

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

REPORT PB-2026-03
April 28, 2026

SUBJECT: City of Welland Proposed Updated Official Plan

AUTHOR: Nicolas Aiello, HBA, MCIP, RPP
Manager of Policy Planning

**APPROVING
MANAGER:** Michael Greenlee, RPP, MCIP
Manager of Planning

**APPROVING
DIRECTOR:** Grant Munday, B.A.A., MCIP, RPP
Director of Planning and Development Services

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council adopt the proposed City of Welland Official Plan Update, as attached in Appendix I; and further

THAT Council revoke the Niagara Regional Official Plan, as it pertains to the City of Welland;

THAT Council direct staff to forward the newly adopted Official Plan to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; and further

THAT Council deem that the minor modifications made to the proposed Official Plan following the public meeting do not require a further public meeting

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This recommendation is aligned with Council’s strategic priority of ensuring “Liveability” by creating a sense of belonging while enhancing mobility by improving access to recreation and community events, ensuring adequate housing options, encouraging job growth, and improving ways to efficiently move people throughout the city.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with a recommendation regarding the adoption of the final proposed Official Plan (see Appendix I). Approval of the updated Official Plan will replace City of Welland By-law 2010-55,

enacting the current Official Plan and revoke the Region of Niagara's Official Plan.

The City has hosted several public and stakeholder engagement sessions, two public open houses, and a statutory public meeting to present and collect feedback on multiple drafts. Comments received during these consultations have been considered in preparing the final proposed Official Plan. Public and agency comments, along with corresponding staff responses, are attached as Appendix II (Public Comments and One (1) Petition) and Appendix III (Agency Comments).

The proposed Official Plan (OP) outlines the goals, objectives, and policies that shape and support the community's long-term vision for growth and development. It integrates environmental, economic, cultural, and social considerations to ensure balanced and sustainable planning. The Official Plan has been updated to guide Welland's growth horizon to the year 2051.

BACKGROUND:

Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, RSO 1990, c P.13 (the "*Planning Act*"), requires municipalities to review and update their current Official Plan every five years to ensure:

- conformity with provincial plans;
- regard to matters of provincial interest; and,
- consistency with *Provincial Policy Statements*.

Provincial Plan conformity is a critical component of the Official Plan update process. In recent years, the Province has introduced wide-ranging initiatives aimed at reforming Ontario's planning system, with a strong emphasis on increasing housing supply. These approved foundational policy changes have significantly shaped the approach to updating the Official Plan, and have necessitated a number of revisions to ensure alignment with current provincial direction.

On April 20, 2021, Council retained SGL Planning & Design Inc., to undertake a comprehensive review and update of the City of Welland's Official Plan. The Official Plan update work plan primarily consisted of four phases.

Phase 1

Phase 1 of the Project involved a comprehensive background review across policy and technical areas, including Provincial, Regional, and City planning documents, growth management, and alignment with the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review. Additional reviews covered complete communities, natural heritage, forestry, and the local economy which identified gaps and opportunities to update policies and ensure conformity with best practices.

Public engagement formed a key component of this phase. This included the project Introduction & Vision public consultation sessions, and the online public consultation on the City's website and Engage Welland (inclusive of an online

survey in 2022). These initiatives provided early community input that contributed to the development of the City's updated planning vision.

Phase 2

Phase 2 - Draft Policy Recommendations developed preliminary policy directions based on Phase 1 findings. The project team prepared the Recommendations Report which identified policy conformity gaps, proposed updates, and housekeeping improvements for clarity and readability. This report included updated mapping changes. Three stakeholder and two public consultation sessions were held to review the draft recommendations and receive feedback.

Phase 3

Phase 3 of the project focused on preparing the first Draft Official Plan based on Phase 2 recommendations and feedback. The first draft of the Official Plan included updated schedules, policies, and visual formatting options.

- On June 25, 2024, this draft was presented to Council. Public consultation during this phase continued online.
- On September 19, 2024, a public open house was held, allowing residents to review the Draft Official Plan and provide feedback.

The first draft of the Official Plan was prepared reflecting changes to the *Planning Act* and other policies, to the extent these changes were in force and effect, including:

- Bill 108 (the *More Homes, More Choices Act, 2019*);
- Bill 23 (the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*);
- Bill 109 (the *More Homes for Everyone Act, 2022*);
- Bill 97 (the *Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act, 2023*);
- Bill 185 (the *Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024*), implementing the following regulations; and,
 - *Provincial Policy Statement (PPS, 2020)*;
 - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe; and
- Niagara Region Official Plan (2022).

Subsequently, a second draft of the City's Official Plan was prepared following the Niagara Region's loss of planning approval authority in March 2025 and the coming into force of the *Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS, 2024)* in October 2024.

The second draft reflected updated provincial policy direction under PPS, 2024 and responded to the governance shift in which the City of Welland is the planning approval authority under the *Planning Act*.

