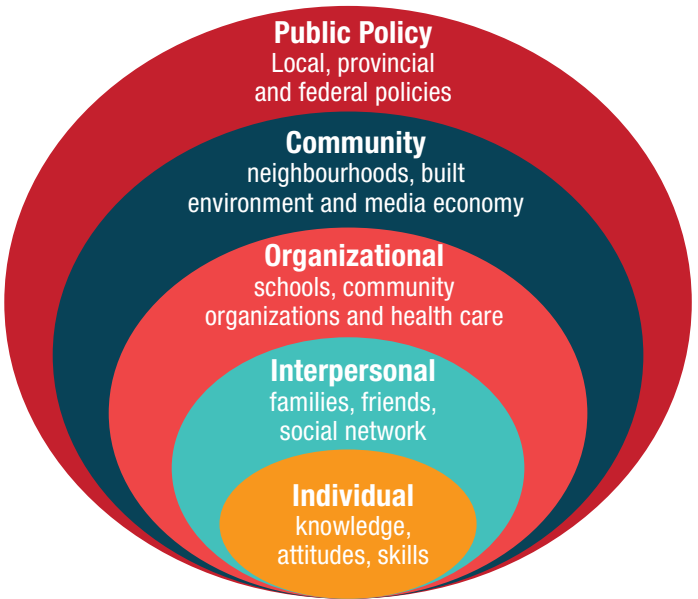

Municipal Tax Study, BMA Management Consulting Inc. (2013-2017)

Community Wellbeing

The term wellbeing is used interchangeably with quality of life, and typically refers to a person's satisfaction with community-level factors such as living environment, economy, education, health, as well as the level of social connectedness and community belonging.

People do not act in isolation, which is why it is important to understand how they interact with their community and the environment around them. One way of visualizing these interactions is through the socio ecological model.

Socio Ecological Model

Public Policy
Local, provincial and federal policies

Community
neighbourhoods, built environment and media economy

Organizational
schools, community organizations and health care

Interpersonal
families, friends, social network

Individual
knowledge, attitudes, skills

Social Determinants of Health

Health is a natural extension of wellbeing, and Social Determinants of Health is a term used to represent a range of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that determine individual and population health. Reducing social inequalities translates to giving everyone the same opportunities to be healthy. The table below provides a summary of how the Region's services may have an impact on our population's health.

Category	Regional Service Description	Impact on Wellbeing
Infrastructure	Transportation (active, public transit, automobile, commercial), roads and bridges, waste management, water, wastewater, buildings	• Safe and affordable housing • Water and sanitation • Access to services through safe and maintained transportation infrastructure
Access to Services	Senior services, child and family services, housing and homelessness, transportation and walkability (enabling mobility and access to services) Public health services, bike lanes and pathways, ambulances and emergency services	• Equitable access to health programs and services • Healthy child development • Physical and social environment • Social inclusion
Physical Environment	Environmental protection, sustainable development, land use planning policy, urban design, active transportation infrastructure	• Access to greenspace • Food security through access to nutritious food, agriculture and food production
Economy	Supports for jobs and skilled labour, investment attraction	• Employment and job security • Equitable income distribution • Addressing precarious employment and working conditions
Governance and Advocacy	Proactive leadership, fiscal responsibility, open government, advocacy for Niagara	• Ensuring active participation and engagement of communities in decision making • Equitable access to services
Community Wellbeing	Safety, police presence, community planning, walkability, engagement, newcomer supports	• Social inclusion • Built environment conducive to physical activity, recreation and walkability for all ages • Sense of belonging promoting social cohesion

Safety

Niagara has a good level of public safety and has been maintaining low violent criminal code incidents in comparison to similar or neighbouring municipalities. A feeling of safety has a positive impact on an individual and community's wellbeing, and it contributes to the attractiveness of a place to live in.

Reported Number of Violent Criminal Code Incidents per 100,000 Population
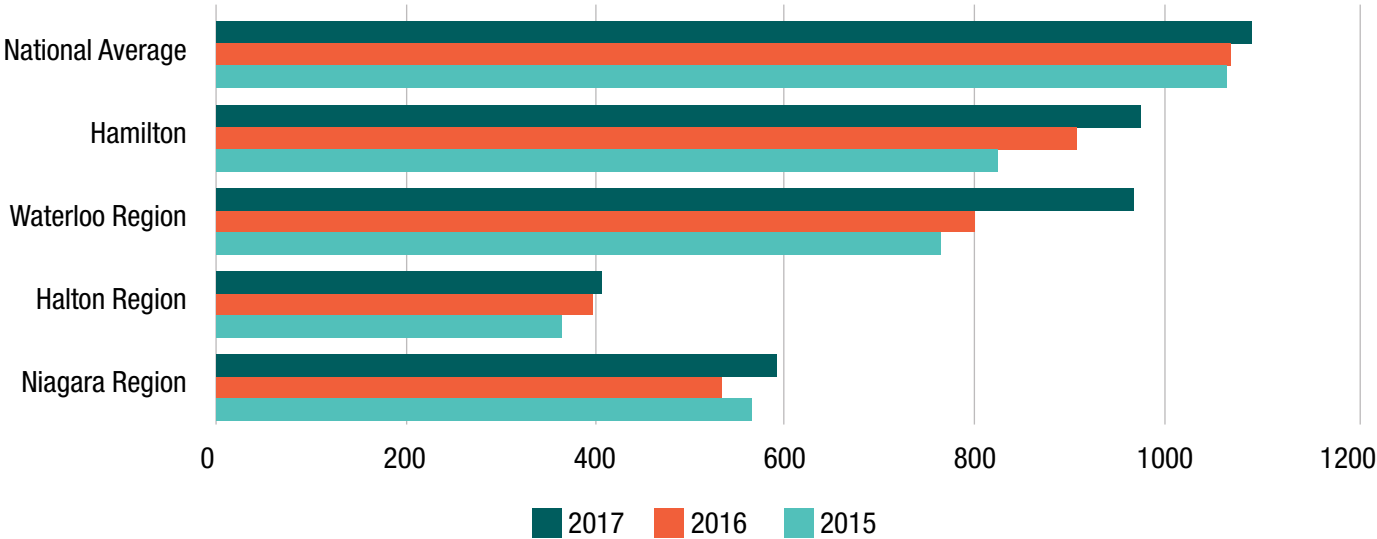
Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2015-2017)

SETTING THE STAGE FOR STRATEGY

MOVING NIAGARA FORWARD

In order to be successful for the next term of Council, with only four years to make a meaningful impact, the Region needs to effectively identify a plan that is focused and clear in its direction forward.

Vision For Niagara

Typically a strategic planning process begins with a vision setting exercise, and the new Council will be given the opportunity to review the current vision if they so choose. To inform a vision setting process, the community was asked what they hoped Niagara would be known for in 10 years, summarized below. A full overview of what the community said can be found in the *What We've Heard* report.

The community would like Niagara to:

Be a thriving economic hub

Maintain unique traits and natural features

Have a high level of community engagement

Have inclusive services

Be a vibrant community

SWOT Analysis

Through a combination of information collected through community engagement and staff input, the following strengths and weaknesses for Niagara Region have been identified. It is important to note that some are statements of the community and that many of these strengths and weaknesses are not unique to Niagara.

