



CITY OF  
**WELLAND**

OFFICIAL  
PLAN  
REVIEW

# POLICY GAP BACKGROUND REVIEW



# Table of Contents



|           |  |           |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Introduction .....</b>                    | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1       | City of Welland Official Plan Review .....   | 1         |
| 1.2       | Purpose of the Discussion Paper.....         | 1         |
| 1.3       | What is a Gap Analysis.....                  | 2         |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Policy Gap Discussion.....</b>            | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Housing .....</b>                         | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Environment and Natural Hazards.....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Climate Change .....</b>                  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Intensification .....</b>                 | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Transportation .....</b>                  | <b>12</b> |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Employment.....</b>                       | <b>19</b> |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Agriculture .....</b>                     | <b>22</b> |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Infrastructure .....</b>                  | <b>24</b> |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Community Planning Permit System.....</b> | <b>25</b> |

# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 City of Welland Official Plan Review

- The City of Welland Official Plan Update (the Study) involves a review and update of the City’s current Official Plan.
- With a focus on intensification and diverse housing mix in the latest Provincial policy documents, as well as the Region’s ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review, it is an opportune time to develop a strong vision for guiding growth in the City to 2051.
- The Study provides an opportunity to deliver an updated Official Plan that will ensure the City continues to evolve prioritizing development along the Canal and Recreational waterway lands supported by a growing economic sector, sustainable infrastructure and vibrant complete community.
- The Update of the Official Plan will build upon the existing Official Plan, while establishing a robust land use policy vision for Welland and sets out directions for managing growth, promoting the development of a complete community, and celebrating its deep historic roots.
- Phase 1 of the Study involved a background review of current documents including the City’s Official Plan, the Region of Niagara Official Plan, Provincial policies, as well as other guiding documents and plans currently guiding growth and development within the City.
- These key themes will be reflected in the overarching policies for the City Official Plan as a whole as well as more specific plans and policies.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Discussion Paper

- This Policy Gap Discussion Paper provides a review of current policies within the City of Welland Official Plan in comparison to Regional and Provincial policies.
- The City’s Official Plan must be consistent with and conform to the higher level documents.
- The Discussion Paper identifies gaps within the City’s current policies in light of Region of Niagara’s and Provincial policies that have come into effect since the adoption of the current Official Plan.
- This analysis provides an opportunity to strengthen the City’s policies regarding land uses in light of emerging best practices to facilitate a robust policy framework.

### **1.3 What is a Gap Analysis**

- The Policy Gap Analysis identifies new or updated policy direction from Provincial and Regional policy documents that should be addressed in the City's Updated Official Plan.
- The Gap Analysis identifies specific areas where current policies are lacking in the current City Official Plan and where additional detail is required to ensure policies are clear and understood.
- Gaps identified in this analysis assist in providing direction as to where new policies should be developed in order to guide growth.
- Other changes may also be warranted to ensure the Updated Official Plan provides appropriate direction to achieve a vibrant complete community for residents to live, work, and play, while celebrating the past.

The following policy documents were reviewed in preparing this Discussion Paper:

- Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 (PPS);
- A Place to Grow: Growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020 (Growth Plan);
- The Niagara Region Official Plan, 2014 (NROP); and
- The Niagara Region Official Plan Review Revised Draft Policies released August 2021.

## 2 Policy Gap Discussion



- The current City of Welland Official Plan was adopted on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011.
- New Provincial policies have since been implemented in the form of a new Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and a new Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2020.
- In addition, the Regional Niagara is currently in the process of updating the Regional Official Plan.
  - Which is anticipated to be submitted to the Province before July 2022.
- This Study identifies potential policy gaps and opportunities to provide greater clarity regarding policy direction.
- Specifically addressing these policy gaps can create a robust Updated Official Plan that better meets both the evolving Regional and Provincial Policies, while balancing stakeholders', Council's and the public's vision.

The policy gaps are grouped according to key policy including:

- Housing;
- Environment and Natural Hazards;
- Climate Change;
- Intensification;
- Transportation;
- Employment;
- Agricultural;
- Infrastructure; and
- Community Planning Permit System.

## 3 Housing



- Provincial policies require appropriate mix and range of market-based residential housing that responds to market needs in facilitating diverse housing options, which is illustrated in **Figure 1** (PPS 1.1.1 b), & 1.7.1b)).
- In facilitating a range housing, Provincial policy directs municipalities to permit a mix of housing that meets the needs of diverse populations:
  - Housing needs can be very different for individuals as well as young and old families, as such there should be housing to accommodate individuals and families' changing needs as they age; and
  - While also directing growth in locations with appropriate infrastructure to support an efficient use of land and services (PPS 1.4.3).



**Figure 1 – Building Typologies**

- The City of Welland Official Plan should be updated to contain policies for directing the creation of a market based supply of housing types and densities provided such densities fit within the City's structure (PPS 1.4.3).