Phase 4

Phase 4 of the project, which is now underway, consists of:

- A Statutory Open House held on November 20, 2025;
- A Statutory Public Meeting and information report provided on December 9, 2025. The purpose of the public meeting was to obtain comments from

interested community members and public agencies on the updated Draft Official Plan;

- Consideration of all submitted public and agency comments;
- Preparation of the final proposed Official Plan and staff recommendation report, and
- Council adoption.

DISCUSSION:

Municipal Official Plans are the primary source for the implementation of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2024, and for achieving comprehensive, integrated, and long-term planning. An Official Plan is more than a collection of individual policies. It is intended to be read in its entirety with relevant policies applied collectively to each planning decision. Interpreting policies in isolation can result in misinterpretation or unintended outcomes that conflict with the broader intent of the Plan. This proposed Official Plan reflects municipal priorities, provincial interests, and the applicable legislative framework. It should therefore be considered as a complete document. The proposed Official Plan establishes a comprehensive framework to guide the City's projected growth in an appropriate and coordinated manner, and individual policy amendments are not recommended.

It should be noted that since the February 24, 2026 Special Council Meeting, the following minor changes have been made to the proposed Official Plan:

- Schedule D – Serviced and Unserviced Lands: Updated to identify existing servicing on a single property.
- Schedule B – Land Use and Schedule B1 – Residential Hierarchy: Revised to redesignate City-owned lands east of Memorial Park from *Low Density Residential* to *Open Space*.
- Section 1.1.2: Updated to add a specific acknowledgment of the Six Nations of the Grand River as part of the history of the lands that comprise Welland today.
- Section 9.4: Updated to identify that the City will consider opportunities for cultural expression and the recognition of Indigenous communities within park planning and public space design.
- Section 4.2: Updated and clarifies that residential land-use densities are to be calculated based on gross land area.

Proposed Official Plan Overview

The Plan has regard for Provincial legislation and community priorities and appropriately guides Welland's short-term and long-term growth. The Plan is prepared with feedback submitted from the public and commenting agencies. This section of the report outlines key changes to the Official Plan policies and schedules.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the Plan, which explains the historical and planning context for the Official Plan. Some key changes:

- Acknowledge First Nations history and that Welland is situated on treaty lands;
- Update references to Welland's history, including acknowledgment of its connection to freedom seekers who travelled along the Underground Railroad and ultimately established permanent residence in Welland and the Township of Crowland;
- Update the reference text to the provincial and local policy that this Plan is required to conform to; and,
- Incorporate applicable Regional Official Plan policies and removal of Regional Official Plan references.

Chapter 2 – Strategic Directions

This chapter sets out the Plan's strategic goals (what the community aims to achieve) and the directions that outline how those goals will be reached. The updated Plan provides an updated directional policy to:

- Appropriately plan for the City's projected growth;
- Enhance and promote the development of complete, vibrant and healthy communities;
- Action the need to consider climate change and sustainability measures through planning initiatives;
- Address economic vitality;
- Provide a greater focus on tree protection – with reference to Forestry Guidelines; and,
- Promote, protect and enhance natural areas and green spaces.

Chapter 3 - Growth Management Strategies

This chapter sets out policies for managing the long-term growth of the City. It includes important planning considerations, such as population, household and employment forecasts, city structure, and intensification directives. The following changes have been updated and included as part of this chapter:

- Population, jobs and household forecast;
- Intensification target to 75%; and,
- Settlement Area Boundary Expansion permissions and evaluation criteria.

Housing and Population Forecasts

The Housing and Population Forecasts are based on the City's 2022 Development Charges Background Study and the City's 2024 Housing Needs Assessment. The City projects a population of approximately 129,525 residents and 56,605 households in Welland by 2051. Residential growth projections are based on:

- Historical dwelling unit growth trends derived from building permit data,
- The City's records of approved and ongoing residential development activity; and,
- Anticipated increased intensification within identified intensification areas.

The City's forecasts project approximately 73,000 additional residents and 33,000 dwelling units. This count exceeds the Niagara Official Plan 2051 Land

Needs Assessment (LNA) by 46,525 residents and 19,155 dwelling units. While the Region's Official Plan forecasts approximately 900 people or 465 dwelling units per year for Welland, the City's projections anticipate roughly 2,433 people and 1,100 dwelling units per year. The Regional Official Plan identifies its growth forecasts as minimums. As such, the City may establish forecasts that are more aligned with local and market conditions.

In a letter submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Region of Niagara stated that the City of Welland has averaged 387 dwelling unit completions per year since 2020. City staff calculate this differently and are uncertain of the origins of this data. The City accurately maintains the official record of new dwelling units through building permit data which is reported annually to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This data shows the City has averaged 655 new dwelling units per year since 2020. This figure is expected to increase when considering planned future developments and growth trends from prior years. Accurate forecasts are critical, as they assist the City, service providers, and other agencies in planning infrastructure and services such as water, wastewater, stormwater, schools, hydro, and transportation systems. If growth projections are understated, the result is inadequate planning for the needs of both current and future residents.

