

A1 THE COMMUNITY VISION

The primary purpose of this Official Plan is to provide the basis for managing growth for the period ending in 2031, subject to 5-year reviews. The Vision for this Official Plan is to revitalize the City's economy and civic identity through growth and development in the Downtown, the employment areas, the existing urban area and the Secondary Plan areas. This Plan is intended to provide direction and encouragement for public and private sector investment, and also recognize that the City possesses numerous cultural/heritage features and diverse natural features that contribute in a meaningful way to the quality of life in Thorold.

The City has a number of significant environmental and topographical features that contribute to the 'sense of place' felt by many of the City's residents. These features include the Niagara Escarpment, the Welland Canal, Lakes Gibson and Moodie as well as numerous natural areas that support wildlife and contribute to the rural and small town character of Thorold.

Thorold forms part of the Provincially significant "Gateway Economic Centre", given the City's extensive supply of employment land which is accessible by Provincial highways, the Welland Canal and intercontinental rail. These areas shall be protected for future employment uses so that they may contribute to the creation of local employment and economic investment.

The Thorold urban areas are identifiable, affordable and accessible and the City will promote these qualities in an effort to attract more families and retirees seeking a small-town lifestyle in a moderate Ontario climate. According to Regional growth projections, it is anticipated that the population of the City will increase by about **5,000** people by the year 2031. Under this Official Plan, the majority of this growth will be directed to existing or planned urban areas.

A2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A2.1 GROWTH AND SETTLEMENT

A2.1.1 Goal

It is a goal of this Plan to encourage new development in the Urban Areas where full sewer and water services are available.

A2.1.2 Objectives

To establish an orderly progression of urban development that utilizes lands within existing urban area as well as in new secondary plan areas.

To continue to provide housing that is affordable.

To encourage diversity in housing in an effort to accommodate the broadest range of housing needs.

To maintain, at all times, a minimum 10-year supply of residential development land.

To reinforce the function of the Downtown as a business and commercial focal point of the community and to increase the prominence of Downtown through community improvement in public and private land and buildings.

To encourage intensification and redevelopment in and in proximity to the Downtown for a mix of land uses and diversity in housing that includes housing oriented to seniors and students.

A2.2 THE ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

A2.2.1 Goal

It is a goal of this Plan to provide opportunities for economic development and the creation of new jobs in the City.

A2.2.2 Objectives

- To work with the Province and other Niagara Region municipalities to plan for and implement measures to encourage investment within the Provincially significant “Gateway Economic Centre”.
- To protect employment lands for current and future need.
- To show leadership on matters relating to economic and employment growth.
- To ensure lands are available in the City to accommodate the broadest potential range of needs in the industrial market place.
- To encourage opportunities for employment within a Regional context including a

broad range of commercial and service facilities.

- To encourage the development of additional employment and service commercial uses in the Downtown.
- To work with Brock University to promote economic and social development that is beneficial to the City and the university.
- To encourage the development of home-based businesses and home industries provided the proposed use is compatible with adjacent uses.

A2.3 INFRASTRUCTURE

A2.3.1 Goal

It is a goal of this Plan to ensure that all infrastructure, including sanitary sewers, water distribution and stormwater management facilities and roads meet the needs of present and future residents and businesses.

A2.3.2 Objectives

- To ensure that infrastructure required to serve the Urban Areas is built prior to, or coincident with, new development.
- To maintain existing infrastructure and services in a manner that is efficient, cost effective and contributes to the quality of life of citizens.
- To consider adaptive re-use of infrastructure wherever feasible.
- To promote the use of green infrastructure.
- To locate infrastructure and public services in a manner that supports effective and efficient delivery of emergency management services.
- To encourage the establishment of a Regionally integrated transportation system, including active transportation that safely and efficiently accommodates the broadest number of transportation modes.
- To encourage the maintenance and/or upgrading of water, sanitary and stormwater services within older parts of the City, through development or re-development projects within and proximate to the Downtown.

A2.4 URBAN CHARACTER

A2.4.1 Goal

It is a goal of this Plan to protect and enhance the small-town character of the existing Urban Areas.