S

Organizational Strengths

- Ability to leverage global brand recognition: Niagara Falls, Niagara Wine Industry, Welland Canal and all surrounding attractions
- Collaboration with local community organizations, post-secondary institutions
- Partnerships with local area municipalities to better serve residents such as development and customer service
- Economic designations and incentives to drive growth
- Ongoing work to build connective transportation network
- Building organizational maturity around data driven decisions, project management and asset management

W

Organizational Weaknesses

- Coordination with local area municipalities and Region to bring a singular voice to higher levels of government and customer service
- Ability to handle future increases in service demand. Including, factors such as growth from Greater Toronto Area and aging population.
- Sustainable funding for Regional services such as infrastructure projects and social services
- Widespread densely populated areas, service delivery reach can be challenging
- Customer service including opportunities to increase hours of operation or access to services

O

External Opportunities

- Geographic location, access to Greater Toronto Area and Buffalo, natural assets and greenspace
- Potential provincial or federal funding opportunities
- Emerging economic sectors, such as sports tourism and cannabis
- Explore broadband opportunities for rural areas
- Opportunities to align services to emerging higher level government priorities. Such as federal requirements for coordinated of services
- Enhance organization's reputation including transparency, trust and accountability

T

External Threats

- Provincial and federal unknowns in policy and funding
- Workforce pressures such as the inability to retain and recruit skilled workforce
- Lack of succession planning in local businesses
- Dependency on seasonal and precarious employment
- Youth and young family retention
- Increasing housing prices
- Impact of aging population on regional services and economy, however these could present as potential opportunities

Tying the Organization's Initiatives with Community Priorities

Niagara Region has made significant progress in moving towards a better Niagara including momentous progress on the GO transit initiative, on "Bending the Curve" of the Ontario Works caseload, and on the Niagara's Foreign Trade Zone designation, among many others. There is an opportunity to build on this momentum, to set the focus for Niagara's success through this strategic planning process.

This section of the report outlines some Past, Upcoming and Potential Initiatives, (as applicable) of Regional departments, matched to the 17 community priorities from the *What We've Heard* report. As this report serves as an informational document, it will then be up to Regional Council to utilize the relevant components of the Shape Niagara reports, and determine which strategic areas of focus the Region will set. Past initiatives of the Region can be found in the Term in Review report, and can be downloaded at **niagararegion.ca/priorities**.

Priorities from the community are available in full within the *What We've Heard* report, and are identified in rank ordered by frequency (how often a priority was identified). The report can be found at **niagararegion.ca/priorities**.

Current Niagara Region Departmental Makeup

At the time of writing this report, the divisional service areas by department are as follows:

Community Services

- Children's Services
- Homelessness Services
- Seniors Services
- Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities

Enterprise Resource Management Services

- Business Licensing
- Finance
- Facilities
- Information Technology
- Internal Control and Organizational Performance
- Legal
- Procurement

Office of the CAO

- Clerks
- Economic Development
- Human Resources
- Strategic Communications and Public Affairs

Planning and Development

- Community and Long Range Planning
- Infrastructure and Development Engineering
- Development Approvals

Public Health

- Public Health Services
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Public Works

- GO Implementation Office
- Transportation Services
- Waste Management Services
- Water / Wastewater

Community Services

Services Supporting Niagara's Residents

Aligning to Niagara's Community Priorities:

Niagara's community identified the need to support residents in a way that makes Niagara a place where everyone can thrive. An importance was placed around supporting populations in need by ensuring necessary services are provided including senior services, affordable housing, services for young families and vulnerable populations.

The Region's Community Services initiatives align with the following community-identified priorities:

Past Organizational Initiative

"Bend the Curve" on the Ontario Works Caseload

Goal was to increase the number of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program clients with employment. The BENN (Building Employment Networks Niagara) system launched in November of 2017. The shift from a manual tracking to system automation has resulted in an increase in the quantity of referrals and efficiency (real-time) of matches to training programs and employment opportunities. The long term goal is to further reduce the Ontario Works caseload.

Upcoming Organizational Initiatives

Long Term Care Home Redevelopment Projects

The redevelopment of two Long Term Care (LTC) homes has been undertaken to meet provincial compliance and fire code requirements. The new homes will be designed to enhance efficiencies and will be situated on campuses with co-located services to support long-term care residents and the local community.

Affordable Housing

To fulfill Niagara Region's provincially legislated responsibility, staff are preparing an updated 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) to be presented to Council for approval in the spring of 2019. The revised HHAP will be integrated with the work on the new Regional Official Plan now in development, further contributing to an overarching regional Affordable Housing Strategy. This strategy will include a Regional Housing Statement, a review of and recommendations for Regional policies and financial incentives with the aim of increasing the availability of affordable housing in Niagara.

Early ON Transformation

In 2016, the Ministry of Education announced all Family Resource Programs, Ontario Early Years Centres, and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres move toward an increasingly integrated, cohesive system of services and supports for children ages 0-6 years and their parents/caregivers known as EarlyON Child and Family Centres (EarlyON Centres). The EarlyON Centres are open to all families across Niagara region, to provide support, advice, personal connections and a network of resources as well as play and inquiry based programs for young children and their families.

Niagara Region Children's Services, in the role of Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), is required by the Province to engage with community and implement this transformation locally as part of their responsibility for the planning and administration of the early learning and child care system. The 2018 year was a transition year, and the new EarlyON programs, locations and services informed through local consultation and needs assessment, will be awarded through a competitive bidding process in 2019.

Potential Organizational Initiatives

Social Procurement – An Organizational Opportunity

Seeking a community benefit through the purchase of goods and services can have a strategic benefit to objectives such as reduction of poverty, increasing employment for youth, or inclusion/engagement of marginalized populations, without requiring additional investment. Social procurement processes have already been developed that meet procurement requirements of transparency, competitiveness and fairness, while still allowing for a social benefit. Many municipalities across Ontario are implementing this approach as part of their poverty reduction initiatives.

Potential Opportunities

- Improvements in service delivery to provide higher value to clients, for example, BENN
- Potential opportunity to address affordable housing gap through strategy alignment and co-investment with Provincial and Federal government housing initiatives
- Opportunities to align services/work/projects with new provincial government as priorities are identified

Potential Obstacles

- Provincial uncertainty around funding and policy changes. Effects could be to core services, such as social assistance, childcare, homelessness/housing and senior's care
- Historical challenges with funding allocation model for homelessness services as Niagara enters into new contracts for this sector

Enterprise Resource Management Services (ERMS)

Corporate Services Supporting the Organization

Aligning to Niagara's Community Priorities:

Community members identified a desire to stay informed about where their tax dollars are spent through transparency in government spending, and decision-making.

Fostering "organizational excellence" is a generic term, which encapsulates the goal of improving the way the Niagara Region as an organization functions. The focus of the community comments received identified a desire to build on collaboration, customer service and opportunities to foster informed decisions as an organization.

The Region's ERMS initiatives align with the following community priorities around accountability and organizational excellence:

Past Organizational Initiative

Enhanced Financial Management Service

The implementation of an integrated enterprise solution to provide system functionality that improves efficiency and effectiveness, reduces risk, enables effective internal controls, ensures better management of the organization, and improves the client experience.

Value for Money Audits

Determining if Regional programs, including the execution of policies and procedures, are delivered in an efficient, effective and economical manner. Over 13 recommendations were compiled to address corporate project management methodology, asset management, cost estimation, document management, performance measurement and other issues.

Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT)

Looking to secure federal and provincial funding to improve Niagara's information infrastructure and to provide better connections for residents and businesses in rural communities. Through the project, Niagara is now a key partner in a larger buying group to attract broadband providers.

Upcoming Organizational Initiatives

Asset Management

Addressing provincial requirements, an Asset Management (AM) program and governance model was developed implement leading AM principles and practices. Next steps include an implementation plan which will assess the impacts on the organization, and address change management, communications and training plans. The AM governance model will ensure that the Region complies with the requirements set out by the Province.