Strategic Intensification Areas

Intensification can be described as the development or redevelopment of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists. The net increase of one infill unit would be considered intensification. The Strategic Intensification Areas within the City's Urban Area have been expanded. This is identified in Schedule A of the proposed Official Plan. These areas include the Downtown, Health and Wellness Cluster, brownfield sites, development lands along the Welland Recreational Waterway, and designated Intensification Corridors. The subject areas are generally located along key transit routes, arterial roads, collector roads, and regional roads. These locations are intended to be suitable to accommodate higher-density growth and support the development of more housing options, complete communities, affordable housing, and the redevelopment of brownfield sites.

In response to concerns raised by Council at the December 9, 2025, General Committee Meeting, it is noted that a Strategic Intensification Area remains subject to the land use policies of the underlying land use designation. Proposals for intensification beyond what is permitted by the underlying designation would require additional planning approvals. It's also noted that the newly identified intensification areas have already been developed with intensified uses.

Settlement Area Boundary Expansions

The PPS, 2024, provides significant changes to the policies that govern settlement areas and settlement area boundary expansion. This includes policies allowing new settlement areas to be created and changes to the timing and criteria for settlement area boundary expansions (SABE's).

With the elimination of the Growth Plan, the PPS, 2024 permits settlement area boundaries to be expanded at any time, rather than at the time of a municipal comprehensive review provided municipalities consider certain factors. Factors include: infrastructure capacity, agricultural impacts, and alternate location options. The City's Official Plan must be consistent with these changes.

Through the public consultation process, staff received a total of 12 requests to expand the settlement area boundary. After reviewing these submissions, staff found that many provided limited justification for the proposed developments and did not meet the criteria for settlement area boundary expansion outlined in the proposed Official Plan and PPS, 2024.

In staff's opinion, of the requests received, a 165-hectare proposal covering lands south of Regional Road 58A and west of Colborne Street does meet the criteria for inclusion within the Urban Area. These lands also include several properties whose owners specifically requested inclusion in the Urban Area. It should be noted that these lands were previously removed from the City's urban boundary in 2021 in order to permit the North-West urban expansion area at the time. That removal was subsequently appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal, where a settlement permitted an estate lot condominium on the portion of the lands north of the railway line.

The proposed Official Plan proposes to include these subject lands back within the Urban Area, subject to the area-specific policies of Area 3 (Section 13.3 of the proposed Official Plan), which specify that the final land use designations will be determined through Secondary Planning and major planning studies.

The policies pertaining to SABE's under Section 2.3 of the PPS, 2024, which the City must consider when evaluating a SABE request are outlined in the table below:

2.3.2 New Settlement Areas and Settlement Area Boundary Expansions	Conformity Analysis
a) the need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses;	<p>In utilizing the growth forecasts identified in the proposed Official Plan, achieving the 75% intensification target with the housing mix identified in the City's 2022 Development Charges Background Study (also identified in the 2022 LNA) would require Welland to significantly increase apartment units. This would also mean reducing single/semi-detached and row housing within the Built Boundary. While this would support intensification objectives, it would not deliver an appropriate or balanced range of housing options.</p> <p>The Region's LNA identifies that the City's Designated Growth Areas (Formerly Designated</p>

	<p>Greenfield Areas) can accommodate approximately 3,300 dwelling units based on the density calculation of 50 residents and job per hectare. This would create a shortfall of approximately 4,700 dwelling units. As such, a SABE should be required.</p> <p>The PPS 2024, requires municipalities to maintain, at all times, the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 15 years through lands which are designated and available for residential development. The previously approved Northwest SABE lands are currently undergoing plans of subdivision and servicing plans are being completed. Development within the Northwest Area is forecasted to be completed within the next seven to eight years. The pace at which these lands are progressing indicates a need for the City to ensure an adequate supply of development-ready lands to support continued growth.</p> <p>Parcel Consulting’s Residential Justification Study, submitted as part of the SABE request, identifies the need to expand the Welland settlement area boundary to accommodate an additional 353.3 gross hectares of Community Area land to meet land needs to 2051. The proposed expansion area comprises approximately 165 hectares.</p>
<p>b) if there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities;</p>	<p>In accordance with the Master Servicing Plan, Crozier and Associates in their SABE request, identifies that Regional water supply and wastewater treatment facilities have sufficient capacity to accommodate the population increase from the subject lands under both existing conditions and projected 2051 demands. While nearby sanitary pumping stations generally have surplus capacity, upgrades may be required to support full build-out depending on servicing routes, development phasing, and timing. The detailed design process during the Secondary Planning will address where the most suitable servicing connection can be made from.</p> <p>Overall, water and wastewater infrastructure is capable of supporting the subject lands, and the area is therefore suitable for inclusion within the Welland urban boundary.</p> <p>The lands are in close proximity to various public service facilities that are accessible from existing</p>