A2.4.2 Objectives

- To maintain and enhance the Urban Areas as diverse, liveable, safe, accessible and attractive communities.
- To respect the character of stable residential areas and only support applications

for new development that are physically compatible with the character of the surrounding neighbourhood.

- To encourage the intensification and use of the lands within the Downtown and to make every effort to improve the economic health of the Downtown by encouraging redevelopment and the broadest mix of compatible uses.
- To maintain and enhance the character and stability of existing and well-established residential neighbourhoods by ensuring that development and redevelopment is compatible with the scale and density of existing development.
- To encourage the development of neighbourhoods which are pedestrian-friendly and provide a mix of housing types compatible with the existing neighbourhood, in addition to community facilities, small-scale commercial centres and public open spaces.
- To provide community facilities that are safe, visible and accessible to residents in each neighbourhood.
- To improve the civic identity of the urban areas through the use and application of appropriate standards of urban design in public and private development.

A2.5 AGRICULTURE

A2.5.1 Goal

It is the goal of this Plan to maintain, support and enhance agricultural opportunities.

A2.5.2 Objectives

- To support agricultural uses by allowing for diversified activities that will add value to their primary products
- To provide opportunities to become more competitive and adapt to new and changing markets
- To encourage diversification by taking advantage of new agricultural opportunities.

A2.6 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

A2.6.1 Goal

It is a goal of this Plan to maintain, enhance or restore ecosystem health and integrity.

A2.6.2 Objectives

- To ensure that an understanding of the natural environment, including the values, opportunities, limits and constraints that it provides, guides land use decision-making in the City.

- To make planning decisions that consider the health and integrity of the broader landscape as well as long term and cumulative impacts on the ecosystem.
- To make planning decisions that avoid negative environmental impacts as a first priority, with secondary priority given to mitigation of negative impacts.
- To restrict and regulate land uses which could impact the water quality and hydrological and hydrogeological characteristics of watercourses, aquifers and wetlands.
- To work with the Region and other agencies responsible for public land to encourage the establishment of an open space system that links environmental and recreational resources both within and beyond the boundaries of the City.

A2.7 CULTURAL HERITAGE

A2.7.1 Goal

It is a goal of this Plan to continue to identify, conserve and enhance the City's significant cultural heritage resources.

A2.7.2 Objectives

- To encourage the retention of cultural heritage resources wherever practical for the benefit of future generations.
- To foster civic pride by recognizing the contribution that cultural heritage resources have on the rural and urban fabric of the City.
- To use cultural heritage resources as a tool to attract additional economic development, increase tourism opportunities and enhance the character and vitality of neighbourhoods and districts.
- To work with community partners and volunteers to promote awareness and interest in the conservation of cultural heritage resources.
- To prevent the demolition, destruction, inappropriate alteration or use of cultural heritage resources.
- To encourage development that is adjacent to significant cultural heritage resources to be of an appropriate scale and character.
- To prepare a comprehensive inventory of the City's built heritage and cultural heritage landscape resources.

A3 SETTLEMENT AREA STRATEGY

According to Regional growth studies, the City of Thorold is projected to accommodate about 5,186 new residents during the 25 years between 2006 and 2031. The Regional growth study further projected that this level of growth will precipitate the need for about 2,345 new dwelling units.

Through this Official Plan, future residential growth will be accommodated primarily within the traditional urban areas of Thorold as well as two new secondary plan areas known as The Neighbourhoods of Rolling Meadows and Port Robinson West.

In Port Robinson West, there is a significant urban land base that will contribute to growth within the timeframe of this Official Plan as well as future growth beyond the timeframe of this Official Plan.

Regional projections also estimate that Thorold could experience employment growth of up to 1,400 jobs by the year 2031. Thorold is prepared to accommodate this level of employment growth on an existing employment land base that includes approximately 100 hectares of serviced land and approximately 500 hectares of rural industrial land that would only provide for dry industrial uses on private services.