Project Management Office

Deliver and assess the organization's project management maturity. Strengthen the link between capital project planning and execution so that the project outcomes are predictable, and consistent, with risk management considerations. Recommend proven practices to support implementation of organizational strategy through successful projects including organizational change and business readiness assessment and preparation.

Debt and Financial Sustainability Review

In support of responsible spending, the Region is looking strategically at what it spends money on. To answer the question of whether there are there more cost effective ways of doing our business, a review of the services provided and the associated costs will be conducted. The intended outcome of this project is to repurpose dollars to support the significant infrastructure budget gap.

Regional Development Charges (RDC) By-Law

The next RDC By-law is an opportunity to re-align incentives for development, to Council's strategic focus, and to be viewed as the revenue-generation tool it is intended to be, supporting responsible government spending with purpose. It ties directly into the grants and incentives review that is being led by the Planning and Development department to re-align grants and incentives provided by the Region with Council's strategic focus.

Debt Risk Strategy

The finance team has been tasked with working on debt and a long term strategy in how it is handled at the Region. How the Region finances all assets cannot change each year, a set plan must be in place in order to manage and plan against it. This will include the development of debt policies and a risk management strategy.

Safe Drinking Water Act

The Safe Water Drinking act requires municipalities to prepare financial plans in the sustainability of water and waste water systems. Finance staff will be working with Public Works to build a plan that focuses on building a strategic plan for the Region to address funding of major infrastructure of wastewater over the next 10 years. This long range financial planning will be integrated with the master servicing plan and has opportunities to connect to the sustainability review and revenue generation.

Internal Audit

Reporting directly to Council and designed to drive accountability, identifying opportunities for improvement across organization, the Internal Control and Organizational Performance division prepares an annual Audit Plan, providing independent assurance and consulting services to improve Niagara Region's operations and brings a disciplined approach to the evaluation of risk management activities, internal controls, and governance processes.

Supporting Council's Strategic Planning and Reporting

Supporting Council in the development, implementation and monitoring of their term Strategic Plan through the Shape Niagara work. Re-alignment of the public facing dashboard and progress reporting with Council's new strategic priorities to ensure accountability and transparency on the work of the Region.

Business Improvement and Performance Measurement

Driving continuous improvement through business improvement and lean methodology, performance measures and operational dashboards. Leveraging data to inform business decisions focusing on measurable outcomes to drive organizational accountability and transparency.

Customer Service Implementation

The Customer Service team is working with the organization to leverage information and communication technology to modernize how government delivers services and interacts with clients and residents. The initiative requires collaboration across government levels and partners to integrate and enhance opportunities across the region as a whole.

Enterprise Content Management

This initiative looks to address gaps in our records management activities and policies to ensure the organization has the documentation it requires and to support transparency.

IT Data Centre

Through collaboration with multiple public sector partners (such as: LAMs, school boards), there are opportunities to share data and costs associated with storing data as well as increased security measures.

Facilities

Led by Facilities and supported by Finance staff, finding sustainable ways of funding new construction projects while ensuring infrastructure is aligned with growth and development needs in Niagara. Upcoming projects include the Police One District in St Catharines, Long-Term Care facilities, EMS hub, Niagara Regional Civic Park.

Potential Future Organizational Initiatives

Council Strategic and Implementation Plan

The Internal Control and Organizational Performance (ICOP) division will work directly with Council as they identify their strategic priorities. Informed by the Shape Niagara work, and by their collective knowledge, Council will identify the organizational priorities for the next four years.

SWIFT Broadband Internet

Niagara Region secured the opportunity to participate in the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) program to bring high speed internet to underserved communities in Southwestern Ontario. The opportunity is to support the growth of small businesses in rural areas by expanding access to online and e-commerce tools. These federal and provincial programs are currently under review.

Potential Opportunities

- Integration of partnerships: working with Province for additional funds beyond short term financial plans
- Funding of the service enhancement and integration of Niagara Regional Transit; integrate with local municipalities and advocate for funding to expand transit
- Potential for provincial and federal funding for South Niagara water and wastewater treatment plant
- Customer service modernization
- Explore Niagara Regional Broadband Network partnership
- Driving continuous improvement and organizational maturity, using data for decision making

Potential Obstacles

- Provincial interest in municipal restructuring (amalgamation) – would be a large financial project
- Regional budget pressures
- Unknowns at provincial level
- Continued growth in the region
- Cost and availability of infrastructure for broadband expansion

Office of the CAO

Economic Development

Aligning to Niagara's Community Priorities:

Through the *What We've Heard* report, community members identified the need to develop Niagara's economy based on its strengths. The community would like to see a focus on supporting small business, secure employment opportunities and ensuring the necessary supports are in place to foster economic prosperity.

The Region's initiatives in Economic Development align with the following community-identified priorities:

1. Fostering Jobs and Economic Prosperity .... What We've Heard Report, page 40
5. Accountable and Collaborative Government .... What We've Heard Report, page 41
13. Tourism as an Economic Driver .... What We've Heard Report, page 44
15. Youth and Young Family Retention.. What We've Heard Report, page 45

Past Organizational Initiatives

Federal Commitment to Foreign Trade Zone in Niagara

Raising global and national business awareness, supporting export-focused business operations; Niagara's Foreign Trade Zone storefront opened in Fort Erie in May of 2018.

Strategy to Improve Niagara's Global Attractiveness

A Global Attractiveness Strategy has been created that provides direction to increase Niagara's readiness for being a welcoming community. Key outcomes include strengthened relationships between Regional staff and the Local Immigration Partnership, the re-development of Niagara's Immigration Portal and improved access to local information.

Upcoming Organizational Initiatives

Economic Development Strategy

Following research and extensive stakeholder consultations, a number of key themes have been identified to inform the economic development work plan. The new Economic Development Strategy will be presented to Regional Council early in 2019.

Team Niagara

The Team Niagara memorandum of understanding is currently being revised to update the signatories. This initiative is a collaborative effort bringing together representatives from all 12 local area municipalities and the Region quarterly to network and collaborate on economic development initiatives across Niagara.

Employment Land Strategy

Planning and Economic Development staff working on an Employment Land Strategy and Lands Needs Assessment, as part of the Official Plan work, to protect Niagara's employment lands. In addition, there are efforts underway with the St. Lawrence Seaway and Hamilton Port Authority to investigate land acquisition as part of a Niagara Port Strategy.

Skilled Labour Shortage

The Economic Development department is collaborating with organizations such as Niagara Workforce Planning Board, Niagara Industrial Association, Niagara's post-secondary institutions and School Boards to tackle the mismatch between labour skills and jobs across the Region.

East-West Transportation Corridor

Economic Development will support Public Works to develop an application to secure infrastructure funding from Transport Canada's National Trade Corridors Fund. The funding would construct a portion of the East-West Transportation Corridor, which would run roughly from Fort Erie to Hamilton Airport in support of goods movement. It would tackle the congestion issue on the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) which is a significant risk for the tourism, agriculture and manufacturing sectors in Niagara.

St. Lawrence Seaway Management Review

Elected officials have presented a joint submission with five Niagara area municipalities along the Seaway corridor to the federal government regarding a consultative review of the St. Lawrence Seaway conducted by Transport Canada in 2018. The recommendation to Transport Canada is a new management model for marine-strategic lands and an analysis of non-strategic land. Niagara has recommended that Transport Canada, with support from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, consider a partnership with the Hamilton Port Authority with respect to the management of marine-adjacent strategic parcels of the St. Lawrence Seaway through Niagara.

Strategic Marketing

Conducting targeted marketing activities to position Niagara as a competitive location for business investment.

