

**SUMMARY  
of  
COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS  
held  
MAY 12-15, 2008**

*Final Draft June 30, 2008*

**A strategy for a healthy,  
sustainable future.**

**2031**

**NIAGARA**

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**Niagara**  **Region**

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## **Executive Summary**

1. The community workshops held in May 2008 are the third major effort to engage the community in creating a strategy for a healthy, sustainable future for Niagara.
2. In 2007, 1200 Niagara households were surveyed for their opinions on future growth of the Region. Later in 2007, NiagaraQuest engaged the community in discussions on sustainable development.

Differing viewpoints provided a greater appreciation for the range of opinions that exist in the Region and the difficult task ahead in developing a single approach to future growth in Niagara. Discussions also highlighted the complexity and breadth of the issues related to growth management and a diversity of viewpoints on these issues.

3. In the household survey, the community said:
  - i. 70% of households surveyed expect their communities to grow and change over the next 20 years.
  - ii. The majority of respondents believe that the built-up urban areas, and more particularly downtowns, are the most appropriate location for higher density development. Many believe that these areas will benefit from new development.
  - iii. When asked what concerns they would have with growth/new development in their neighbourhoods, the most common concern expressed, by 26% of respondents, was with traffic while the next largest response, by 18% of respondents, was that they had no concerns.
  - iv. Most respondents believe that the current mix of housing in their communities is satisfactory.
  - v. The majority of Niagara homeowners and renters say their housing is affordable.
  - vi. A high level of satisfaction exists with educational services, recreational and community facilities, open space and libraries but the majority of respondents believe that youth, health and emergency services should be improved.
  - vii. A large majority (79%) believe that transit service, especially on an inter-city basis, requires improvement and only 2% currently use transit to commute to work.
  - viii. The majority of residents wish to remain in their communities and 'age in place'.
  - ix. While the majority of households wish to remain in their communities, securing work is the most common reason given for moving, especially in South Niagara. Job creation is a high priority for everyone but especially in South Niagara.
4. These findings reflect the discussions that were held early in 2008 in consultations regarding Council's Business Plan. The consistency of themes reinforces our understanding of the insights and opinions of the Niagara community regarding community evolution, growth, and change.
5. Participants at the May 2008 community workshops provided valuable insights and opinions concerning future growth in Niagara. They care deeply about their communities and Niagara,

as a whole. They are very knowledgeable about growth and development issues and they want to achieve a prosperous, healthy and sustainable future.

6. Irregardless of the growth option chosen, workshop participants stressed the following:
  - i. We must include policies and guidelines in the Regional Official Plan update to achieve more sustainable communities.
  - ii. We need to achieve new growth to the greatest extent possible within existing urban boundaries and, although controversial for some, many support intensification (i.e., building within the built boundaries of each urban centre where infrastructure and service investments have already been made).
  - iii. A better range of housing choices is required.
  - iv. We must strive to achieve the greatest cost efficiencies possible in the provision of infrastructure.
  - v. We should aggressively seek new economic opportunities that offer better paying, career-oriented jobs, especially for South Niagara.
  - vi. We must make regional and local transit, including high speed rail, and alternate, active transportation a priority.
  - vii. Matching growth with availability of health care and educational facilities and services is required.
  
7. The three options for growth presented at the workshops triggered lively discussion. The differences between Option A - Current Trends and Option B - Grow South were significant enough to allow participants to understand and express opinions on the evaluation criteria.
  
8. Strengths and weaknesses of each option were considered. While the Grow South option was found to have the most strengths, it was not always the preferred option.
  
9. A new fourth option started to emerge that: built upon the Grow South option; recommended that economic development in the South must go 'hand-in-hand' with population growth; required better definition of the role of West Niagara in this option; and, addresses all of the matters list in point #2.