- In facilitating a diverse housing mix that can meet anticipated growth, municipalities are required to maintain an ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 15 years (PPS 1.4.1 a)).
- The Niagara Region Official Plan contains similar policy language for accommodating residential growth in within the Regional Market Area for a minimum of 10 years through residential intensification (NROP 4.B.3.1)
  - Which the City of Welland's current Official Plan conforms to.
- The City of Welland Updated Official Plan will need to provide appropriate policy direction for ensuring a land use framework is in place to maintain the ability to accommodate residential growth for up to 15 years.
- A key component of the new Provincial policies is directing municipalities to align their land use policies with applicable housing and homelessness plan (PPS Policy 1.2.1 & GP Policy 2.2.6 c)).
  - In this case the Niagara Region Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2020:
    - Which provides details regarding housing opportunities for low and moderate income households.
  - Addressing affordability will be a key component within the City's Updated Official Plan.
  - The Region's MCR also provides a draft policy framework for working in cooperation with local municipalities to establish metrics reporting on the number of affordable units and assessing the achievement of the affordable housing target.
  - Policy 4.2.3.10 Affordable Housing of the City of Welland's Official Plan should be expanded to provide directions for assessing how the affordable housing target is achieved based on Niagara Region's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.
  - The City of Welland current affordable housing target of 30% conforms to the Region's minimum of 25%.
- The Niagara of Region Official Plan also recognizes the importance of a range of housing options, including rental housing, in creating affordable housing (strategic objective 2.1).
  - Policy 4.2.3.10 Affordable Housing of the City of Welland's Official Plan could also be expanded to incorporate a framework for purpose built rental housing to assist in creating more affordable housing options (Niagara Region's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan).
- The City of Welland's Updated Official Plan will need to ensure the City's target and affordable policies are consistent with the Niagara Region Housing and

Homelessness Action Plan Update 2020 and if any new draft policies are included through the Region's MCR process.

## 4 Environment and Natural Hazards



- Provincial and Regional policies emphasize environmental responsibility with land use patterns that focus on both conserving biodiversity and supporting sustainability (PPS 1.1.1 h)).
- A key component of supporting a wise use of resources and conservation is the protection of the Natural Heritage System, which refers to a connected network of natural features that are ecologically important for the system's function (PPS 2.1).
- The Natural Heritage and Forestry Guidelines Policy Review conducted by GEI Consultants – Savanta Division provides a comprehensive review of the policy framework and an analysis of gaps and opportunities in the City's Official Plan.
- In addition, the Official Plan Update should support on-site and local reuse of excess soil through the development approval process (PPS 3.2.3, & GP 4.2.9.2).
  - Section 6 of the Official Plan should be updated to include policies for the local reuse of excess soil.
- Further, new Provincial and Regional policies have also been introduced that include water demand management strategies, and a woodland compensation plan
  - Policy 6.1.3.2 B, could be updated to include a policy framework for a woodland compensation plan; and
  - Policy 6.1.3.3 could be expanded to include a policy framework for water demand management strategies.