A3.1 POPULATION FORECAST

During the 25 years between 1981 and 2006 the population of the City of Thorold increased by about 2,800 people or at an annual rate of about 0.7%. The growth management policies of this Plan are premised on a Regional population forecast that has allocated a 25-year population growth of 5,186 people, which represents an annual growth rate of about 1%. The 25-year population projection is shown below.

Year	25 Year Population Forecast
2006	18,900
2011	19,200
2016	20,900
2021	22,000
2026	23,100
2031	24,086

A3.2 HOUSING FORECAST

The growth management policies of this Plan are premised on a Regional forecast that has allocated 25 year housing growth of 2,345 units as shown in the summary below.

Year	25 Year Housing Forecast
2006	7,055
2011	7,260
2016	7,900
2021	8,390
2026	8,950
2031	9,400

According to Regional growth allocations, approximately 80% of this housing growth will be lower density dwelling types, whereas about 20% of this growth will be comprised of medium and higher density unit types. It is anticipated that the City will achieve the Regional allocation and policies in this Plan provide for the development of medium and higher density housing types within the secondary plan and downtown areas of the City.

A3.3 EMPLOYMENT FORECAST

Regional growth allocations project future employment growth of about 1,400 new jobs over the next 25 years as shown in the summary below.

Year	25 Year Employment Forecast
2006	7,280
2011	7,670
2016	7,890
2021	8,130
2026	8,390
2031	8,690

The City is prepared to accommodate this level of employment growth given the City's current supply of industrial land designated and zoned for employment purposes is in excess of 600 hectares.

A4 CITY STRUCTURE AND LAND USE

As was articulated in the Vision of this Plan, the City of Thorold is characterized by distinct urban and rural areas. This Plan intends to maintain and in some cases strengthen these characteristics by implementing the following City structure comprised of three primary categories of land use:

1. The *Urban Area* designations apply to land use within existing built-up areas of the City as well as the Secondary Plan areas. No new settlement areas will be permitted under this Official Plan.
2. The *Rural Area* designations apply to lands outside of the *Urban Area* designations.
3. The *Environmental* and *Open Space* land use category applies to lands within the *Urban Area* and *Rural Area* categories that are considered to be important from a natural heritage, natural hazards and/or open space perspective.

The land use designations in each category are intended to implement the Vision, Goals and Strategic Objectives of this Plan.

A4.1 URBAN AREA DESIGNATIONS

The Urban Area Designation represent categories of land use which will be the focus for urban development on full municipal services. The land use designations within the *Urban Area* category are described below:

A4.1.1 Urban Living Area

Lands designated *Urban Living Area* are the site of existing and planned residential development and complementary uses on full municipal services. The *Urban Living Area* may also include other small or minor land uses such as convenience stores or institutional uses which are supportive of and compatible within a primarily residential area.

A4.1.2 Downtown

Lands designated *Downtown* are the site of primarily commercial uses within the traditional, inner-City commercial area of Thorold.

A4.1.3 Downtown Transitional

Lands designated *Downtown Transitional* are located adjacent to the *Downtown* designation and are intended to be used for a mix of residential and commercial uses within existing buildings or through redevelopment that is complementary to the Downtown.

A4.1.4 General Commercial

Lands designated *General Commercial* are located on major roads which are utilized or proposed to be utilized for commercial and service uses on full municipal services.

A4.1.5 Employment

Lands designated Employment are located within urban areas and generally reflect areas for employment uses, such as offices, distribution centres, light industrial operations.

A4.1.6 General Industrial

Lands designated *General Industrial* are located within the urban areas primarily adjacent to the Welland Canal and Provincial highway.

A4.1.7 Institutional

Lands designated *Institutional* are located throughout the urban areas and generally reflect existing places of worship, schools, public uses and similar uses.

A4.1.8 Open Space and Parks

Lands designated *Open Space and Parks* are generally public lands owned by the City, the Niagara Region, the Province of Ontario, Ontario Power Generation, or the Government of Canada. Lands included within this designation also include all major municipal parks and passive parkland and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority lands.

A4.1.9 Greenfield Overlay

Lands designated *Greenfield Overlay* are lands within urban areas that are located outside of the built boundary. In accordance with Provincial and Regional policy, lands designated Greenfield Overlay are to be planned to achieve future population and employment densities a minimum density of 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare.

