
Subject: New Official Plan Update

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, February 21, 2018

Recommendations

1. That Report PDS 3-2018 **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.
2. That a copy of PDS 3-2018 **BE CIRCULATED** to all Local Municipalities.

Key Facts

The purpose of this report is to provide an update with respect to the New Regional Official Plan process. Specifically with respect to:

- The eight priority Background Studies previously outlined to the Committee.
- Stakeholder/Area Planners engagement, support and consultation.

Financial Considerations

The Background Studies to support the development of the New Regional Official Plan (ROP) will be prepared by a combination of staff and consultants. Council approved the resources to complete the New ROP as part of the 2017 Budget Process.

Analysis

PDS 41-2017 outlined the framework for the New ROP, including: key objectives; priority background studies; resources and community/stakeholder engagement.

Background Study Frameworks

Since Committee's consideration of PDS 41-2017, staff has been identifying the process steps, timelines and content for the priority background studies for discussion with Area Planners. These were presented to Area Planners on January 26, 2018 and subsequently "one on one" workshops with individual local planning staff are being scheduled to discuss the Background Study Frameworks in detail. As outlined in PDS 41-2017 many of the priority Background Studies are inter-related.

Priority Background Studies/Strategies –Agriculture & Natural Systems

Natural Environment and Agriculture

The consultation approach with Area Planners was embedded in the development of the frameworks for Natural Environment (PDS 6-2018) and Agricultural (PDS 7-2018) Project.

Climate Change

The terms of reference for a Climate Change Study is still in the early stages and consultation will soon take place with Area Planners on: priorities such as infrastructure resilience, transportation, agriculture, mitigation, and Greenhouse Gas Emission inventories; as well as the best structure that allows the local municipalities to address alignment with the New ROP.

Aggregates

A Background Study for Aggregates was endorsed by Regional Council in early 2016. A technical addendum is being completed. A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was previously formed and has been re-engaged. It is anticipated the technical addendum will go to Planning and Development Committee in April. Policy development will follow including a consultation and engagement program.

Growth Management (MCR) Related Background Studies

As per PDS 41-2017, there are four interrelated studies to support growth management:

- Regional Land Needs Assessment;
- Employment Lands Strategy;
- Urban Structure/Intensification; and,
- Housing Strategy

Regional Land Needs Assessment

Provincial guidance for the methodology for Land Needs Assessments has been recently released and will apply to the Region's Land Needs Assessment. The methodology requires input from the Urban Structure/Intensification, Employment and Housing Strategies. As a result, completion of the Region's Land Needs Assessment will likely extend into 2019.

Council endorsement of an overall regional land needs quantum is required. The Regional Land Needs Assessment will identify whether there are excess lands (developable after 2041) for residential and employment purposes or whether there are

deficit of land to justify settlement area expansions. The outcomes of the Regional Land Needs Assessment will be foundational in the consideration of 2041 settlement area boundaries.

Regional Urban Structure

The Regional Urban Structure will identify important strategic growth nodes within the region to 2041 and assign population and density accordingly. A preliminary structure incorporating an Urban Growth Centre, Emerging Urban Centres, Transit Station Centres, other Strategic Growth Centres, Regional corridors, and local centres and corridors is being discussed with Area Planners.

Regional Employment Lands Strategy

The Regional Employment Lands Strategy is intended to ensure there will be sufficient and appropriate employment areas to serve the growing regional population as well as sufficient marketable areas for traditional and prime employment. It is important to identify “*Regional*” Employment Areas being areas protected for long term employment development. The strategy will also ensure sufficient supply of employment lands to that are serviceable and marketable. This criteria, including Employment Areas mapping will be discussed in detail with Area Planners throughout the process.

Regional Housing Strategy

The Regional Housing Strategy is intended to ensure a proper housing mix in terms of housing forms over the planning horizon of the New ROP to provide choice, aging in place opportunities and affordability. This will involve setting affordable housing targets and establishing tools to support affordable housing. The analysis of the Housing Strategy will inform elements of the land needs assessment related to determining the “persons per unit”.

The Province has announced that a proposed methodology will be released to guide the development of the Housing Strategy. The Region is in the process of undertaking a review of the Region’s “*A Home for All: 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan*”. Regional staff from Community Services, Planning, and Niagara Housing will be co-ordinating these efforts in order to comprehensively address housing and housing affordability in the Region. The framing of this Strategy is in the early stages.

Moving Forward-Consultation

The preparation of the Background Studies mentioned above will all involve consultation that fits within a comprehensive consultation strategy for the New ROP. Key components of a comprehensive consultation package will include at a minimum:

- Engagement with Area Planners at key steps of Background Studies particularly formation, option discussions and conclusions.
- There will be stakeholder consultation and open houses for Background Studies and policy sections.
- Review of Background Studies and policy development by Planning Advisory Committee.
- Presentations to Local Councils' to highlight approach and invite involvement in March/April.
- Using *Imagine Niagara* and Background Study engagement to theme public topics, visioning and engagement relative to the policy development.

Planning Advisory Committee

A request for applications for the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) was placed in the newspaper and advertised through social media. Application were available electronically. The structure and requirements for the up to eight member PAC was previously approved by consideration of PDS 19-2017. The PAC will provide input on key findings of the Background Studies as well as policy development.

Eighty six applications have been received. Planning staff intend to short list the applications based mainly on the criteria in PDS 19-2017 but will also consider other factors such as geographic representation. Planning staff intend to have an Internal Committee select about twelve applicants for interviews. After conducting interviews, a report to Planning and Economic Development Committee with a recommendation on members will come forward – likely in March. Applicants not selected will be placed on a stakeholder consultation list if they are interested.

Other Matters

Other ongoing aspects of the New ROP work consists of:

- Developing a brand logo which is reflective of growth, industry, agricultural, economy, natural heritage and diversity.
- The initiation of consultation with indigenous peoples will begin upon the Committee's consideration of this report.
- A more detailed work plan for the New ROP is being developed based on the statutory requirements of the Planning Act.

Alternatives Reviewed

The Background Studies discussed are critical to properly inform the New ROP and either directly or indirectly required by the Growth Plan. Consultation with Area Planners during the framing, options development and recommendations of the Background Studies assists in ensuring local situations and alternatives are considered.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

A New Regional Official Plan will assist in implementing Council's Strategic Priority of Innovation, Investment, & Entrepreneurship.

Other Pertinent Reports

PDS 40-2016: Regional Official Plan Update
PDS 41-2016: Coordinated Policy Review Proposed Revisions
PDS 19-2017: Planning Advisory Committee
PDS 41-2017: High Level Official Plan Process Framework
PDS 6-2018: Natural Environment Project Initiation
PDS 7-2018: Agricultural Project Initiation

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