## 5 Climate Change

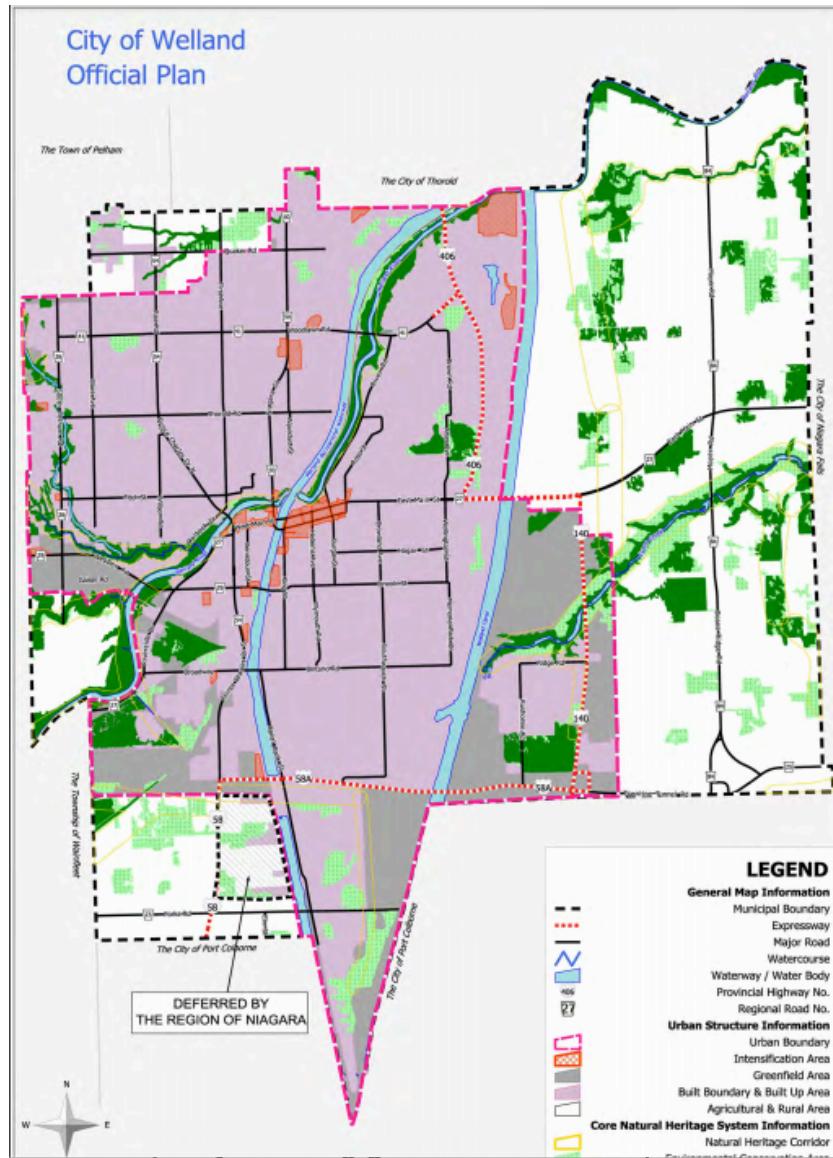


- With a shift in the Provincial policy approach to climate change, the Updated City of Welland Official Plan will need to transition the policy language from consideration and mitigation, to preparing for the impacts of climate change (PPS 1.1.1 j) & 1.1.3.2 d).
- There is a strong focus in Provincial and Regional policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, supported through developing clean air initiatives and the creation of a greenhouse emission inventory (GP Policy 4.2.10.2 a), 4.2.10.2b),
  - The NROP also provides policy direction for promoting energy efficient designs, alternatives to fossil fuels, compact development, as well as promote active transportation and green spaces (NROP 7.A.3)
  - The NROP also provides a policy framework for developing a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (NROP 7.A.3.1)
- The Updated Official Plan provides opportunities for introducing a policy framework for developing clean air initiatives that can be connected to development and future infrastructure projects
- This framework can include the introduction of building standards that encourage net zero developments, while also encouraging the use of resilient building material.
- The use of green rating and certification standards such as LEED can also be encouraged for new developments to aid in facilitating a recognized standard for net zero design.
- Similar policy language regarding the green infrastructure and asset management should be incorporated into the Updated Official Plan to ensure the growth of a resilient City (PPS Policy 1.6.1 & 1.6.2).
- As discussed in the Natural Heritage and Forestry Guidelines Policy Review conducted by GEI Consultants – Savanta Division, the growth and protection of the urban tree canopy is another opportunity to mitigate the effects for climate change and reduce urban heat island effects.
  - The Updated Official Plan could consider providing policies regarding Urban Forestry Management, which can include locally significant woodlands.

## 6 Intensification



- Recent Provincial policies provide a greater focus on accommodating growth through intensification, the Region's MCR process has identified the City of Welland's Downtown as a Regional Growth Centre.
  - The Welland Official Plan's City Structure and Land Use schedules should be updated accordingly. The identification of Downtown Welland as a Regional Growth Centre is discussed in greater detail in the Growth Management Background Review;
- Further, the Region's ongoing MCR process has identified an intensification target of 75% for the City of Welland.
  - The Updated Official Plan for the City will need to include policy language and strategies addressing the new minimum intensification target of 75% and desired form of development in the delineated Built-up Area, particularly within Strategic Growth Areas such as Downtown Welland Regional Growth Centre.
  - The intensification target (3.4.4.1.D) and intensification strategy (OP 3.4.4.1.C) should be updated accordingly.
  - As discussed in more detail within the Growth Management Background Review, and in accordance with Provincial and Regional policies, the Official Plan should include an intensification strategy to address appropriate locations for intensification (OP 3.4.4.1), such as Local Growth Centres and the Downtown Welland Regional Growth Centre.
- While the current Official Plan focuses on directing higher densities to the Downtown (now identified by the Region as a strategic growth area), as well as generally along the Welland Recreational Waterway and Welland Canal as shown on **Figure 3**:
  - The Growth Management policies, specifically Section 3.4 (City Structure) and Section 4.1 (Downtown Welland) should be reevaluated in light of the focus on intensification (as discussed in greater detail within the Growth Management Background Review).
  - Intensification does not always mean greater heights. Intensification can also be accommodated through a variety of built form types, such as townhouses, stacked townhouses, back-to-back townhouses, as well as low-rise and mid-rise multiple residential buildings.



**Figure 3: Schedule A: City Structure**

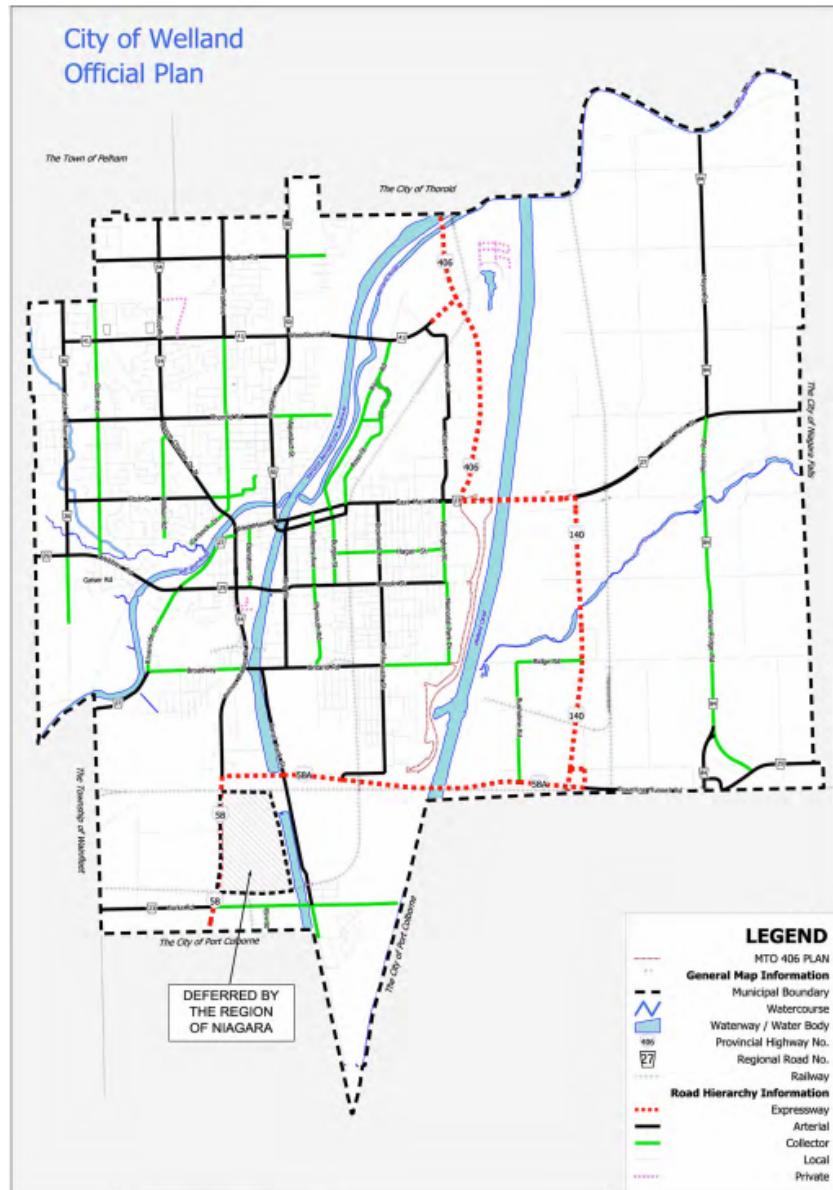
- With the Region's proposed density target for the Downtown Welland Regional Growth Centre of 125 person and jobs per hectare, it will be important that the Updated Official Plan include policy direction on built form compatibility.
  - As such, to ensure intensification occurs in a compatible manner with adjacent low rise residential areas or established neighbourhoods, the following compatible built form design aspects can be interwoven into the policy framework for the Downtown (Section 4 and 4.1)
    - Appropriate setbacks from the street; and
    - Urban design policies related to:
      - setbacks;

