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**Subject:** Niagara Official Plan - Consultation Details & Revised Framework

**Report to:** Planning and Economic Development Committee

**Report date:** Wednesday, March 11, 2020

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## **Recommendations**

1. That Report PDS 9-2020 **BE RECEIVED** for information; and
2. That a copy of Report PDS 9-2020 **BE CIRCULATED** to the Local Area Municipalities.

## **Key Facts**

- This report is a follow up to Report PDS 1-2020 and provides further details on consultation that has occurred to date and additional consultation that will occur and that will contribute to the preparation of draft policy.
- A revised Consultation Timeline Framework is provided which adds local Council workshops, two Public Information Centres (PICs), online surveys and social media engagement.
- Preliminary vision statements and higher level directives, which have been derived from input received to date, have been drafted and will be presented for input as part of the additional consultation outlined above.
- To supplement this report a presentation will be made to the Planning and Economic Development Committee highlighting the contents of the Niagara Official Plan website.

## **Financial Considerations**

Council approved the resources to complete the Niagara Official Plan over a 5 year period as part of the 2017 Budget Process, predominantly funded through Development Charges.

## **Analysis**

This Report follows up on Report PDS 1-2020 which summarized the public/stakeholder consultation gathered to date on the Niagara Official Plan with a focus on the consultation received at the four Public Information Centres in November 2019. At this

meeting the Commissioner of Planning and Development indicated a report would be provided to the Planning and Economic Development Committee highlighting the consultation in further details such as the amount of consultation with Area Planners, local Councils, stakeholder groups and public, as well as provide an overview of the Niagara Official Plan website.

Gathering input from the public and stakeholder groups is an important component of the preparation of the Niagara Official Plan. Another important component is to involve those who will be making recommendations on Plan's adoption and ultimately implementing the Plan. Therefore considerable effort is made to involve Area Planners and local Councils in the process.

### **Consultation To Date**

Consultation details are organized by category in Appendix 1 relative to local Council meetings, meetings with Area Planners, Planning Advisory Committee meetings, workshops with stakeholder groups, indigenous consultation and Public Information Centre (PIC) sessions. However, the following are key consultation detail highlights:

- The key themes that the public identified as being important to address were identified through Imagine Niagara (October 2013 – June 2014). This outreach involved 4,000+ survey responses, 3,700 comments through community events. The results were identified in Appendix 1 of Report PDS 1-2020 and confirmed through much of the Public Information centres carried out in November 2019.
- Throughout 2017, one on one meetings took place with local municipal planners to discuss policy planning issues in general relative to the Regional Official Plan.
- In February 2018, individual meetings took place with local planners to gather input to frame the priority background studies.
- A Special Meeting of Council was also held in July 2018 to hear input on the need for a new Official Plan and what planning matters it could address. A more detailed summary of public comments was provided in Appendix 2 of Report PDS 1-2020.
- Throughout the summer of 2019, there were individual Meetings with local municipal planners and in some cases Economic Development staff to discuss: growth scenarios; urban boundary expansion; and employment land conversion.

- There have been over 15 Area Planners meetings, from 2017 to 2020, where the new Niagara Official Plan, related background studies and related provincial policies have been discussed.
- The Region's Planning Advisory Committee has met six times so far, starting September 2018 providing comments on background work and directives to inform the new Official.
- There have been four meetings with NPCA staff on the Natural Environment Work Program and a presentation to the NPCA Board on September 18, 2019.
- In 2019, eight specific workshop sessions took place with stakeholder groups relative to either the Natural Environment, Housing or Employment Lands Work Plans.
- During 2019 there were two Public information Centre sessions on the Natural Environment Work Program and four on the Official Plan process and background work.
- Staff have travelled to consult with Indigenous groups. There have been eight different meetings in 2019.
- A Climate Change Discussion paper was released in November 2019 for comment. The following groups were contacted to provide input: Climate Change Working Group; Area Planners; stakeholder groups; Indigenous groups; Planning Advisory Committee; subscribers for updates to the Official Plan; Brock University and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

### **Refinements to Consultation Timeline Framework**

The Consultation Timeline Framework was approved by Council in March 2019. At that time staff indicated that adjustments might be made as the Niagara Official Plan project proceeds. In light of considering the consultation to date, staff have made refinements by adding the following consultation steps during the end of second quarter/beginning of third quarter 2020:

- Workshops with Mayors, Local and Regional Council members to inform on growth allocations, land needs and natural environment options and discuss related issues.

- Two extra PICs to be held at Regional Headquarters on key options, directives/initiatives anticipated to be incorporated in to draft policy.
- Public surveys to gather input on key options, directives/initiatives anticipated to be incorporated in to draft policy. These surveys will be promoted through social media in an attempt to reach people and different demographics who do not attend traditional PICs. Other social media platforms will be explored if the survey responses are not satisfactory.

A revised Consultation timeline framework is attached as Appendix 2.

### **Preliminary Vision Statements and Higher Level Directives**

Planning staff have developed preliminary vision statements and higher level directives for the main sections of the Niagara Official Plan in consideration of all the public input received. Appendix 3 outlines the vision statements and directives relationship to public feedback and Council's Strategic Plan. Planning staff anticipate making these available for public comment during the next public input sessions for the Niagara Official Plan.

### **New Niagara Official Plan Website**

In coordination with the Region's Communications department, a website has been established to support all stages of development of the Niagara Official Plan and provide a platform for staff to share with and gather information from the public and stakeholders. The website is in a constant state of update as work is completed and compiled in support of the Plan's development process. The layout of the website is integrated with the "Making our Mark" branding aesthetic previously developed with the Communications team at the commencement of the project. The website provides a user-friendly platform with options for users to learn about the process of developing the Plan, view materials produced as part of the background work, provide feedback, and subscribe to circulated updates on the Plan's progress.

All submissions made through the website are sent to an email inbox monitored by the Official Plan team members. As Public Information Centres (PICs) are planned, dates and notices are posted at the top of the website homepage. Once the events have occurred, all materials are immediately made available for viewing through the webpage. Additionally, links to topic area specific project pages are also featured on the

website, to allow users to easily find information relevant to certain topic areas such as growth management, rural and natural systems, and archaeology. Contact information is provided on these pages as well.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

There are no alternatives to this report which provides further consultation details to Report PDS 1-2020 and highlights additional consultation, relative to options and key policy directives, to add to the Consultation Timeline Framework approved by Council in March 2019. Vision statements and high level directives are preliminary and are drafted to receive public input.

### **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

The Niagara Official Plan is important to address Council's priority as a Sustainable Engaging Government. The Plan will address Council's other priorities, being: Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth; Healthy and Vibrant Community; and Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning.

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

PDS 1-2020 New Niagara Official Plan-Public Consultation Summary  
PDS 33-2019 Growth Management Program Update for New Official Plan  
PDS 9-2019 New Official Plan Consultation Timeline Framework  
CWCD 421-2019 New Niagara Official Plan Updates

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**Appendices**

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