	<p>active transportation routes. In addition, development within the subject lands will include new public service facilities to support the proposed development, such as parks and connected active transportation routes.</p>
<p>c) whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas;</p>	<p>The lands do not comprise of Specialty Crop Area.</p>
<p>d) the evaluation of alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas and, where avoidance is not possible, consider reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in prime agricultural areas;</p>	<p>Based on Ontario Agricultural Systems mapping, the majority of the subject area which consists of South of Highway 58A, East of Highway 58, and North of Forks Road are not considered Prime Agricultural Area. This portion of the property was in fact previously included in the urban boundary. Small portions of the subject lands south of Forks Road and west of Highway 58 are identified as Prime Agricultural Area and Candidate Area.</p> <p>Per the Canada Land Inventory, the subject lands are identified as “Class 3” where soils in this class have moderately severe limitations that restrict the range of crops or require special conservation practices.</p>
<p>e) whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation (MDS) formulae;</p>	<p>One small livestock operation is located at 555 Forks Road. This location is proposed to be included as part of the Urban Area. Policy 36 of the MDS Guiding document states that MDS I setbacks are not required within approved settlement areas. Should this urban boundary expansion be approved, MDS setbacks will not be applicable. The closest livestock operation adjacent to the proposed expansion area is approximately 1 kilometre away to the west. As such, there are no concerns regarding compliance with the minimum distance separation formulae.</p>
<p>f) whether impacts on the agricultural system are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance;</p>	<p>As identified, small portions of the subject lands located south of Forks Road and west of Highway 58 are designated as Prime Agricultural Area and Candidate Area and consist of Class 3 soils under the Canada Land Inventory. Class 3 soils represent the lowest agricultural capability within the prime agricultural land classification and are characterized by moderate limitations that may restrict crop production. These limitations can affect one or more agricultural practices, including the timing and ease of tillage, planting and harvesting, crop selection, and conservation methods.</p>

	<p>The majority of the subject lands were previously designated as Rural in the currently in force Official Plan and were not identified as Prime Agricultural Area. The Regional Official Plan and current Official Plan permitted a Site-Specific Policy Area allowing for an estate plan of condominium on a portion of the lands. The proposed development is directed to lower-priority agricultural lands and will not result in the displacement of existing or former agricultural uses or related investments. Furthermore, the subject lands do not contain infrastructure or services that support or are essential to surrounding agricultural operations.</p> <p>The lands are bounded by Highway 58, Highway 58A, Colborne Street, the Welland Recreational Canal, Forks Road, and the CN Rail Corridor. These physical features function as permanent boundaries and buffer the subject lands from adjacent agricultural uses. As a result, drainage impacts or other potential effects on surrounding agricultural operations beyond the proposed expansion area are unlikely to occur.</p> <p>Overall, it is anticipated that the proposed land use change will not result in any significant short- or long-term negative impacts on surrounding agricultural lands, operations, or the broader agricultural community. It is also noted that the subject lands were previously included within the City's Urban Area prior to 2021.</p>
<p>g) the new or expanded settlement area provides for the phased progression of urban development.</p>	<p>The proposed expansion supports the phased progression of urban development by providing an orderly extension of the existing urban boundary. The proposal to include the subject lands would re-establish the pre-2021 urban boundary, while also incorporating additional lands. The proposed expansion area is contiguous with the existing Urban Area to the east and south of the City.</p> <p>Should the subject lands be included within the urban boundary, no development would occur until a Secondary Plan is prepared in accordance with the site-specific provisions of Policy Area 3. The Secondary Plan would establish appropriate land uses, densities, road networks, parkland systems, and servicing strategies, and would also identify</p>

	<p>the phasing of development and infrastructure construction.</p> <p>The timing of the required secondary planning, servicing, and infrastructure works is anticipated to align with the completion and build-out of the City's North-West Secondary Plan Area. Accordingly, the proposed urban boundary expansion would ensure that the City maintains a sufficient supply of designated and developable residential lands to meet the minimum 15-year planning horizon.</p>
--	--

Employment Land Needs and City Initiated Settlement Area Boundary Expansion

The 2022 Land Needs Assessment (LNA), completed as part of the Region's Municipal Comprehensive Review to support the adoption of the Regional Official Plan, identified that Welland is expected to accommodate an additional 5,660 jobs within Employment Areas by 2051.

City staff are generally in agreement with this employment growth forecast. The Region's assessment further concluded that the existing 209 hectares of vacant Employment Area land within the City could accommodate only 5,320 jobs. This is approximately 340 fewer jobs than the LNA's projected employment growth. To address this shortfall, the Region expanded Welland's Urban Area and Employment Area by 15 hectares through the adoption of the Regional Official Plan.