- shadowing;
- step-backs;
- angular planes; and
- heritage preservation.

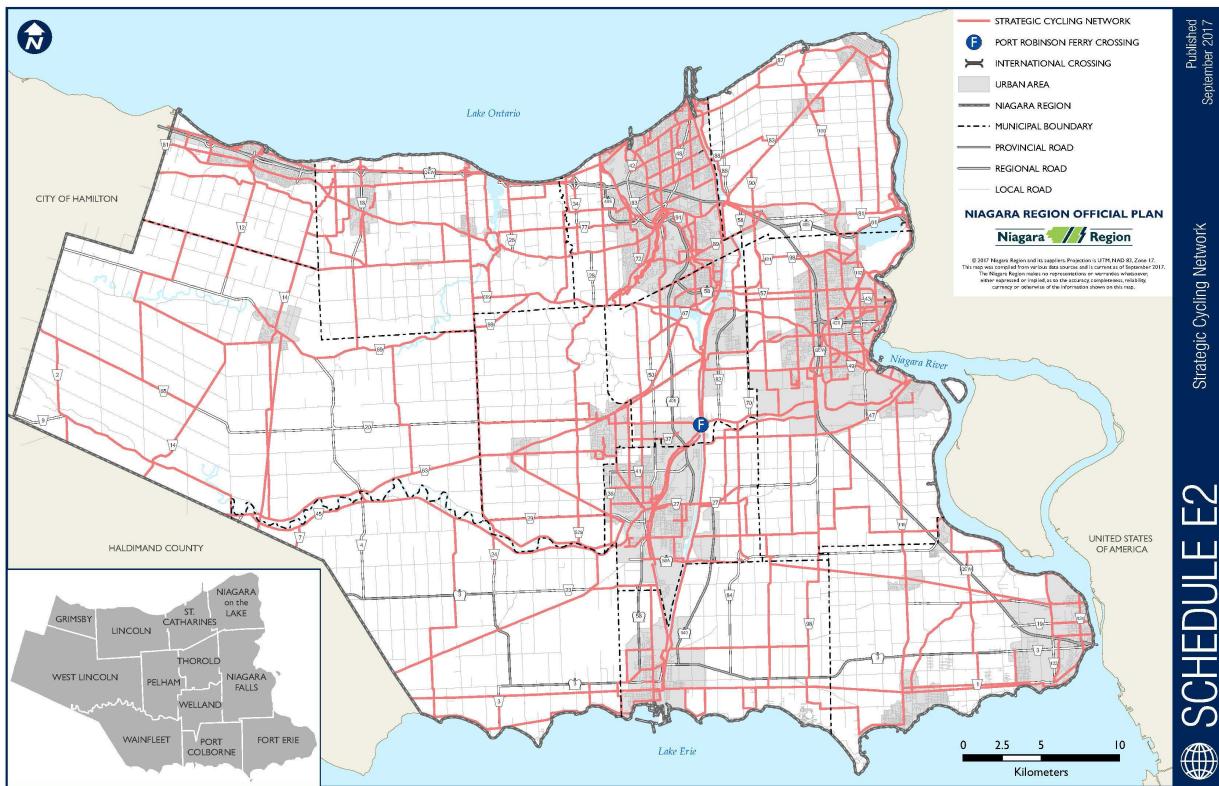
## 7 Transportation



- A key new focus in Provincial policy is supporting the achievement of complete communities with access to transit networks and active transportation options between residential, employment, and institutional areas (PPS 1.8.1 b).
  - The current Official Plan's complete community and transportation policies acknowledge the importance of sustainable transportation network in connecting the City and Region.
- With the City's population increasing to 2051, it is important to provide viable alternative travel options to the private automobile.
- Provincial policies promote active transportation and transit connections between residential, employment, and institutional areas.
  - Provincial policies also direct major employment and commercial uses to sites and areas that are well served by existing or planned transit, as well as strategic growth areas (PPS 1.8.1 c) & PPS 3.2.3.3 c).
  - The City's Official Plan policies could be expanded to be more direct. Rather than facilitating the establishment of public transit and cycling routes (OP 6.4.2.1.A), the policy should direct the creation of cycling and transit routes to encourage alternative modes of transportation.
  - Existing Official Plan schedules could be updated, or a new schedule could be created that highlights transit routes (existing and planned) and cycling routes – consistent with the Region's Official Plan.
- Echoing this direction, the Region of Niagara Official Plan requires local municipalities to introduce a Strategic Cycling Network (NROP 9.D.4)
- As such, it is important for the Updated Official Plan to include policies for supporting active transportation, which can require cycling infrastructure through the development approval process as well as introducing a framework for a cycling program.
  - This could also be strengthened in updating the Official Plan's Road Hierarchy (refer to **Figure 4**) Schedule to include active transportation facilities such as existing or planned trails and bicycle lanes to be consistent with the Region's Cycling Network – **Figure 5**.



