

NIAGARA RESEARCH AND PLANNING COUNCIL LIVING IN NIAGARA – 2011 REPORT



12 Sectors, 13 Overall Opportunities Suggested for Action, and 65 Suggested Action Steps

OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES SUGGESTED FOR ACTION

The following are overall action areas identified in the *Living in Niagara – 2011* report, and suggested in interviews with community expert opinion leaders. Sector-specific Suggested Action Steps are listed on the following four pages. For the data, tables and charts behind the Suggested Action Steps, link to the full *Living in Niagara – 2011* report at www.nrapc.com.

- 1. Increase planning and coordination within sectors**
Coordination, planning and partnerships are emerging and evident within many of the 12 sectors. Some planning efforts are well-established and have moved toward actionable and measurable initiatives. Some show evidence of beginning Niagara-wide planning and partnerships.
- 2. Increase inter-sectoral development and partnerships**
There could be more inter-sectoral development, planning and partnerships for mutual benefit for Niagara.
- 3. Increase knowledge exchange capacity building**
The opportunity and community support for horizontal knowledge exchange, current information and evidence is vital to positive development in all sectors, as well as to inform all indicators covered in this report.
- 4. Reduce poverty** Poverty persists in Niagara and is evident across all sectors. Focusing on strengthening Niagara's investments in reducing poverty will benefit all of Niagara. All sectors contribute to the economy in varying degrees and drive increased prosperity for the region.
- 5. Strengthen services and approaches for mental health**
Strengthen the continuum of mental health care to include linkages between health promotion, risk prevention, treatment and care across the region and across the lifespan.
- 6. Make Niagara age friendly for all ages** Continue to support the work of creating a region that is age-friendly, accessible and inclusive of all ages.
- 7. Strengthen and acknowledge the not-for-profit sector**
This sector contributes a great deal to the economy and quality of life by creating economic activity, and giving time, talents and leadership. This contribution should be described, quantified and considered in any economic development planning.
- 8. Create quality employment opportunities and a coordinated economic strategy for Niagara** Quality employment opportunities, increased innovation, and a coordinated economic development strategy are essential for quality of life and growth for Niagara.
- 9. Focus on children and youth** Investment in children and youth and their health, education, well-being and resiliency is essential and vital for Niagara's future.
- 10. Focus on seniors and the aging population** The number of seniors in Niagara is growing. Their well-being, as well as their potential for contribution as leaders and citizens needs to be better described.
- 11. Inventory, measure and protect the natural assets of Niagara** We have rich natural assets and we need to describe, measure, and monitor their status in order to plan for future growth and sustainability.
- 12. Create social spaces** Create actual, virtual and relational spaces where community dialogue and innovative action strategies can be nurtured. An inclusive approach to community engagement and development is essential for this process.
- 13. Strengthen and increase the assets of Niagara** Niagara has many assets (human and natural) and emerging strategies to make positive change. Now is the time to connect and innovatively link all those positive assets to make a quantum leap for Niagara.

LIVING IN NIAGARA – 2011 REPORT: 65 SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS

The 65 Suggested Action Steps below are included in the *Living in Niagara – 2011* report. These Suggested Action Steps emerged from the community-driven research process behind the report; they are informed by front-line community experts in each of the 12 sectors of the report.

In creating the report, relevant, reliable Niagara-focused data was gathered by the *Niagara Research and Planning Council* research team. The data was reviewed by *Community Expert Opinion Leaders* (at least 3 people for each of the 12 sectors of the report), and then discussions occurred between the researchers and those front-line community experts, to arrive at the Suggested Action Steps for each Sector.