A4.1.10 Regeneration Overlay

Lands designated *Regeneration Overlay* are existing or former industrial lands that are located within or proximate to the Downtown which have been identified as having potential for redevelopment to other, more compatible land uses.

A4.1.11 The Neighbourhoods of Rolling Meadows Secondary Plan

The Neighbourhoods of Rolling Meadows Secondary Plan was originally approved in 2000 and was updated in 2007 to ensure conformity with the Provincial Growth Plan. This Secondary Plan has been integrated into this Official Plan with no changes to the land uses or development policies.

A4.1.12 The Port Robinson West Secondary Plan

The Port Robinson West Secondary Plan is the last substantial Greenfield area in the City designation for urban development. This Secondary Plan has been prepared concurrently with the new Official Plan and has been integrated into this Plan.

A4.2 RURAL AREA DESIGNATIONS

The land use designations within the *Rural Area* category are described below:

A4.2.1 Agricultural

Lands designated *Agricultural* are lands within prime agricultural areas that are identified as Good General Agricultural areas in the Niagara Regional Official Plan.

A4.2.2 Rural

Lands designated *Rural* are those that are identified as being outside of prime agricultural areas as identified by the Niagara Regional Official Plan.

A4.2.3 Specialty Crop

Lands designated *Specialty Crop*, as identified in the Provincial Greenbelt Plan, are lands within prime agricultural areas that are identified as *Unique Agricultural* areas in the Niagara Regional Official Plan.

A4.2.4 Rural Industrial

The *Rural Industrial* designation applies to lands designated for employment purposes that are located outside of the urban area designations and are not connected to the municipal water or sanitary sewer system.

A4.2.5 Rural Settlement

The *Rural Settlement* designation applies to the historic community of Port Robinson East.

A4.2.6 Aggregate Extraction Area

Lands designated *Aggregate Extraction Area* applies to licensed pit and quarry operations.

A4.2.7 Rural Highway Commercial

Lands designated *Rural Highway Commercial* apply to an existing commercial area located on Regional Road 20.

A4.3 ENVIRONMENTAL AND OPEN SPACE DESIGNATIONS

The land use designations within the *Environmental and Open Space* category are described below:

A4.3.1 Environmental Protection One

The *Environmental Protection One* designation is intended to reflect the designation and policies for the Environmental Protection Area (EPA) located in the Core Natural Heritage Area of the Niagara Regional Official Plan.

A4.3.2 Environmental Protection Two

The *Environmental Protection Two* designation is intended to reflect the designation and policies of the Environmental Conservation Area (ECA) located in the Core Natural Heritage Area of the Niagara Regional Official Plan.

A4.3.3 Environmental Protection Three

The *Environmental Protection Three* designation is intended to reflect key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features identified in the Natural Heritage System and anywhere in the Protected Countryside designation of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005).

A4.3.4 Greenbelt Natural Heritage Overlay

The *Greenbelt Natural Heritage Overlay* designation is intended to reflect lands within the Natural Heritage System of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan (2005).

A4.3.5 Niagara Escarpment Plan Area

This area, located in the north-east and north-west corner of the City is the site of four land use designations under the Niagara Escarpment Plan. These include the *Escarpment Protection Area*, *Escarpment Natural Area*, *Escarpment Rural Area*, and *Mineral Resource Extraction Area* designations. The policies relating to these designations as well as their spatial extent can be found in the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

A4.3.6 Floodplain

Lands designated *Floodplain* constitute regulated areas in accordance with the Conservation Authorities Act and Regulations.

A4.3.7 Natural Recovery Overlay

The Natural Recovery Overlay designation is intended to reflect the areas adjacent to and/or that drain into Marlatt's Pond and/or Lake Gibson that are subject to additional policies intended to facilitate the effective implementation of the Marlatt's Pond/Lake Gibson Natural Recovery Program as approved by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

A5 CONCEPTS GUIDING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AREAS

This Plan was prepared at a time when the Province of Ontario and the Region took a strong leadership role in not only directing more growth to existing urban areas but also in requiring that the development and utilization of urban areas occur in a more sustainable and efficient manner.