**Figure 4: Schedule E: Road Hierarchy**



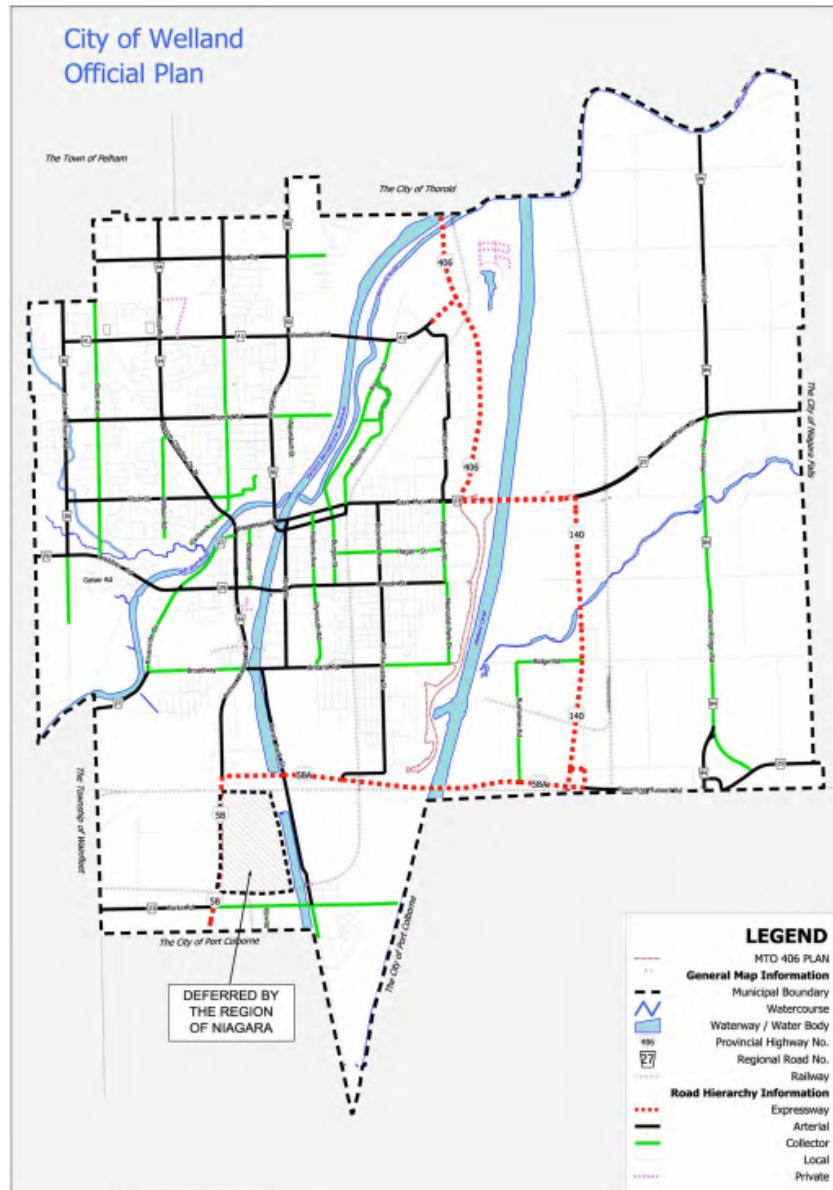
**Figure 5: Schedule E2: Region's Strategic Cycling Network**

- Building on an updated Road Hierarchy, the Updated Official Plan should introduce a new sub policy within Policy 6.4.2.1 (Roads) that supports the construction of transit and cycling infrastructure in a complete streets approach when streets are being repaired or new streets are being planned and building upon the existing trail system (GP 3.2.2.3).
- Further, when new developments are proposed, the Updated Official Plan should require that transportation demand management strategies be a component of the application.
  - Official Plan policy 4.4.3.5 should be updated to require transportation demand management strategies.
- As noted previously, the Region has identified Downtown Welland as Regional Growth Centre, and as such it will become essential to leverage existing transit infrastructure and its expansion to support an integrated system within and across the Region (GP 3.2.3.3).
  - The existing transit system within the City could be strengthened through identifying transit corridors within the Official Plan to protect for transit use, and this could include updating the Official Plan's road classification policies (6.4.2.1.A).

- The Updated Official Plan should also introduce a policy framework for Metrolinx's smart commute program.
  - The Metrolinx smart commute program seeks to encourage residents to choose efficient and sustainable transportation choices to reduce congestion. This choice can be reflected in strategies such as promoting carpooling.