It's noted however that the City's own Employment Lands Analysis (see Appendix IV), shows that Welland currently has only 117 hectares of vacant employment lands (excluding the recent 15-hectare expansion). This is 92 hectares less than the Region's estimate. Based on the Region's employment forecast which estimates an average employment area density of approximately 23 jobs per hectare, this analysis suggests that the City would require an additional 77 hectares of employment lands. This is beyond the 15 hectares already added through the Regional Official Plan to fully accommodate future employment growth.

The Region's Official Plan identifies lands along the eastern edge of the urban boundary as Future Employment Lands. This designation has been carried forward into the proposed City Official Plan. Given the City's demonstrated need for additional employment lands, Staff is recommending expanding the eastern urban boundary by approximately 33 hectares and incorporating the identified Future Employment Lands.

The City currently maintains a limited supply of vacant industrial land available for development. To support future employment growth, the City recently purchased 432 and 476 Ridge Road. These lands are proposed to be added to the Urban Area through a SABE and redesignated to the Gateway Economic Centre land use designation. This will allow the City to service, subdivide, and market the land for future employment uses.

The policies pertaining to SABEs under Section 2.3 of the PPS, 2024, which the City must consider when evaluating the City driven SABE request are outlined in the table below.

2.3.2 New Settlement Areas and Settlement Area Boundary Expansions	Conformity Analysis
<p>a) the need to designate and plan for additional land to accommodate an appropriate range and mix of land uses;</p>	<p>In order to fully accommodate future employment growth, the City requires an additional 77 hectares of employment land beyond the 15 hectares already added through the Regional Official Plan. The Region’s Official Plan further identifies the subject lands as Future Employment Lands.</p> <p>At present, the City has a limited supply of vacant industrial lands available for development. “Shovel-ready” employment lands are typically characterized as serviced, subdivided, appropriately zoned, and free of contamination. “Shovel-ready” lands are in particularly short supply within Welland. Accordingly, the proposed expansion of the Employment Area is necessary to support future industrial development and ensure the City remains competitive to successfully attract new employment opportunities.</p> <p>The Region of Niagara notes through their Niagara Employment Area Strategy, as part of the Regional Official Plan, that many employment areas within the Region are generally comprised of small or irregular sized parcels. These areas are incapable of accommodating large-scale employment uses.</p> <p>Where larger vacant parcels exist, they often possess encumbrances such as contamination, absence of available connections to municipal servicing infrastructure, or fragmentation caused by natural heritage features. This is notable for Welland’s currently vacant employment areas identified in Appendix IV.</p>

<p>b) if there is sufficient capacity in existing or planned infrastructure and public service facilities;</p>	<p>Existing Water supply and wastewater treatment facilities have sufficient capacity to accommodate the small 33 hectare Employment Area expansion.</p> <p>Preliminary servicing and site development cost estimates range from \$12.5 million to \$17.5 million to extend municipal servicing (water, sanitary, storm, roads) and other infrastructure (gas, hydro, and telecom) from Ridge Road and Buchner Road.</p> <p>The City of Welland has budgeted for these costs as part of the 2026 Budget. The detailed servicing design will be addressed during the Plan of Subdivision process.</p>
<p>c) whether the applicable lands comprise specialty crop areas;</p>	<p>The lands do not comprise of Specialty Crop Area.</p>
<p>d) the evaluation of alternative locations which avoid prime agricultural areas and, where avoidance is not possible, consider reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural lands in prime agricultural areas;</p>	<p>The Ontario Agricultural Systems mapping identifies the majority of the subject area as Prime Agricultural Area. The subject area is also directly adjacent to an existing industrial subdivision as well as the Urban Area. As discussed, the subject lands allow the City to market “shovel-ready” employment lands where other lands within the City possess encumbrances such as contamination, absence of available connections to municipal servicing infrastructure, or fragmentation caused by natural heritage features.</p> <p>The Canada Land Inventory identifies the affected lands as “Class 3”. Soils in this class have moderately severe limitations that restrict the range of crops or require special conservation practices. “Class 3” soils represent the lowest agricultural capability within the prime agricultural land classification and are characterized by moderate limitations that may restrict crop production.</p>
<p>e) whether the new or expanded settlement area complies with the minimum distance separation (MDS) formulae;</p>	<p>Two small livestock operations are located in close proximity to the proposed expansion area: 426 Buchner Road, immediately north of the proposed expansion lands; and, 441 Ridge Road directly south of the existing urban boundary.</p> <p>As outlined in the MDS Guiding Document, MDS I setbacks do not apply to industrial uses outside of settlement areas; however, they do apply to new or expanded settlement area boundary expansions in accordance with Policy 34. Given that the</p>