Trade and Investment

Promoting the Niagara Region through investment attraction and lead generation activities (investment missions) to strategically targeted sectors and within specific geographies.

Potential Opportunities

- Increased market interest and growth coming from the Greater Toronto Area
- Economic Trade Corridor designation award which would support infrastructure-funding applications and create unique marketing opportunities
- Niagara Foreign Trade Zone role in export diversification for Niagara companies
- Creation of a provincially significant employment zone with the Niagara Gateway Economic Zone and Centre

Potential Obstacles

- Meeting current and future labour needs for skilled trades and professional occupations
- Shortage of employment land that is shovel-ready and development pressures on land zoned for employment
- Infrastructure pressures, for example, congestion on the QEW
- Scheduling of public transit needs to align with employment needs
- Lack of succession planning in Niagara businesses

Office of the CAO

Clerks | Human Resources | Strategic Communications and Public Affairs

Aligning to Niagara's Community Priorities:

Niagara's community identified a need to be informed and have their voices heard through increased transparency in government spending and decision-making.

The Region's CAO Office initiatives align with the following community priorities around communication, accountability, organizational excellence and transparency:

Past Organizational Initiative

People Strategy

The people strategy focused on delivering an interrelated, measured approach to driving employee engagement. Through development and retention and by utilizing best in class people practices at the Niagara Region.

Niagara Week is Every Week

Focusing on fostering strong relationships between the Region and its senior government partners, collaboration with Niagara's local area municipalities to advance Niagara's economic prosperity. Key announcements through this initiative included the Daily GO Train Service, the first Ontario Foreign Trade Zone designation, 2021 Canada Summer Games.

Upcoming Organizational Initiatives

Special Projects

Niagara District Airport

Based on the work of an external consultant, there is an on-going requirement for an airport located within the region to serve the business and general aviation needs of residents and visitors within Niagara. Aligning with the Region's Transportation Strategy, an airport study and governance strategy is underway. These studies will focus on the governance and funding opportunities for each the Niagara District Airport (NDA) and Niagara Central Dorothy Rungeling Airport (NCDRA). There has also been support for a potential Regional role in the operation of the airport(s) to support the larger scale connected transportation strategies of the Region around moving people and goods.

2021 Summer Games

Niagara Region has been selected as the Host Community for the 2021 Canada Summer Games. The prior term of Council committed $10.35M in funding to support infrastructure projects related to hosting the Games. Each community in Niagara will host events or practice events in 2021. The Games are administered by the 2021 Canada Summer Games Host Society, and Regional staff will support as required.

Potential Organizational Initiatives

Communications Master Plan

The Strategic Communications and Public Affairs division will be undertaking the development of a Communications Master Plan (CMP) which will set out a defined mission and vision as well as identify objectives, key actions and a framework for the organization. The CMP will bring together resident feedback and best practice research with input from staff and Council to act as a framework to provide guidance to how Niagara Region will communicate and interact with residents, employees and stakeholders.

Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) Software Review

Niagara Region's largest and most important expense is its people. A review of current software will be initiated to ensure the technical tools being used to manage this expense are providing value, are fully leveraged, and will help drive engagement and productivity into the future.

Employee Engagement and Leadership Development through People Strategy Update

Driving productivity, employee commitment and attraction through a new People Strategy for 2019 and the coming years.

Mental Health Promotion Strategy and Implementation

Managing workplace factors for employee well-being, the emerging regulatory requirements and the urgency of escalating related costs.

Total Rewards and Labour Relations Strategies

Building a comprehensive rewards strategy that provides direction for compensation and benefits, and drives the labour relations plan for future bargaining.

Potential Opportunities

- Improve organizations reputation
- Improve relationships with local media and more consistent transparent communication with residents

Potential Obstacles

- Regional budget pressures
- Local shortage of skilled labour and workforce talent
- Changing municipal act legislation requirements. Including conflict of interest, integrity commissioner
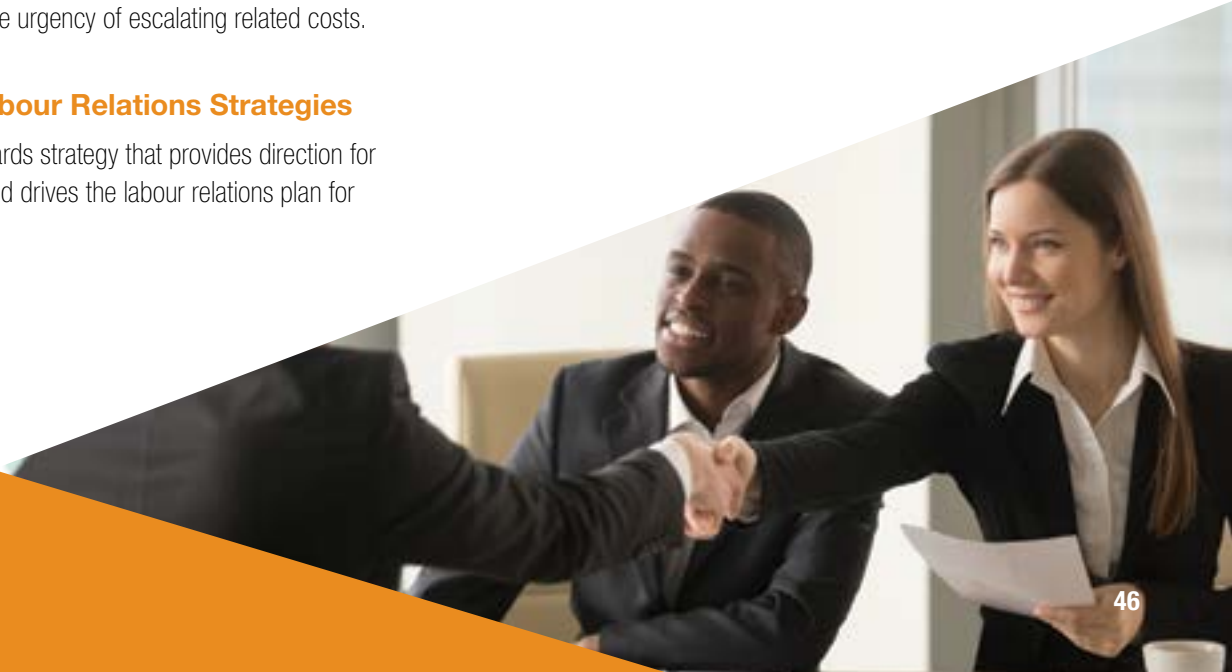
Planning and Development Services

How Niagara Grows

Aligning to Niagara's Community Priorities:

Niagara's community would like to see sustainable and thoughtful growth that is aligned with diverse community needs and transparency in spending. The community also identified the importance of protecting and maintaining a resilient natural environment, as well as protecting the rural character of the Region, key natural assets and agricultural land.

The Region's Planning and Development Services initiatives align with the following priorities around growth, sustainable development and environmental protection:

Past Organizational Initiative

Expedited Process for Development

An expedited planning approvals process was developed to increase approval certainty and accelerate the review period for development initiatives. The project created an evidenced-based evaluation procedure to evaluate sites and created the ability to showcase "shovel-ready" sites as part of Niagara's competitive advantage in attracting new investment.

Upcoming Organizational Initiatives

Official Plan

Growth Management including a housing strategy, employment land strategy, urban structure and land needs assessment.

Natural Systems including agriculture, natural heritage system, aggregates and climate change.

Employment Land Strategy

Planning and Economic Development will be working on an Employment Land Strategy, as part of the Official Plan work to identify strategies to protect Niagara's employment lands. As part of this, there are efforts underway with the St. Lawrence Seaway and Hamilton Port Authority to investigate land acquisition as part of a Niagara Port Strategy.