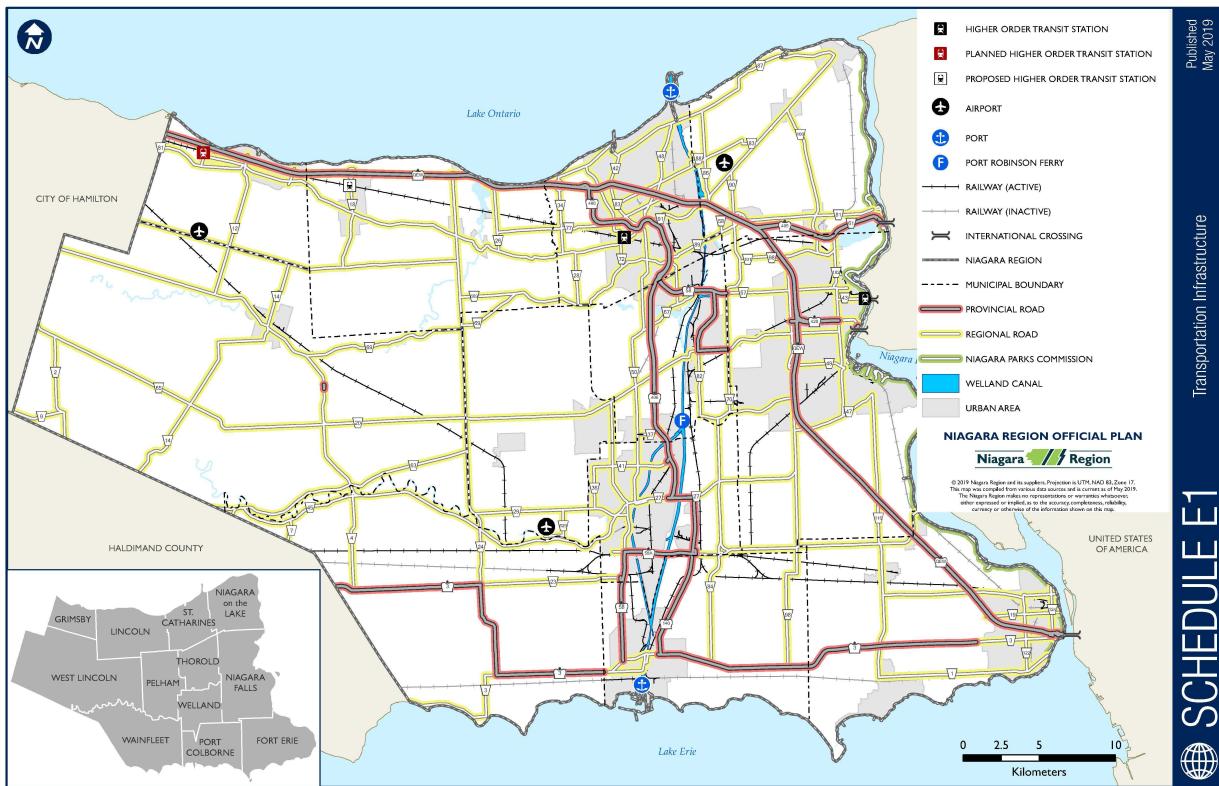
### Movement of Goods

- With large employment areas dispersed throughout the City with a mix of uses including manufacturing (refer to **Figure 6**), a resilient transportation network that supports an efficient movement of goods is a key component of a thriving economy.
  - This can include expanding the City's Truck Traffic Management policies of 6.4.2.1 to include designated truck routes.



**Figure 6: Schedule E: Road Hierarchy**

- In facilitating an efficient transportation system, Provincial policy directs that major goods movement facilities and corridors shall be protected, such as major highways interchanges (PPS 1.6.8.2 & GP 2.2.5.5). These corridors are shown in the current Region Official Plan (refer to **Figure 7**).



**Figure 7 Schedule E1: Transportation Infrastructure**

- The Official Plan transportation policies of section 6.4 should also be updated to ensure consistency and protection for the Region's long term vision for the transportation network found in the Region's Transportation Master Plan (2017), as shown in **Figure 8**.
  - This could include updating the road classification policies of 6.4.2.1, including the right-of-way widths, and planned widenings.



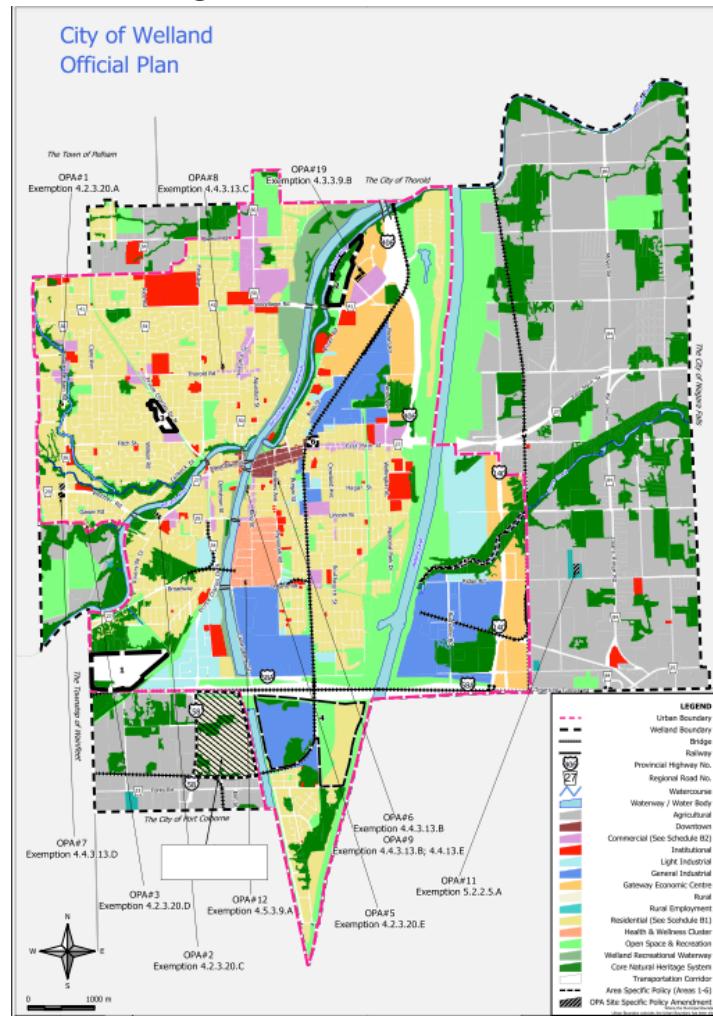
Figure 8: [Map 6: 2041 Road Network](#)