	<p>proposed boundary expansion is intended for the expansion of an employment area, new industrial uses within the expansion lands will not be subject to MDS I setbacks.</p> <p>MDS I setbacks may apply to permitted non-employment uses that are ancillary to the primary employment use, consistent with the PPS, 2024 definition of an employment area. Any such requirements will be assessed on a case-by-case basis as specific uses are proposed through the industrial subdivision process.</p> <p>It should also be noted that the Region of Niagara previously approved a 15-hectare settlement area boundary expansion for employment lands directly south of the proposed expansion area, which is immediately adjacent to the small livestock operation at 441 Ridge Road, as part of the 2022 Regional Official Plan.</p>
<p>f) whether impacts on the agricultural system are avoided, or where avoidance is not possible, minimized and mitigated to the extent feasible as determined through an agricultural impact assessment or equivalent analysis, based on provincial guidance;</p>	<p>As identified, the subject lands are designated Prime Agricultural Area and consist of Class 3 soils according to the Canada Land Inventory (CLI). Class 3 soils represent the lowest agricultural capability within the prime agricultural land classification and are characterized by moderate limitations that may restrict crop production. These limitations may affect one or more agricultural practices, including the timing and ease of tillage, planting and harvesting, crop selection, and conservation methods.</p> <p>The proposed employment area expansion is directed to lower-priority agricultural lands and will not result in the displacement of existing or former agricultural uses or related agricultural investments. Lands to the east of the proposed expansion area are zoned, designated, and used for Rural Employment, providing a buffer from agricultural uses further east. Furthermore, the subject lands do not contain infrastructure or services that support, or are essential to, surrounding agricultural operations and are currently under City ownership.</p> <p>The subject lands are bounded by an unopened road allowance and natural heritage features to the east, the CN Rail corridor to the west, a solar field to the south, and primarily estate residential lots</p>

	<p>and a non-crop-based agricultural use to the north. These permanent features establish clear physical boundaries and provide buffering from adjacent crop-based agricultural uses. As a result, drainage impacts or other potential effects on surrounding agricultural operations beyond the proposed expansion area are unlikely.</p> <p>It's anticipated that the proposed land use change will not result in any significant short- or long-term negative impacts on surrounding agricultural lands, agricultural operations, or the broader agricultural community. It is also noted that the subject lands will be directly connected to a recently approved urban employment area located immediately to the south along Ridge Road.</p>
<p>g) the new or expanded settlement area provides for the phased progression of urban development.</p>	<p>Based on the Region's employment forecasts and current available employment land supply, the City is projected to require an additional 77 hectares of employment lands. This is beyond the 15 hectares already added through the Regional Official Plan to accommodate future employment growth. The Region's Official Plan identifies lands along the eastern edge of the urban boundary as Future Employment Lands. This designation is carried forward into the proposed City Official Plan. However, the City currently has a limited supply of vacant industrial lands available for development.</p> <p>To address this need, the City is proposing an expansion of the eastern urban boundary by approximately 33 hectares. Incorporating these identified Future Employment Lands is a logical and contiguous extension of the existing employment area. The proposed expansion supports phased and orderly urban development by aligning land supply with forecasted demand and coordinated servicing.</p>

Chapter 4 - Urban Area Land Use Policies

This chapter describes the land use designations that apply to lands within the City's urban boundary. The designations and land use policies support the vibrancy of Welland's urban neighbourhoods and create a hierarchy of land use in the Urban Area. These policies support growth management applying to both, Designated Growth Areas and Intensification Areas within the Urban Area.

Some notable changes to the Urban Land Use Policies include:

Downtown Welland

- Identification of the Downtown as a Regional Growth Centre;
 - Established as a mixed-use node;
 - Planned to accommodate significant new growth through intensification; and,
 - Designed to include a variety of uses that support residents living in and around the downtown, fostering a complete community.
- Encouragement of mid-rise and high-rise developments;
- Permitted uses: commercial, institutional, residential, mixed-use, and recreational;
- Designation of retail priority streets: East Main Street, West Main Street, Cross Street, The Boardwalk, King Street, and Division Street;
- Emphasis on public realm and urban design enhancements; and
- Review and refinement of traffic patterns.

Residential Areas

To align with provincial interests there is a proposed update and expansion of density ranges, building scales, and built-form permissions. This is a key change from the current Official Plan. The proposed density ranges for the low-, medium- and high-density residential designations have been increased and now overlap to support a broader and more flexible range of housing options. These increased densities are consistent with those proposed and Council-approved in recent planning applications. For example, recently approved medium-density zoning and Official Plan amendments fall within the newly proposed high-density range of 75 to 300 dwelling units per hectare.

The recommended increases affecting built-form and building scale design are intended to facilitate the development of more purpose-built rental dwelling units. This housing type is identified as a significant need through the City's Housing Needs Assessment and Affordable Rental Housing Community Improvement Plan.