The land use designations summarized in Section A4, which collectively comprise the City's Structure are subject to several concepts which have been articulated in Provincial and Regional policy. These concepts are described below and represent primary building blocks, not only of this Plan but of an overall Provincial strategy aimed at using the City's land base more sustainably.

A5.1 URBAN AREA BOUNDARIES

The Urban Area of Thorold is delineated with an Urban Area Boundary. The purpose of the Urban Area Boundary is to spatially identify the limit of urban development on full urban services in Thorold.

A5.2 THE BUILT-UP AREA

The Built-Up Area comprises all lands within the Urban Area Boundaries of Thorold that have been developed into urban uses as of June 2006.

A5.3 GREENFIELD AREAS

Greenfield Areas are undeveloped areas located within the Urban Area Boundary but outside of the Built-Up Area. In the policies and schedules to this Plan, Greenfield Areas are referred to as a Greenfield Overlay. Development occurring within the Greenfield Overlay designation shall be planned to achieve a minimum of 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare. Additional policies concerning the Greenfield Overlay are located in Section B1.11 of this Plan. There are two Greenfield areas in the City that comprise about 90% of the total supply of Greenfield land. These areas are Secondary Plan areas known as The Neighbourhoods of Rolling Meadows and Port Robinson West.

A5.4 INTENSIFICATION TARGET

When referenced in relation to urban land use, intensification means developing urban lands at a higher density than currently exists through redevelopment, infilling, using vacant or underutilized land or building expansion. As per the Growth Plan, the annual minimum intensification target for the Region as a whole is 40 %. The Region has allocated a 15 % intensification target to the City of Thorold.

In order to achieve the minimum intensification target allocated to the City, approximately 300 units will need to be constructed by 2031 within the built boundary. Background studies prepared for this Official Plan have confirmed that the City can meet or exceed this target, primarily through the utilization of vacant lots within the Built-up Area. However, the City of Thorold is characterized by a mix of housing types and has achieved an average housing density of about 20 units per hectare. Given this history of intensification and redevelopment, this Plan has articulated policies for the *Downtown*, *Downtown Transitional* and *Regeneration*

Overlay Designations that provide guidance and direction with respect to intensification.

Where appropriate, intensification areas will be planned to provide a diverse mix of land uses that complement and support the overall residential intensification objective. This includes providing for employment, commercial, recreation, institutional and other compatible uses.

The City shall maintain at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 10 years through residential intensification and redevelopment and, if necessary, lands which are designated and available for residential intensification and redevelopment, and land in draft approved and registered plans. The City will also maintain at all times where new development is to occur, land with servicing capacity sufficient to provide at least a three-year supply of residential units through lands suitably zoned to facilitate residential intensification and redevelopment, and land in draft approved and registered plans.

A5.5 INTENSIFICATION CORRIDORS

Intensification corridors are areas along major roads that have the potential to provide a focus for higher-density mixed use development. In the City of Thorold the areas identified include Front Street, Ormond Street, Pine Street, Clairmont Street and St. David's Road where such streets are located in and adjacent to the historic Downtown. These areas have generally emerged as mixed-use areas characterized by a range of housing types and commercial uses. This Plan contains urban design guidelines specifically for these areas not only in the interest of better utilizing land and buildings but to do so in a way that creates a high quality urban environment that provides diversity in housing and commerce.

A5.6 PHASING

The City supports new development occurring in both greenfield areas and in the built-up areas. In accordance with Section 14.1 of the Regional Official Plan, the City identifies the following measures aimed at ensuring proper and orderly phasing of future development in the City:

- a) a new Secondary Plan has been integrated into this Official Plan for the Greenfield Area of Port Robinson West. This new Secondary Plan is guided by a phasing strategy and identifies priority areas for development in a manner that conforms with the Regional Official Plan and the Provincial Growth Plan;
- b) the extension of existing draft approved plans of subdivision will be subject to a review of servicing availability and coordination with local and regional growth management objectives related to housing and employment;
- c) future greenfield development in the City will be aligned with Regional water, wastewater and transportation master plans and related capital plans and economic development plans including the Gateway Community Improvement Plan;
- d) development occurring in greenfield areas and through intensification and redevelopment within built-up areas will be monitored by the City and summarized on an annual basis;
- e) the City will communicate and work with the Region to ensure that infrastructure phasing is aligned to reflect a balanced approach to development; and,