- Provincial policy encourages, where appropriate, the co-location of linear infrastructure that support an efficient movement of goods and people (PPS 1.6.8.5).
- The City's is uniquely as it has access to multiple movement corridors: the Welland Canal, Rail corridor, and Highway network
- The City's Official Plan transportation policies of 6.4 should be strengthened to recognize the importance of compatible land uses near major goods movement facilities and corridors to maintain an efficient transportation system.

## 8 Employment



- Employment areas are generally located near or adjacent to major goods movement corridors such as the Canal, highways, arterial roads, and rail corridors as shown on **Figure 9**.



**Figure 9: Schedule B: Land Use Map**

- Provincial policy provides a strong framework for preserving the long-term viability of employment areas through reinvestment and appropriate separation from sensitive land uses (PPS 1.2.6, 1.3.1 c), 1.3.2.2, 1.3.2.3, & GP 2.2.5.1).
- In maintaining a vibrant employment area, provincial policies direct that employment areas along major transportation infrastructure should be protected,

and redevelopment should represent an efficient use of land that improves connectivity with the surrounding community (PPS 1.3.2.6).

- Policy 4.3.1.7 and 4.3.1.9 of the Welland Official Plan should be expanded to protect both employment uses and strategic movement corridors from non-compatible land uses that could erode the employment area.
- In addition, Section 6.4 Transportation of the Welland Official Plan should be expanded to provide policy language for protecting strategic goods movement corridors.
- Building on Provincial policy direction, the Niagara Region Official Plan states that employment areas are to be well designed in a manner that includes supporting services, compatible with the surrounding area, as well as supported by pedestrian connections to facilitate transit use (NROP 3.D.4).
  - Similar to Policy 4.1.1.7 that seeks to create linkages between the Downtown and adjacent neighbourhoods, policies within Section 4.6 (Employment) of the Welland Official Plan should also incorporate a framework for creating and improving linkages for pedestrians, transit and cycling within and adjacent to employment areas.
- There is a strong Regional policy framework to leverage highway access
  - Including the access to Welland Canal and proximity to Highway 406 (NROP 3.A.3.6).
  - A key strategic direction within the Welland Official Plan is supporting the growth of the transportation and manufacturing sectors for lands in close proximity to the highway (OP 2.4.2).
- In addition, the Regional Official Plan provides policy guidance for compatibility between residential developments and the Welland Canal Green Manufacturing and Assembly Zone (NROP 3.A.3.6).
  - Policy 4.3.1.9 of the Welland Official Plan speaks to minimizing adverse impacts and can be expanded to include policy guidance regarding compatibility between residential uses and employment areas, to ensure residential development does not erode the existing employment areas.
- With the Provincial policies permitting an employment conversion outside of the MCR, Policy 4.3.3 Additional Policies of the Employment Areas in the Welland Official Plan will need to be updated to reflect the new permission of the Growth Plan.
- The Region's MCR Draft Regional Structure policies have identified Downtown Welland as Regional Growth Centre.
  - As such there are opportunities for denser forms of employment buildings such as offices in strategic areas, which is consistent with Provincial and Regional direction of efficient use of land and services.

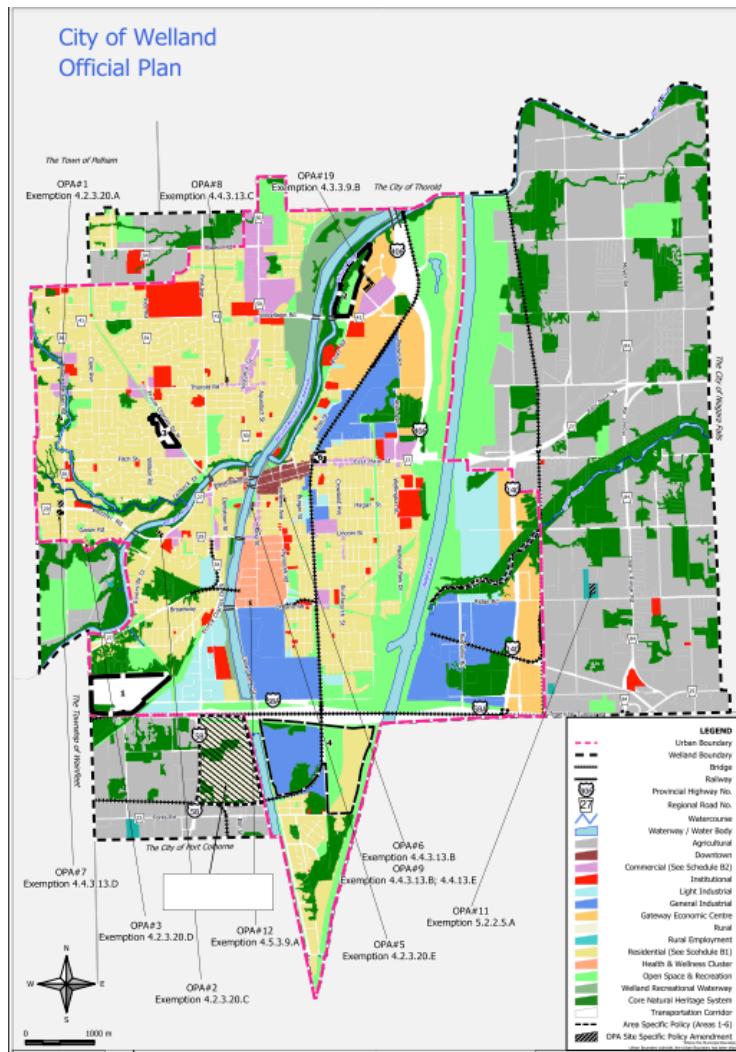
- The City Structure and Land Use Map should be updated accordingly.