To address potential built-form compatibility concerns associated with higher-density and multi-storey developments, the updated Official Plan introduces and expands policies related to design, compatibility, and location. These policies address transitions in height, density, and massing adjacent to low-rise residential neighbourhoods. There are also requirements for supporting studies and landscape buffering to minimize impacts related to massing, overlook, and shadowing.

Other changes to the residential designated policies include:

- Affordable Housing incentives and new targets;
 - 20% new rental as affordable; and,
 - 10% new ownership as affordable
- Urban Hens: permission for up to 4 hens;

- Low-rise apartments permitted in the Residential Low-Density designation along arterial and collector roads;
 - 3-storeys in height
- Massing and compatibility policy introduced for high-rise buildings;
- Compatibility criteria introduced for infill development exceeding the provisions of this plan; and,
- Additional Dwelling Unit permissions.
 - 4 units on an urban lot.

Employment Lands

Areas of Employment and Employment Transition Designation

The PPS, 2024, incorporates an updated definition of “Employment Area” that reflects the June 8, 2023, amendment to the *Planning Act*. Under this revised definition, municipalities are required to plan for and protect industrial uses within Employment Areas based on a more narrowly scoped interpretation focused primarily on industrial activities and associated or ancillary uses. Uses that do not align with the new definition must be removed from Employment Areas.

As a result, several uses previously permitted within the Gateway Economic Centre (GEC) designation such as major offices, hospitality, certain minor commercial uses and some institutional uses would no longer be permitted.

To ensure these desired uses continue to be accommodated, the updated Draft Official Plan introduces the Employment Transition land use designation. This new designation will continue to function as an employment designation but will not be considered an Area of Employment under the *Planning Act*. The Employment Transition designation is proposed to apply to several former GEC-designated properties along River Road, Power Drive. Also, several former General Industrial and Light Industrial designated properties within the City’s core around Burgar Street and Hagar Street.

The updated Draft Official Plan also provides greater control over Employment Area conversions with the ability to remove lands from Employment Areas at any time. Previously, under the PPS, 2020 and the Growth Plan, municipalities were required to review changes to designated Employment Areas during a Municipal Comprehensive Review. Under the PPS, 2024, municipalities no longer have to wait for a Municipal Comprehensive Review to convert Employment Areas.

Other notable changes for employment land use designations include:

- Updated compatibility policies between employment and non-employment uses based on the PPS;
- Carryover of Future Employment Land Mapping from the Regional Official Plan;
- Re-designated Transport Canada Lands east of the Welland Canal to the General Industrial Land Use; and,
- Re-designated expanded urban boundary through the Niagara Region Official Plan to Gateway Economic Centre.

Commercial Areas

Regional Shopping Node – Eastern Approach

The updated Draft Official Plan replaces the Eastern Approach designation with the Regional Shopping Node – Eastern Approach designation. This applies to the commercial lands located east of the Welland River and north of Woodlawn Road. The existing Eastern Approach designation in the current Official Plan resulted from an Ontario Municipal Board (now the Ontario Land Tribunal/OLT) appeal and subsequent settlement. That designation imposed strict criteria on permitted uses and unit sizes. In addition, there is no corresponding Eastern Approach Zone in the City's Zoning By-law. This creates inconsistencies in the review of planning applications.

The new Regional Shopping Node – Eastern Approach designation is intended to function similarly to the Regional Shopping Node. It is a regional focal point for retail and service activity in the City, excluding residential development. Commercial uses in this area are intended to serve a broad regional market, including the City of Welland and surrounding municipalities. The proposed designation aligns with current land uses and removes the existing site-specific requirements for Market Impact Studies for Major Development Applications.

Other notable changes for commercial land use designations include:

- Permitting Mixed-Use (residential buildings) in Commercial Designations (up to 16 storeys);
- Expanding the Community Commercial Corridor Mixed-Use Designation; and
- Neighbourhood commercial uses can be established in residential areas if they are located on a Regional, Collector, or Arterial Road.

Chapter 5 - Agriculture and Rural Area Land Use Policies

This chapter sets out the objectives, function, permitted uses, scale, and design policies for Agricultural Lands, Rural Employment Lands, Mineral Aggregate Resources, and Rural Lands. Some key changes include:

- Settlement Area Boundary Expansion permissions;
- Lot creation permissions revised; and
 - Surplus farm dwellings; and
 - Agricultural-related uses.
- Permitted uses expanded.
 - On-farm diversified uses replaces secondary uses.

Chapter 6 – Natural Environment System

This chapter describes the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System features that apply within the City's boundary. The policies provide guidance for the protection, conservation and permitted forms of development within the Natural Environment System. This includes objectives, permitted uses, and required buffers for the different components of the Natural Environment System. Key updates include:

- Revising the Natural Environment System (formerly natural heritage system) policy component to conform to the Regional Official Plan;
- Revising the Natural Environment System mapping to conform to the Regional Official Plan;
- Refinement of development and site alteration permissions;
- New permissions for expansion of existing buildings;
- Additional protection for environmental buffers inside and outside the Urban Area;
- A Water Resource System;
- Removal of the Natural Heritage System of the Growth Plan provisions;
- New Urban Forestry policies to enhance urban forestry cover; and
- Updated draft established a City-wide forest cover target of 30%.

