

## **SECTION 3**

# ***Regional Strategy for Development and Conservation***

### **3. Regional Strategy for Development and Conservation**

In many ways, the Niagara Region is a community of communities and this is becoming increasingly so. It is made up of towns and cities, hamlets and rural areas, all linked together by social and economic ties. People live in one community and shop and work in another. They have ties of friendship and family relations to other communities and enjoy recreational and social activities around the Region.

As a community, Niagara has special qualities, rooted in its rich cultural and historical heritage, its unique mix of natural resources, and in its diversity. It offers a mix of the urban and the rural, of small hamlets and bustling cities, of specialty farmlands and sensitive natural areas, of heavy industry and scenic tourist spots. It is seen as a special area known for Niagara Falls and the Welland Canal, for historic sites such as Niagara-on-the-Lake and historic Fort Erie, and for its orchards and vineyards. Both those who live here and those who visit as tourists value the special qualities that Niagara has to offer.

The preservation and enhancement of the Region's special character will be important to the quality of life here in the future. At the same time, though, it is also important to provide for economic development and housing to meet the needs of those who live in Niagara. The challenge is to provide a balance between conservation and development. At the Regional scale, there is the opportunity to achieve such a balance, accommodating urban development while conserving resources and protecting the environment.

Increasingly, economic development at the community level is influenced by quality of life issues such as environmental health and quality, housing mix and affordability, the quality of public services, and the range of educational and recreational facilities. There is the opportunity to establish a framework to guide change that will preserve and enhance what is special about Niagara while also accommodating growth and new development.

To this end, seven strategic objectives have been identified along with underlying principles which assist in the attainment of the objectives.

**Strategic Objectives****3.1 To recognize the diversified opportunities and needs in Niagara by balancing both urban development and the conservation of natural resources.**

- A choice of housing and employment locations.
- Development and efficient use of lands within the existing urban boundaries first.
- Conservation of natural resources (e.g., fishery habitat, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, natural areas, wildlife habitat, waterways, Niagara Escarpment, wetlands, aggregate areas, and woodlots).
- Minimization of conflicts between incompatible land uses.

**3.2 To facilitate and maintain a pattern of distinctive and identifiable urban communities.**

- Separation between urban areas.
- Integrated urban communities.
- A variety of housing suited for each urban area.
- Recognition of historical features.
- Provision of opportunities for selective rural development in areas of poor agricultural land where farming activities would not be adversely impacted.

**3.3 To encourage two discontinuous development corridors, one between Thorold and Port Colborne and the other between Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, through enabling public policies.**

- Preferred locations for additional residential and employment areas based on studies showing the Regional need for additional land.
- Access to be improved by completion of Highway 406 and the mid-peninsula transportation corridor.
- Corridors to recognize natural resources and protect environmental features.
- Orderly, staged development within the corridors.

**3.4 To preserve and enhance the ecological processes and life-support systems essential for sustaining human well-being and the health of the natural environment.**

- Importance of water quality (e.g., as a source of drinking water, and for fishery habitat).

- Public facilities to protect water quality.
- Air quality improvements by good urban design, reduced commuting, and linking residential and employment areas.
- Contributions of natural areas (e.g., wetlands).

**3.5 To improve regional self-reliance through long-range economic development planning and economic diversification.**

- Attraction of more employment through existing or new firms.
- Creation of tourism development opportunities.
- Importance of affordable housing.
- Relating employment and residential areas to discourage commuting.

**3.6 To provide for the conservation and wise use of Niagara's agricultural and other natural resources, through environmentally sound resource use without compromising the needs of future generations.**

- Advocate and support government policies and programs which promote the agricultural industry.
- Protection of farmers' right-to-farm by minimizing the introduction of incompatible land uses within the agricultural areas.
- Preserve agricultural lands with highest priority being given to the protection of the unique agricultural lands.
- Preference for urban development on lower quality agricultural land.
- Conservation of forest resources, fisheries, and significant landscape features.
- Wise use of mineral aggregate resources.

**3.7 To undertake and support those activities which improve the quality of life for the Niagara community.**

- Importance of quality of life in community development through housing, employment, services, agriculture, environmental quality, and natural features.

**Strategic Statement**

These seven objectives taken together provide the basis for a Regional Strategy to guide development and change in Niagara. This Strategy represents a balance among the various objectives, a balance between development and conservation. The combined objectives are to:

- (1) Provide a broad framework against which to assess major development proposals and planning documents, Regional capital expenditures and servicing plans, and Provincial initiatives; and
- (2) Provide the basis for the objectives and detailed policies contained in the other sections of this Plan.

The Regional Strategy for Development and Conservation Map illustrates the Strategy in a very schematic and approximate way. The Map provides guidance as to the broad direction for development and conservation in the Region. It does not indicate specific development areas or locations. The strategic objectives are made more specific in the policies and policy maps found elsewhere in this Plan.

The emphasis in the Strategy is on issues of Regional concern. The local municipalities have a significant contribution to make in developing more detailed policies within the overall framework provided by the Strategy as well as in developing other policies to address more local issues.

# Regional Niagara Strategy for Development and Conservation