Grants and Incentives Programs

A review of the Regional grants and incentives programs will be conducted to address misalignment in the grants and incentives provided by the Region with Council's strategic focus. Additionally, having more streamlined offerings will reduce confusion, reduce red tape and improve administration. By working closely with stakeholders, the Region can ensure that grants and incentives are directed to where incentives provide the best return on investment, while ensuring transparency in spending.

Memorandum of Understanding with Developers

Currently our Planning and Development department meets regularly in collaboration with local area municipal staff with developers at pre-consultation meetings. These meetings are designed to eliminate red tape by ensure the correct documentation and requirements are submitted upfront with a development application. This process has worked well in the past, and there is an opportunity to review what has been learned from holding these meetings to update, improve service and further build relationships.

Environmental Planning

With the addition of a new environmental planning team within the Planning and Development department, there is a greater ability to balance Niagara's drive to be open for business with good environmental policies and planning.

Urban Design

Ensuring development projects include functional and attractive urban areas creates a sense of place within the community. The Niagara Regional Civic Park is an example of the core principles of urban design to improve the public environment. The project provides the Region the ability to lead by example, particularly if developers are expected to incorporate urban design into their own projects.

Potential Opportunities

- Work with local municipalities to identify growth nodes that will accommodate future population growth
- Work with local municipalities to increase housing supply to meet future housing and affordable housing targets
- Build on the strength of the agriculture sector through supportive land use policies, including on-farm diversified use
- Develop new natural systems, policies, and mapping that are reflective of the needs and priorities in Niagara, which better implement Provincial direction, while reducing uncertainty in the development process
- Establish a relevant critical mass of employment land that will meet the requirements business and establish Niagara's position within the regional Greater Golden Horseshoe market and builds on access to the US market
- Incorporate climate change throughout urban and rural land use policies

Potential Obstacles

- Population forecasts evolve over time and are assumed by some to be static
- Urban planning regulations and policies are limited in their ability to resolve challenges that are not land use based, for example affordable housing

Public Health and Emergency Medical Services

Building a Healthier Niagara

Past Organizational Initiative

Top Ten Health Issues in Niagara

Public Health has identified the top ten overall Niagara-specific health issues for each of 11 different age groups across the life course for both males and females. These top ten health issues in Niagara are the basis for decisions around services and programs, leading towards an outcome-focused service delivery model.

Upcoming Organizational Initiatives

Top Ten Health Issues in Niagara

Public Health has identified the top ten overall Niagara-specific health issues for each of 11 different age groups across the life course for both males and females. These top ten health issues in Niagara are the basis for decisions around services and programs, leading towards an outcome-focused service delivery model.

Health Equity Strategic Plan

Health Equity is defined as "all people having the opportunity to achieve their full health potential and being free from social, economic, demographic, or geographic barriers to health". The strategic plan (2018-2022) operationalizes this concept within the scope of our local public health agency to maximize the community's opportunities for health and wellbeing.

Mental Health Promotion Strategy (MHP)

Mental health, as part of Niagara's Top Ten was identified as one of the top burdens of disease in Niagara. The goal of the MHP strategy is to build mental health literacy and reduce stigma, ensuring that MHP is embedded into all initiatives within Public Health by making "every contact count".

Parenting Strategy

A framework to guide decision-making about how we support and engage with parents and families in Niagara. By using a Social Determinants of Health lens, this strategy is aligned with the Health Equity Strategic Plan and Mental Health Promotion Strategy to support populations in need. The strategy will equip parents in Niagara with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary for their children and family to thrive, and ultimately make Niagara the best place to raise a family.

Potential Organizational Initiatives

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Transformation

EMS call volume has been steadily increasing over the last few years and is projected to continue according to this trend. Paired with hospital offload delay issues, this has prompted a review of how ambulances and paramedics are dispatched. EMS is identifying new ways of doing business to better handle this volume by providing tailored care to make services available, accessible and affordable. EMS transformation is in progress as a pilot and has dedicated resources around project coordination. A complimentary restructuring of the physical footprint of ambulance bases, the hub model has been deferred to 2020.

Potential Opportunities

- A corporate and public health movement towards outcome focus with supporting data and dashboards, utilizing business intelligence software
- Transforming the way Niagara Emergency Services (EMS) deliver service, through the EMS transformation and hub projects
- Customer service changes to bring multi-modal opportunities for clients to access services
- Connective transportation to connect people to needed services

Potential Obstacles

- Potential provincial funding and policy changes with the new Provincial government
- Emerging issues in health, for example, opioid crisis, and legalization of cannabis
- Climate change impacts on environment and health status in Niagara
- Provincial government plans to restructure the health sector, and review Regional governments

Public Works

Transportation

Past Organizational Initiative

Hub and Transit Station Study

Planning for transit-supportive development around Niagara's GO station sites in Grimsby, St. Catharines, and Niagara Falls; as well as the future Beamsville site. Outcomes of the project included a comprehensive 20-year vision for the surrounding lands, streetscape and public realm elements, and improved connections between GO stations, active transportation networks and municipal transit systems.

Upcoming Organizational Initiatives

GO Train Service

The GO Implementation Office has been working on the acceleration of daily GO Rail Service, in advance of 2021 - 2023 timelines to align with Canada Summer Games. Work is underway around getting stations constructed and online, and determining Region's role in station ownership and ongoing operation.

Inter Municipal Transit

Transit routes have been expanded to mirror local area municipal level. Fleet acquisition and replacement is underway and a governance model for conventional transit and specialized transit will be developed to support this significant community initiative.

East-West Transportation Corridor

A corridor from Fort Erie to Hamilton Airport in support of goods movement, and tackling the congestion issue on the QEW, which is a significant risk for the tourism, agriculture and manufacturing sectors in Niagara.

Active Transportation

The Region's Transportation Master Plan focuses on the creation of a safe, connective network of active transportation facilities that is accessible to visitors and residents of all ages and abilities. Moreover, including infrastructure for active modes of travel that is designed, developed and maintained is necessary to ensure active transportation is a competitive option within Niagara. Work is also underway in Public Health through the Students on the Move project, looking at how post-secondary students in Niagara utilize active transportation to get to school, work, social activities and necessities.

Potential Opportunities

- Transit to increase mobility supporting access to senior care, post secondary schools, tourist destinations and access to jobs and services
- Development Charge by-law update to include transit, as an additional funding source
- East-West Transportation Corridor to relieve traffic congestion, truck traffic on local roads and Greater Toronto Area pressures

Potential Obstacles

- Consolidated Niagara Transit System – significant net new financial consideration
- Provincial and federal funding and policy unknowns
- Active transportation changes to product, increase maintenance costs
- Health care centre of excellence model puts strain on specialized transit budget

Public Works

Infrastructure and Service Delivery

Past Organizational Initiative

Transportation Master Plan

The Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will provide Niagara with a strategic transportation vision for the next 25 years to enhance quality of life through pedestrian and cycling facilities, responsive and conventional transit and the creation of an integrated network of roads and highways.

Upcoming Organizational Initiatives

Water/Wastewater (W/WW) Master Servicing Plan Implementation

Implementation of the servicing plan over the next 10 year forecast will be a priority going forward with a significant increase in capital investment required for critical infrastructure in support of growth.

Waste Management Strategy

Over the next 25 year period, a strategy is required to ensure sustainable waste management systems and services are available for the Niagara Region over the long term.

Waste Management Service Level Review

For next waste collection contract, efficiencies and sustainability efforts are being sought to positively influence Niagara's overall waste diversion rate and the associated costs required to deliver waste management services.