Chapter 7 – Open Space and Recreation

This chapter provides direction for protecting and expanding the City’s system of parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities. Key updates include:

- Providing greater focus on supporting the following:
 - The Welland Parks, Recreation and Culture Master plan
 - Community Trails Strategy
 - Urban agriculture
 - Climate change initiatives
- Introduction of Temporary Public Realm Enhancement; and
- Revisions to Parkland dedication or land contribution policies.

Chapter 8 – Climate Change

This chapter provides policy direction for initiatives that reduce emissions and support a resilient City. This chapter provides objectives through planning initiatives, such as:

- Reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions; and
- Encouraging sustainable practices.

It also provides new policies related to:

- Clean air initiatives;
- Green infrastructure;
- Green development standards;
- Tree canopy protection; and
- Renewable energy.

Chapter 9 – Art, Culture and Design

This chapter provides policies to protect cultural heritage resources and support the growth of a vibrant pedestrian realm. It includes objectives and policies related to conservation, heritage designations, the heritage inventory, heritage districts, and heritage retention. The chapter also offers guidance for conducting Archaeological Assessments and outlines approaches for supporting public art, arts and culture, and mobility improvements. Key changes include policies related to:

- Cultural Heritage Resources:
 - Identification;
 - Removal of non-designated properties; and
 - Timelines.
- Urban Design:
 - Streetscape;
 - Built form;
 - Placemaking;
 - Public art;
 - Accessibility and age-friendly design; and
 - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.

Chapter 10 – Integrated Transportation

This chapter provides the policy basis for facilitating the creation of an efficient multi-modal transportation system that supports all modes of travel safely. Key updates include:

- Updated Road Hierarchy and right-of-way widths in reference to the Transportation Master Plan; and
- Strengthened Active Transportation policies in consultation with the Community Trails Strategy and other applicable policies:
 - Prioritizing transit and cycling
 - Active transportation infrastructure
 - Expanding the City's trail network

Chapter 11 – Infrastructure and Utilities

This chapter describes the policies for ensuring an efficient use and delivery of infrastructure related to supporting the growth of the City. Key policy updates include:

- Policy directing appropriate consultation with Indigenous Communities for planning matters and capital work projects; and
- Policy to consider sustainable practices such as energy reduction lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

Chapter 12 – North West Secondary Plan Policies

This chapter incorporates the existing approved policies and mapping for the Northwest Secondary Plan into the updated Official Plan.

Chapter 13 – Area Specific Policy Areas

This chapter describes additional permissions for specific properties in the City:

- Incorporating the updated Area Specific Policy Areas into a separate chapter; and
- Reduced to 3 Policy Areas from 5 as follows:
 - Area 1: Region of Niagara Landfill Site
 - Area 2: Lyon's Creek East
 - Area 3: Lands South of Regional Road 58A and West of the Welland Recreational Canal

Chapter 14 – Implementation

This chapter describes the approaches, tools, and mechanisms which the City will use to direct, manage, and control development on a day-to-day basis. It provides further details on the powers which the municipality will exercise over growth, development and change to help it achieve its vision. Key changes to this chapter include:

- Updated scope for studies;
- Updated scope of Site Plan Approval;
- Secondary Plan;
 - Permissions for Privately Initiated Secondary Plans; and
 - Direction for applications in advance of Secondary Plans.
- Zoning By-law;
 - Minor Zoning By-law Amendments.
- Updated consent policy;
- Community Benefits Charges;
- Community Improvement Plans;
- Community Planning Permit System; and
- Engagement with Indigenous Communities early in the process.

Comments from the Community, Stakeholders, Public Agencies and Corporate Partners

Throughout the project period, interested parties have provided various comments and concerns. As discussed, the City has hosted several public engagement sessions, two public open houses, and a statutory public meeting. Through these, staff were able to present and collect feedback on multiple drafts of the Official Plan. Comments received from consultations have been fully considered in the preparation of the revised proposed Official Plan.

In addition to the public events, targeted meetings were held throughout the process with key stakeholders. These included meaningful and ongoing engagement with Indigenous communities, advisory committees, landowners, business owners and developers, ensuring a broad and inclusive consultation process.

All comments/concerns have assessed in the context of appropriate modifications to the updated proposed Official Plan. Public comments and one (1) petition, along with staff responses are attached as Appendix II. Additional Public comments that were too extensive to include in the matrix are provided separately as part of Appendix II. Agency comments are attached as Appendix III.

FINANCIAL:

There are no financial implications associated with this Report.

ATTACHMENT:

Appendix I	Proposed Official Plan
Appendix II	Public Comments
Appendix III	Agency Comments