## 9 Agriculture



- In maintaining a diversified local economy, a vital component is a robust agricultural sector.
- The latest provincial policies direct municipalities to implement a system based approach to both maintaining and enhancing the agricultural land use base and agri-food network (PPS 2.3.2, & GP 4.2.6.4).
- The Region's Official Plan already has a strong policy framework in place for the protection of agricultural lands and the industry, and the Region's draft policies prepared through the MCR generally seek to:
  - Maintain and enhance the agricultural land base;
  - Promote a full range of agricultural and value added uses; and
  - Requirements for Agricultural Impact Assessments.
- Policy 5.1.3.6 of the Welland Official Plan speaks to value added uses, and should be expanded if additional uses are added during the Region's MCR.
- The Region's Draft policies also provide policy direction for permitting non-agricultural uses on agricultural land subject to the new Provincial requirement of an agricultural impact assessment (AIA):
  - Section 5.1 of the Welland Official Plan should be updated to include permission for non-agricultural uses subject to the AIA.
- The Region's Official Plan also provides policies for
  - protecting agricultural uses from unjustified taxes; and
  - providing financial support through grants.
  - (NROP 5.B.9)
- Chapter 5.1 of the Welland Official Plan could be expanded to includes a new subsection consistent with the Region's direction for providing financial support through grants and incentives for protecting and encouraging agricultural uses similar to incentives provided to encourage Brownfield redevelopment in the Official Plan (3.4.4).
- The Region's Official Plan also directs that local official plans should define and categorize on-farm diversified uses (NROP 5.B.20)
  - The definition of the Value Added within Chapter 8 Definitions of the Welland Official Plan should be updated to reflect growing demand and use of renewable energy on agricultural lands.
  - Further, with the emerging development of Cannabis Facilities, the 'on-farm diversified uses" should be reviewed.

- The City has large areas of agricultural lands typically along the peripheries of the City's boundaries adjacent to the City of Niagara Falls, City of Thorold, the Township of Wainfleet, and the City of Port Colborne, as shown on **Figure 10**.



**Figure 10: Schedule B: Land Use Map**

- With the location of the agricultural lands at the City's peripheries and the inherent interconnectedness, the Official Plan should recognize and support the inter municipal transportation linkages to the broader agricultural network in the Region.

## 10 Infrastructure



- The City of Welland's existing Official Plan sets out policies for both water and wastewater infrastructure.
- The Official Plan directs growth and development to Urban Area where lands are serviced with municipal water and sanitary wastewater services (OP 3.1).
  - Which is consistent with Provincial and Regional policies.
- The existing Official Plan has extensive policies for appropriate municipal services related to adequate water and wastewater for development approvals including lot creation (OP 4.4.3.5, 5.1.3.1.b), 6.5, & 7.11).
  - This is intended to ensure developments are approved where this is allocation in the system.
- The NROP notes that the Region will work with local municipalities to determine appropriate development densities in accordance with the service allocation (NROP 8.B.4), while also providing criteria for the construction of new or expanded municipal services (NROP 8.B.12).
  - This allocation enables a co-ordinated approach to the provision of water and wastewater services and ensures services are available prior to occupancy (NROP 8.B.1).
  - Policy 6.5.1.4 in the Welland Official Plan regarding Municipal Water and Sanitary Sewerage could be expanded to include references to the Region's allocations from the ongoing Municipal Comprehensive Review.
- The NROP encourages local municipalities to implement innovative stormwater management plans:
  - With the Provincial policies shifting its approach to prepare for the impacts of climate change, there is an opportunity to strengthen and incorporate new best practices within Section 6.5 Infrastructure and Utilities of the Welland Official Plan for implementing innovative approaches to address climate change; and
  - This could also be expanded to include Sustainability Performance Standards for development applications.

## 11 Community Planning Permit System



- Provincial policy permits the introduction of a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) as a planning tool for municipalities when planning for the future of their communities.
- A CPPS would facilitate a streamlined process for development approvals that supports local priorities while providing more transparency for stakeholders.
  - A more streamlined process can assist in expediting the creation of housing.
  - A CPPS can provide greater certainty for the community, landowner, and developers regarding permission for future developments/applications, through providing:
    - additional density specification:
      - how tall a building can be; and
      - how many units are permitted in a building.
    - As well as elements not traditionally found in a Zoning By-law
      - land uses that are allowed subject to conditions; and
      - classes of development, or uses of land exempt from requiring a permit (garages, pools, sheds).
- CPPS is a unique planning tool that can be applied to an entire municipality or specific area such as Downtown.
- To introduce a CPPS requires policy language in the Official Plan setting out the parameters of a CPPS.
  - As such, flexible policy language could be introduced into the Updated Official Plan allowing for a CPPS, should the City of Welland wish to introduce a CPSS in the future.