Transportation Services, Master Plan Implementation

Implement strategic investments in all modes of transportation to support growth and create a balance of community expectations for active transportation and complete streets such as capacity improvement, East-West Transportation Corridor, escarpment crossing.

W/WW Financial Sustainability and Asset Management

Meeting legislative requirements (Safe Drinking Water Act) to implement and demonstrate a rigorous asset management program in the sustainability of W/WW systems. Tying in with asset management efforts, doing the right work, on the right asset, at the right time, for the right cost while minimizing risk.

Enhancement of Management Cycle of Pavements

Improving how the cycle of pavement maintenance is managed, including crack sealing, patching and resurfacing.

Leveraging New Technologies in W/WW

In an effort to improve service delivery, W/WW will leverage new technologies to pursue Automated Systems, Advanced Reporting Systems, event-based preventative maintenance, GIS improvements, workforce mobilization.

GO Train-Enabling of Capital Investments

Ambitious and aggressive project plans for key transportation projects adjacent and supportive of GO station locations. Upcoming or potential projects include Casablanca Blvd, St. Paul W Canadian National Railway Bridge, Louth Street / Ridley Road, Thorold Stone Rd Extension, and Bridge Street.

New Waste Collections Contract

To be developed with input through a service level review. Includes a social marketing and outreach campaign to support implementation of new service.

Potential Opportunities

- East-West Transportation Corridor to relieve traffic congestion
- Innovations in service and funding opportunities
- Material recycling opportunities for road construction
- Potential for smaller funding opportunities through Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) for capital projects

Potential Obstacles

- Cap and Trade and Provincial Gas Tax, leading to higher energy costs, funding impacts
- Increasing construction costs (trade tariffs)
- Climate change impacts (more severe or wet weather)
- Provincial legislation and regulation, for example, divertible material service standards, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks surplus soil policies, MPAC restrictions on data use
- Provincial and federal policy changes
- Funding uncertainty from all government levels (provincial, federal, regional, local)

SUMMARY

Summary

Armed with the information from the two Shape Niagara reports, Regional Council will work through the process of developing their 2019-2022 strategic plan in the first quarter of 2019, and a resulting implementation plan. The implementation plan will provide detailed direction for the organization over the next four years, and will focus on the actions required to make Council's commitments a reality. Expected timing is to have the implementation plan identified by the second quarter of 2019 to meet the 2020 budget planning process.

Where We Go Next

PHASE 1
Gather Data

PHASE 2
Stakeholder Engagement

PHASE 3
Inform New Council

PHASE 4
Develop Strategic Plan

PHASE 5
Approve and Implement

Next Steps

Staff will work with Council to develop their strategic plan, and will utilize a variety of tools and techniques including workshops. Once Council has determined their strategic objectives, a project-based implementation plan is recommended for development to drive actionable outcomes for the four year term. Following these priority setting exercises, staff will refresh the public facing corporate dashboard with updated relevant metrics that align with the strategic direction of Council. Over the course of the next four years, staff will provide ongoing progress reports on the progress of the implementation plan in support of public transparency and accountability.

Following the development of the new Council strategic plan, an implementation plan will be developed in conjunction with staff to determine the course of action to meet the objectives set out in the strategy.

Finalized strategy and implementation plans will be made available along with progress reports throughout the term of Council at: niagararegion.ca/priorities

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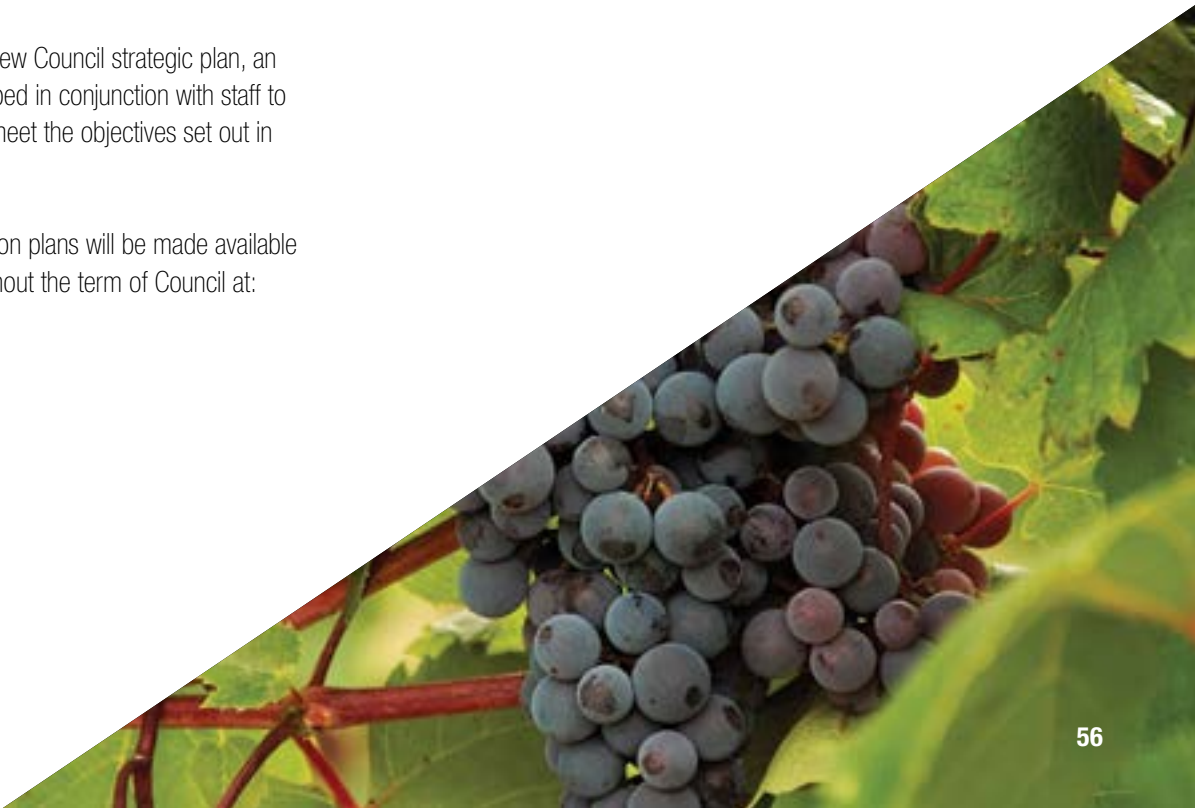
However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results

"

— Sir Winston Churchill

Niagara Region

SWOT Analysis

Current Niagara Region Departmental Makeup

At the time of writing this report, the divisional service areas by department are as follows:

Community Services

- Children's Services
- Homelessness Services
- Seniors Services
- Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities

Enterprise Resource Management Services

- Business Licensing
- Finance
- Facilities
- Information Technology
- Internal Control and Organizational Performance
- Legal
- Procurement

Office of the CAO

- Clerks
- Economic Development
- Human Resources
- Strategic Communications and Public Affairs

Planning and Development

- Community and Long Range Planning
- Infrastructure and Development Engineering
- Development Approvals

Public Health

- Public Health Services
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Public Works

- GO Implementation Office
- Transportation Services
- Waste Management Services
- Water / Wastewater

Niagara Region Departmental SWOT
Organization Wide

S
Organizational Strengths

- Ability to leverage global brand recognition: Niagara Falls, Niagara Wine Industry, Welland Canal and all surrounding attractions
- Collaboration with local community organizations, post-secondary institutions
- Partnerships with local area municipalities to better serve residents such as development and customer service
- Economic designations and incentives to drive growth
- Ongoing work to build connective transportation network
- Building organizational maturity around data driven decisions, project management and asset management

