

Subject: Health Equity Informed Planning Update

Report to: Budget Review Committee of the Whole

Report date: Thursday, July 25, 2024

Recommendations

1. That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The Health Equity Informed Planning (HEIP) project was approved as part of Regional Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. A pilot was completed in 2021, and the work has been integrated into the Region's capital planning process.
- Health Impact Assessments (HIA) are a key part of the HEIP project. These assessments ensure that Regional capital projects, especially those not explicitly health-related, consider and address any impacts on health and health inequities.
- Capital projects are screened as part of the annual capital budget process, and qualifying projects undergo an HIA.
- This work supports the amendment made to By-Law 2019-79 Budget Planning to establish social determinants of health as a consideration in program and budget decisions.

Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial impacts of the report. Recommendations developed and proposed as part of the HIA process may potentially lead to financial impacts for individual capital projects.

Analysis

The health of a population is closely tied to the conditions in which people live and work.

- **Social Determinants of Health** are non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They include housing, education, income and other conditions in which people are born, grow, work and live.
- **Health Equity** is where all people have the opportunity to reach their full health potential and are free from the barriers and differences that exist due to unfair social, economic, demographic or geographic conditions.

The HEIP project, piloted in 2021, sought to better incorporate health and health equity impacts into the planning and implementation of Regional projects. In particular, the project aimed to incorporate Health Impact Assessments into regional planning and budgeting processes by June 2022. This was accomplished, and the project has continued to be part of the annual capital budget process.

An HIA evaluates the potential effect that a policy, plan or project could have on the health of the community and recommends ways the project can address or mitigate those effects. It is usually used to assess projects outside of the traditional health sector, and which do not target health as the principal goal.

Through the Corporate Asset Management Resource Allocation model (CAMRA), an environmental and social risk assessment identifies projects that require a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), based on their potential impact on the social determinants of health.

A detailed listing of projects that will go through the HIA process is provided with the capital budget each year. Staff also developed an HIA Guidebook and supplementary tools to support conducting HIAs on Regional projects.

Health Impact Assessment Project Updates

Since 2021, 16 projects from Community Services, Growth Strategy and Economic Development and Public Works have been identified for an HIA.

- Six HIA reports have been completed
- A total of 143 recommendations have been provided

A dedicated position was created to support this work (one FTE) within Public Health and Emergency Services. This role implements the HIA process on capital projects and completes assessments, which culminate in a final report with recommendations. Public Health's Associate Medical Officer of Health also guides this work as sponsor.

Due to the nature of capital projects, which require lengthy approval or consultation processes, it may be years before a project is completed. This long time frame makes it difficult to report on the implementation and evaluation of HIA recommendations. HIAs will continue to be a part of the capital budget process annually, however, more time is needed to properly evaluate their effectiveness.

An example of a project that received an HIA is the **Glendale Secondary Plan Update**. The HIA report was completed in August 2023 and shared with the project team and external consultants. Sixty-nine recommendations were provided, which touched on issues including greenspace and climate change, park and public spaces design, accessibility, transportation, housing, and food environments.

Alternatives Reviewed

The HEIP work could be stopped; however, staff do not recommend discontinuing this process as it could result in potential negative impacts on the health of residents from impacts of future capital projects. Not moving forward with HIAs would not support the current Council's Strategic Priorities.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This work supports Council's Strategic Priority for an Equitable Region. Additionally, this project may impact the Strategic Priority Green and Resilient Region through project recommendations that address the impacts of climate change, as well as the Strategic

Priority of Prosperous Region through HIAs on projects addressing active transportation or transportation systems.

Other Pertinent Reports

[BRC-C 8-2021 - Memorandum: Health Equity-Informed Planning Update](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=799f0842-9211-4e69-b27d-fe0117cad8d3&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English>)

[CSD 70-2020 - Amendment to By-Law 2019-79 Budget Planning](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=b2ac430f-b114-4439-930e-1e483ca84611&Agenda=Merged&lang=English>)

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Health Impact Assessment Project List

Appendix 1 – Health Impact Assessment Project List

Department	Project	Municipality
Public Works	Merritt Rd. Extension	Welland/Pelham/Thorold
Public Works	Ontario St. Road Reconstruction	St. Catharines
Growth Strategy and Economic Development	Glendale Secondary Plan Update	Niagara-on-the-Lake
Growth Strategy and Economic Development	Eco Park	Niagara-on-the-Lake
Public Works	Catherine St. Sewage Pumping Station	Fort Erie
Public Works	Niagara Escarpment Crossing	Lincoln/ Grimsby/ West Lincoln
Community Services	York St. Affordable Housing Build	Welland
Public Works	Sodom Rd. Road Reconstruction	Niagara Falls
Public Works	Glendale Ave. Road Rehabilitation	Niagara-on-the-Lake
Growth Strategy and Economic Development	Tree Canopy Assessment	Region wide
Community Services	Geneva St. Housing Build	St. Catharines

Public Works	RR81 York Rd. Road Rehabilitation	Niagara-on-the-Lake
Public Works	Reconstruction of Canborough Rd.	West Lincoln
Public Works	*Capacity Improvements – RR102 Stanley Ave.	Niagara Falls
Public Works	Reconstruction of RR116 Stevensville Rd.	Fort Erie
Public Works	Transportation / Active Transportation Master Plan	Region wide

*Budget approval deferred.