- f) **the policies of this Plan support intensification within the built-up area, and the City will, through this Plan and through separate studies and initiatives, continue to encourage and support redevelopment of under-utilized urban land in a manner that is complementary and compatible with existing streets and neighbourhoods.**

A5.7 URBAN AREA EXPANSION

Urban area expansion is not necessary to accommodate the future growth anticipated during the time horizon of this Official Plan.

An Urban Area boundary expansion may only be considered outside the Greenbelt Area and may only occur where a municipal comprehensive review completed by the Region has demonstrated that:

- a) Sufficient opportunities to accommodate the forecasted housing growth, through intensification and in designated greenfield areas, using the municipal intensification target and density target are not available within Niagara Region;
- b) The expansion makes sufficient lands available within the Region for a time horizon not exceeding twenty years;
- c) The timing of the expansion and the phasing of development within the Designated Greenfield Areas will not adversely affect the achievement of the municipal intensification and density targets and any other policies of the Regional Official Plan;
- d) The proposed expansion will meet the requirements of the Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan. Settlement areas outside of the Greenbelt area are not permitted to expand into the Greenbelt. Expansions within either plan area are not encouraged, and any proposal for expansion within these areas is subject to the following provisions:
 - i) Expansions to areas identified as “Towns and Villages” within the Greenbelt Plan may only be considered pursuant to the Greenbelt Plan and subject to policy 3.4.2.5 of the Greenbelt Plan;
 - ii) Expansions to areas identified as “minor urban centre” or “urban area” in the Niagara Escarpment Plan require an amendment to the Niagara Escarpment Plan. Pursuant to the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act;
 - iii) Such an amendment may not be considered until the commencement of the Provincial reviews of the Niagara Escarpment Plan Review and/or the Greenbelt Plan;
- e) Both regional and local existing and planned infrastructure and public service facilities required to accommodate the proposed expansion can be provided in a financially and environmentally sustainable manner which protects public health and safety over their life cycle;

- f) In prime agricultural areas:
 - i) The lands do not comprise speciality crop areas.
 - ii) Alternative locations have been evaluated and,
 - 1. There are no reasonable alternatives that avoid prime agricultural areas.
 - 2. There are no reasonable alternatives on lower priority agricultural land in prime agricultural areas.
- g) Impacts from expanding Urban Areas on agricultural operations which are adjacent or close to the settlement areas are mitigated to the extent feasible;
- h) In determining the most appropriate location for expansions to boundaries of Urban Areas, the Environmental Policies in Section Seven of the Regional Official Plan are applied; and,
- i) Where expansion of an Urban Area is proposed the City will plan to maintain or move significantly towards a minimum of one full-time job per three residents within or in the immediate vicinity of the settlement area.
- j) The expansion to the settlement area is in compliance with the minimum distance separation formulae.

An application for an Urban Area boundary expansion may be initiated by the City independent of the five year cycle for review and updating of the Regional Official Plan where:

- a) The application is based on a municipal comprehensive review prepared by the City subsequent to or in conjunction with a Regional comprehensive review in conformity with Sub-section 4.6 of the Regional Official Plan; and,
- b) The local comprehensive review is in conformity with the policies of this Plan and of the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and comprehensively applies the Policies of those Plans.

A5.8 GATEWAY ECONOMIC CENTRE

The Gateway Economic Centre is a term used to describe the Provincially significant employment land base that has been identified in the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and collectively represents the employment lands in Thorold together with the neighbouring Cities of Welland and Port Colborne. These employment lands have Provincial importance given their proximity to the United States border as well as Highway 406, rail lines, the Welland Canal, Brock University and the City of St. Catharines, which is the defined Growth Centre for the Niagara Region. Collectively these lands form part of the City's Community Improvement Planning Area.