W
Organizational Weaknesses

- Coordination with local area municipalities and Region to bring a singular voice to higher levels of government and customer service
- Ability to handle future increases in service demand. Including, factors such as growth from Greater Toronto Area and aging population.
- Sustainable funding for Regional services such as infrastructure projects and social services
- Widespread densely populated areas, service delivery reach can be challenging
- Customer service including opportunities to increase hours of operation or access to services

O
External Opportunities

- Geographic location, access to Greater Toronto Area and Buffalo, natural assets and greenspace
- Potential provincial or federal funding opportunities
- Emerging economic sectors, such as sports tourism and cannabis
- Explore broadband opportunities for rural areas
- Opportunities to align services to emerging higher level government priorities. Such as federal requirements for integration of services
- Enhance organization's reputation including transparency, trust and accountability

T
External Threats

- Provincial and federal unknowns in policy and funding
- Workforce pressures such as the inability to retain and recruit skilled workforce
- Lack of succession planning in local businesses
- Dependency on seasonal and precarious employment
- Youth and young family retention
- Increasing housing prices
- Impact of aging population on regional services and economy, however these could present as potential opportunities

Niagara Region Departmental SWOT
Office of the CAO

S — Organizational Strengths

- Privacy breach response, and consent management programs
- Comprehensive learning and development programs (leadership development)
- A renewed commitment to drive employee engagement to serve the community
- Experienced staff capable of meeting a wide range of public relations, graphic design and web / social media needs
- High user satisfaction with Region's website and social media channels

W — Organizational Weaknesses

- Workforce management (ability to recruit and retain a skilled workforce) particularly for hard to fill roles and the right fit for senior leadership
- Perceived lack of organizational transparency can lead to media and public mistrust
- Need for a review and update of communications related policies and procedures
- Resource limitations impact turnaround time for social media campaign monitoring / responses and tasks

O — External Opportunities

- Procedural by-law amendments with changes for public and with council
- Fully leverage technology to maximize Human Resource tools and analytics for strategic decision making
- Improve the organization's reputation
- Ability to strengthen relationship with media and public through engagement
- Create an overall strategy and direction for the Region's communications efforts
- New, more robust website platform to improve user experience
- Potential to create additional online presence where needed

T — External Threats

- Marketability of Niagara as a top employer, and local shortage of skilled labour and workforce talent
- Changing municipal act legislation requirements around conflict of interest, integrity commissioner, etc.
- Provincial interest arbitration decisions / impacts with consideration for ability to pay
- Urgency to address staff psychological health, prevent psychological harm and manage escalating costs
- Lack of clarity / consistent messaging can allow for misinterpretation or misinformation
- Lack of traditional communications channels and the need for more diverse channels for communication with all residents and stakeholders

Niagara Region Departmental SWOT
Office of the CAO - Economic Development

S
Organizational Strengths

- Collaboration with post-secondary institutions and local organizations to facilitate research and growth
- Gateway Economic Zone & Centre, Foreign Trade Zone designation
- Availability of incentives
- Relationships with local area municipal staff (Team Niagara)
- Work on GO transit and connective transportation across Niagara
- Ability to leverage our strong economic sectors
- Leveraging global brand recognition
- Niagara's Strategic Location

W
Organizational Weaknesses

- Consistency in application and availability of incentives, processes and designations across each local area municipality
- Need for an employment land strategy and a Niagara port strategy to better guide future planning, in development
- Lack of integrated regional transit
- Broadband not available in rural areas of the region.
- Natural gas not available in rural areas of the region.

O
External Opportunities

- Potential federal and provincial funding (ex. for federal designation as an Economic Trade Corridor)
- Opportunities in emerging industries (ex. cannabis, sports tourism)
- Location (GTHA Corridor, Proximity to US) for trade and to leverage growth
- Strategic initiatives (Hamilton Niagara Partnership)
- Niagara Foreign Trade Zone (working to support export orientated companies)
- Development of the Niagara District Airport
- Seaway lands available for development/partnership with the Hamilton Port Authority.

T
External Threats

- Provincial legislation restrictions for growth (Greenbelt and Provincially significant wetlands)
- Shortage of skilled trades and labour
- Lack of succession planning in local businesses
- Reliance on precarious employment
- Youth and young family retention
- Increasing housing prices
- Lack of shovel ready industrial land
- High hydro costs, particularly in comparison to New York State

Niagara Region Departmental SWOT
Community Services

S — Organizational Strengths

- Leveraging community partnerships for optimized service delivery
- Variety of services aligned to the client: supporting the unique needs of Niagara's population segments (seniors, homeless, children's etc.)
- Improvements in service delivery to provide higher value to clients (ex. BENN)
- The redevelopment project provides the opportunity to build operationally efficient LTC homes and to defer LTC placement through strategic co-location of services

W — Organizational Weaknesses

- Limited affordable housing stock
- Sustainable funding for services with reliability on provincial or federal funding
- Low vacancy rates; high rent costs/ increases
- Provincial funding for staffing levels in the LTC Homes remains below recommended levels for resident care and safety
- Relatively higher social assistance caseload as compared to other comparator municipality

O — External Opportunities

- Potential federal funding opportunities (ex. housing and homelessness services)
- Opportunities to align services/work/projects with new provincial government as priorities are identified (ex. Human services integration and coordinated intake)
- Seniors is a priority population for the province (reducing regulations, increasing LTC beds, ending hallway healthcare and focusing on the front lines)
- Opportunity to leverage technological innovations to enhance care and services in Seniors Services.
- Province has indicated greater focus on employment outcomes in Social Assistance, which aligns with Niagara's strategic work in this are.

T — External Threats

- Provincial funding for core services remains uncertain (pending budget anticipated early spring 2019). Some indication of policy changes. Effects could be to core services, such as social assistance, childcare, homelessness/housing and senior's care
- Historical challenges with funding allocation model for homelessness services
- Limited services available to meet the needs of seniors and the rapidly growing seniors population in Niagara

Niagara Region Departmental SWOT
Enterprise Resource Management Services

S — Organizational Strengths

- Centralized Finance division and Financial Specialists imbedded in each line of business facilitates promotion of fiscal responsibility, accountability and transparency
- Optimal spending decisions to benefit residents and the organization
- Continuous improvement lens through internal audit, corporate performance measures and business improvement reviews
- Building organizational maturity around data driven decisions, project management and asset management
- IT data centre with public sector partnerships (LAMs, school boards, etc.)

W — Organizational Weaknesses

- Gaps in resourcing needs and consistent corporate structure to manage capital assets
- Technology systems to facilitate customer service, being addressed through customer service strategy work
- Sustainable funding for services and infrastructure to deal with budget pressures

O — External Opportunities

- Service Sustainability review approved by Council, led by ERMS will provide strategies to address long term financial planning and sustainability
- Integration of partnerships: working with Province for additional funds beyond short term financial plans (ex. integrate with local municipalities and advocate for funding of enhancement and integration of transit; provincial or federal funding for South Niagara water / wastewater treatment plant)
- Broadband opportunities for rural Niagara

T — External Threats

- Costs of Development Charge discretionary exemptions puts pressure on operating budgets and ability to construct infrastructure to facilitate growth
- Provincial interest in municipal restructuring (amalgamation) – would be a large financial project
- Provincial and federal unknowns around funding and policies
- Continued growth in the region may increase pressures on Regional services

Niagara Region Departmental SWOT
Planning and Development Services

S

Organizational Strengths

- Optimizing natural assets in planning decisions: waterways, greenspace, urban design, etc.
- Protection of agricultural assets
- Pre-consultation meetings with developers to ensure smoother, more timely service
- Coordination and relationships with staff at local area municipal level