SECTOR NUMBER	NIAGARA SECTOR NAME	SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS
1	Arts, Culture and Heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a system to keep the Niagara inventory of cultural assets current, well-described and available to the public. 2. Build a coordinated system to secure consistent and sustainable funding for arts, culture and heritage in Niagara. 3. Describe and monitor the impact of this sector as an economic driver in Niagara as well as its impact on other sectors. 4. Support the actionable goals and objectives as outlined in the Niagara Culture Plan and Sustainable Niagara's Goal Areas.
2	Transportation and Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to develop the <i>Regional Niagara Transportation Strategy</i> with a focus on accessibility and options for public transportation linkages across Niagara. 2. Fine-tune the inter-municipal transportation system for students to better reflect their variant study schedules. 3. Minimize costs of transportation for citizens to get around Niagara. 4. Support long-term transportation capacity planning.
3	The Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create publicly-released environmental report card measures that are linked to established targets for change. 2. Support a sustainable Niagara, and take into account the environment in cross-sectoral decisions. 3. Coordinate and stimulate environmental research with academic and community partners. 4. Create a plan and action steps to increase recycling rates, decrease water use and reduce sewer bypass rates. 5. Maintain the environmental assets inventory and adopt a plan to protect these assets. 6. Support sustainable expansion of agri-tourism, value-added agriculture and agri-food innovation in Niagara.
4	Learning and Education (continued on next page)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to support education organizations and the community to increase post-secondary completion rates in Niagara. 2. Support work being done to facilitate accessible pathways across education streams, institutions (college to university; university to college) and programs. 3. Maintain the advances made in our school systems in testing and EQAO achievement results. 4. In collaboration with adult literacy partners, undertake and resource a comprehensive and collaborative regional and area mapping of current literacy rates and issues and set new targets for Niagara-wide action.

SECTOR NUMBER	NIAGARA SECTOR NAME	SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS
4	Learning and Education (continued)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Continue to embrace full-day kindergarten as part of a broader transition toward a comprehensive early learning and childcare system to meet the needs of Niagara families and children. 6. Describe and analyze the impact of full-day kindergarten on children; families; employment; and Niagara's economy. 7. Support the approaches and actions outlined in the four pillars of the <i>Niagara Early Years Planning Council</i> strategy: families are strong, stable and connected; children are healthy; children are learning; and children are safe. 8. Explore <i>The Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets Model</i> across sectors, to prepare youth to create their own healthy future.
5	Housing and Shelter	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the gains that have been made in addressing youth homelessness through creation of a Niagara-wide, focused sustainability plan. 2. Develop specialized and sustainable strategies to assist unique populations with shelter and housing needs. This includes low-income seniors, individuals, families, and those at high risk of homelessness. 3. Expand and resource supported housing arrangements for seniors, and persons with disabilities and/or mental health challenges (those not requiring 24 hour supervision). 4. Develop cross-sectoral collaboration that emphasizes the value of seniors aging in their own homes. 5. Create Niagara-wide cross-sectoral linkages between initiatives to assist women requiring housing because of poverty and/or domestic violence, poverty reduction action plans, and the four pillars of the <i>Niagara Early Years Planning Council Strategy</i>: families are strong, stable and connected; children are healthy; children are learning; and children are safe.
6	Crime, Safety and Security	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to expand the community policing program and intensify efforts to engage the public, youth and other sectors as partners and leaders in initiatives for community safety. 2. Continue to develop the relationships and jurisdictional connections that are clear and well linked in emergency management. 3. Continue to support the work of community groups and agencies involved in domestic violence, by ensuring there is a Niagara-wide system of accessible services and safe shelters. 4. Continue to develop partnered effective public awareness strategies and campaigns regarding key safety and security issues (eg. Think and Drive). 5. Support the work of the <i>Niagara Prosperity Initiative</i> in addressing the roots of poverty in our community.
7	Health and Wellness (continued on next page)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise public awareness of the role of our <i>Community Health Centers</i> and the primary health care services in Niagara. This approach would make better use of skills and resources throughout the entire health services delivery continuum, including hospitals and emergency services. 2. Engage the community of Niagara in the development of strategies to enhance public trust and confidence in our region's health care system and its leadership.