W

Organizational Weaknesses

- Differences in planning visions of local area municipalities and the Region
- Increasing demand for consideration of multiple facets to address specific planning needs (ex. Climate change, age friendly, etc.)
- Large grants and incentives portfolio, being addressed by a review

O

External Opportunities

- Comprehensive Plan for development in South Niagara Falls (new Hospital, employment uses). Align growth with infrastructure servicing (new Water Wastewater Treatment Plant with servicing strategy)
- Work with local area municipalities to meet their unique needs (growth)
- Work with partners internally and externally to support increasing rental and affordable housing stock
- Develop new natural systems, policies, and mapping aligned with needs and priorities in Niagara, Provincial direction, and development needs
- Employment land stock
- Include climate change in urban and rural land use policies
- Provide new guidelines for Stormwater Management and Environmental Impact Studies for greater clarity
- MOU for improved planning process for development approvals, and improved development industry processes and expectations
- Create a Niagara Region online development portal

T

External Threats

- Population forecasts evolve over time and are assumed by some to be static
- Urban planning regulations and policies are limited in their ability to resolve challenges that are not land use based, for example affordable housing

Niagara Region Departmental SWOT
Public Health and Emergency Medical Services

S
Organizational Strengths

- Partnerships with local community organizations
- Integrating data driven decisions to inform program planning and delivery
- Innovative strategies to deliver service in accessible, convenient locations for customers (ex. Health care centre of excellence model, outreach services)
- Transforming the way Niagara Emergency Medical Services (EMS) deliver service, through the EMS transformation and hub projects
- Well-educated and motivated staff

W
Organizational Weaknesses

- Ability to provide more services outside of typical business hours
- Integration of client information (internally and externally) as a driver of improved client service delivery and to streamline client intake
- Complexity of some health issues can pose challenges in executing strategies across sectors
- Interventions may take years to change health outcomes leading to improved health and health equity of residents

O
External Opportunities

- Enhance digital service delivery for clients to access services
- A corporate and public health movement towards outcome focused and data driven decisions, alignment with health outcomes (i.e. Power BI tool).
- Existing good practice in inter-sectoral cooperation can be built on and extended; multi-sectoral cooperation for the broader health determinants can be established
- Integrating data driven decisions to inform program planning and delivery

T
External Threats

- Potential provincial funding and policy changes with the new Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC)
- Emerging issues in health and unknowns (ex. Opioids, legalization of cannabis)
- Climate change impacts on environment and health status in Niagara
- Significant increases in demand on Emergency Medical Services (ex. aging population, mental health, etc.)
- Decreased trust of science and expertise
- Changing social norms (e.g. cannabis use, vaping, sedentary behaviour
- Economic downturn

Niagara Region Departmental SWOT
Public Works

S — Organizational Strengths

- Working to build a connected transit system across Niagara, connecting with GO System to build a local, inter-municipal and inter-regional system
- Leveraging community partnerships for seamless transit services, roads and cycling infrastructure
- Excellent customer service with a Customer Relations Management System to ensure actions are taken in a timely and organized manor
- Strong diversion programs for the residential, industrial, commercial and institutional sectors
- Asset management – Working to further efficiency, reliability, affordability, and informed decisions to support capital investment

W — Organizational Weaknesses

- Distance between Niagara's densely populated areas leading to challenges in building sustainable transit networks
- On-going performance issues with the Region's Collector Contractor, being addressed
- Public desire to use public transit
- Consolidated Niagara Transit System – significant net new financial consideration
- Funding for infrastructure projects

O — External Opportunities

- Development Charge by-law update to include transit, as an additional funding source
- East-West Transportation Corridor to relieve traffic congestion, truck traffic on local roads and Greater Toronto Area pressures
- Innovations in service and funding opportunities
- Material recycling opportunities for road construction
- Potential for smaller funding opportunities through Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) for capital projects
- New technologies in water and wastewater

T — External Threats

- Active transportation changes can increase maintenance costs
- Aging infrastructure, impending failure in water and wastewater systems, and the corresponding funding gap
- Increasing construction costs (trade tariffs)
- Climate change impacts (more severe or wet weather)
- Provincial and federal funding unknowns
- Provincial legislation and regulation changes (ex. divertible material service standards, Ministry of Environment surplus soil policies, MPAC restrictions on data use, Cap and Trade & Provincial Gas Tax leading to higher energy costs)

Local Area Municipal Strategy Theme Matrix

Theme	Strategic Priority	St. Catharines	Fort Erie	Niagara Falls	Lincoln	NOTL	Wainfleet	Pelham	Welland	Thorold	West Lincoln
Economic	Economic Development			x		x	x		x	x	x
	Investment	x	x		x			x			
	Planning & Development Decisions			x		x					x
	Zoning & Regulatory Tools			x		x			x		
	Downtown Businesses				x				x		
	Employment								x		x
	Economic Gateway								x		
	Engaged Workforce		x								
	Local Business Growth		x								
	Trade								x		
Environment	Agriculture				x				x		x
	Climate Change Adaptation	x						x	x		
	Environmentally Sustainable Infrastructure			x					x		
	Green Town					x				x	
	Air, Land, Water Quality								x		
	Buy-Local Initiatives								x		
	Carbon Footprint Reduction			x							
	Environmental & Convenient Transit			x							
	Environmental Protection	x									
	Green Energy										x
	Natural Asset Access										x
	Smart Growth							x			
	Water Conservation								x		
Future Outlook	Youth Retention/ Attraction			x		x			x		
	Aging in Place							x	x		
	Post-Secondary Programs		x			x					
	Attraction								x		

Theme	Strategic Priority	St. Catharines	Fort Erie	Niagara Falls	Lincoln	NOTL	Wainfleet	Pelham	Welland	Thorold	West Lincoln
Infrastructure/ Transportation	Transit		x	x	x	x			x		
	Infrastructure							x		x	x
	Multi-modal, Active Transit			x						x	
	Pedestrian-Friendly				x						x
Organizational Performance	Financial Efficiencies					x				x	
	Financial Resiliency							x			x
	Governance			x						x	
	Innovation							x	x		
	Responsible Financing		x					x			
	Staff Training				x	x					
	Talent Management			x		x					
	Corporate Value Integration			x							
	Leadership								x		
	Revenue Generation					x					
	Succession Planning					x					
	Trust							x			
Resident Life	Waterfront & Tourism		x	x	x	x			x		x
	Arts & Culture Support	x		x	x				x	x	
	Affordability	x		x					x		x
	Quality of Life	x		x			x				x
	Accessibility			x					x	x	
	History & Heritage	x							x	x	
	Parks & Recreation Support			x		x			x		
	Safety								x	x	x
	Creative Support	x		x							
	Health & Wellness								x	x	
	Health Care Delivery			x		x					
	Public Access & Involvement			x				x			

Theme	Strategic Priority	St. Catharines	Fort Erie	Niagara Falls	Lincoln	NOTL	Wainfleet	Pelham	Welland	Thorold	West Lincoln
	Taxes						x			x	
	Active Living in Senior Population					x					
	Diversity	x									
	Housing								x		
	Social Inclusion								x		
	Supporting Families								x		
Service Delivery	Communication	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
	Customer Service	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	
	Partnerships	x	x			x			x	x	x
	Technology		x		x	x			x		
	Brand Recognition			x	x					x	
	Connected	x	x								
	Public Access & Involvement			x				x			
	Personalized Services							x			
	Personalized Services							x			
	Public Services							x			
	Support for Volunteers					x					

The most current Local Area Municipality (LAM) strategies were reviewed to determine key alignments between the two levels of government. At the time of review, only 10 LAMs had existing strategies available.