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7	Health and Wellness (continued)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Strengthen the links between services across all sectors that affect the health of the elderly. 4. Continue to develop intersectoral collaboration among mental health organizations and service providers in Niagara. 5. Encourage inclusion of mental health anti-stigma principles in planning across all human service areas in Niagara. 6. Support the evidence-based planning approach of the <i>Niagara Suicide Prevention Coalition</i>.
8	Work and Employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the work of economic development partners to attract employers with sustainable employment, and quality job opportunities for Niagara. 2. Advocate for government policies and resources that promote economic prosperity. 3. Support creation of a culture that helps youth to develop entrepreneurial skills, creativity and innovation. 4. In collaboration with adult literacy partners, undertake and resource a comprehensive and collaborative regional and area mapping of current literacy rates and issues and set new targets for Niagara-wide action. 5. Measure and describe the not-for-profit sector of Niagara's workforce in terms of its economic impact.
9	Economic Development, Poverty and Prosperity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt an action plan that recognizes that poverty is complex and its amelioration requires a system of approaches, both at the macro (regional) level and micro (neighbourhood) level. 2. Focus on policy change and infrastructure improvements to ensure a living income above the poverty line for people receiving social assistance. Align this safety net with current realities of labour market and work trends. 3. Base community-wide dynamic planning on tracking and analysis of the 100 indicators of poverty as identified in the report "A Legacy of Poverty? Addressing Cycles of Poverty and the Impact on Child Health in Niagara Region". 4. Stabilize commitments to child care and core human services for people living in poverty in Niagara. 5. Structure government response to poverty reduction on the basis of prevailing evidence, community involvement and ideas. 6. Link economic growth and development strategies to community assets such as: adequate, safe and affordable housing, quality employment, access to health care services, education, and transportation. 7. Develop ways to include the perspectives and utilize the talents and contributions of those living in poverty. 8. Extend entrepreneurial and innovative thinking to human services planning and delivery. 9. Develop new leadership approaches and innovative ideas for prosperity development in Niagara. 10. Support initiatives to build linkages between private enterprise and the 'for social profit' sector.

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10	Belonging, Volunteering, Giving and Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to develop a Niagara-wide culture of involving citizens in civic engagement, and encouraging people to take action on the suggestions for each of the sectors outlined in <i>Living in Niagara – 2011</i>, as well as those identified by the <i>Sustainable Niagara</i> plan. 2. Acknowledge and measure non-paid, not-for profit work and its impact on Niagara's individuals, organizations and the economy.
11	Getting Started	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to describe the impact of the <i>Niagara Children's Charter</i> on the lives of children, families, agencies and the community. 2. Create a forum that includes researchers, community members and academics, along with public policy experts to identify opportunities to leverage our Niagara-specific data on immigration, specifically as it relates to the social and economic health of the Niagara Region. 3. Actively involve and inform parents about their critical role in actualizing the areas identified by the <i>Early Years Niagara Planning Council</i> to ensure that: children are learning, healthy and safe; and families are strong, stable and connected. 4. Create an intersectoral strategy for, and dedicate resources to attracting and retaining youth through innovative employment and leadership opportunities.
12	Recreation and Sports	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Measure, acknowledge and nurture the economic impact of this sector on Niagara, including the volunteer leadership and contributions. 2. Encourage more formal partnerships between this sector and leaders in tourism to capture opportunities for economic impact in Niagara. 3. Develop intersectoral cooperation to plan together for big projects to benefit Niagara. 4. Increase access to sports and recreation for all ages, as well as for family-shared types of recreation. 5. Create a planning framework to bring all principals in the sector together to answer key questions, such as: What are we doing? How are we doing? Are there enough opportunities, for whom and where? What are we doing to increase access and opportunities, and is it working? 6. Increase civic engagement by developing and facilitating leadership skills and capacity for all ages, through recreation and sports.



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