

Living in Niagara-2017 report: 62 Suggested Action Steps across 12 Sectors

The Living in Niagara report is a triennial measure of quality of life in Niagara, across 12 Sectors that align with the *Social Determinants of Health*¹. The report and its Sectors are described, built, and owned by the Niagara-wide community. It is produced by Niagara Connects, a Niagara-wide network of people working together to plan, learn, innovate and lead community action toward a stronger future for Niagara.

The report, and its companion tool www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com (NKE), are cornerstones in building a culture of evidence-informed planning for Niagara. The process of building the report weaves networks among diverse partners working together to intentionally gather, share and record data, information and knowledge. These partners agree on Suggested Action Steps to guide focused planning and decision-making.

For more information about the process of constructing the Living in Niagara report, download the Purpose, Format and Construction Methodology document at: http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/10/2017-09-29_Living-in-Niagara-Report_Purpose_Format_Methodology-FINAL-2.pdf

The Living in Niagara-2017 report is available in two formats:

- The print (summary) version provides an overview of findings in and across the 12 Living in Niagara Sectors: http://www.livinginniagarareport.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/LivingInNiagaraReport_2017_final.pdf
- The online version: www.livinginniagarareport.com provides Measures (data, statistics, reports, analysis) for report Indicators within each of the 12 Sectors.

The following pages provide an overview of a total of 62 Suggested Action Steps across the 12 Sectors of the Living in Niagara-2017 report; and the Main Action Theme Arising in each Sector.

Living in Niagara Sector	Living in Niagara-2017 report Action Theme Arising by Sector	Living in Niagara-2017 Report Suggested Action Steps by Sector
Arts, Culture and Heritage	<p>Track Progress and Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather, share and learn from evidence that shows investment in Arts, Culture and Heritage is essential to advance Niagara's social and economic health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in developing and beginning to talk together about metrics and evaluation that track progress and impact of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector in Niagara. This will support evidence-informed decision-making and enable comparisons over time. Strengthen existing partnerships and identify opportunities to build new ones within Arts, Culture and Heritage networks in Niagara, by engaging Sector players in working together to build a connectivity map. Acknowledge and provide evidence about how investment in Arts, Culture and Heritage is an essential element in building up Niagara's social health and economy. Create an action plan to address barriers that exist to people being able to access Arts, Culture and Heritage activities and programming in Niagara. Encourage local leadership to invest directly into an independent entity that builds the overall capacity of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector in Niagara.

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Community Belonging	<p>Include and Connect People, with a focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational, reciprocal mentoring • Health benefits of inclusion • The socio-economic impact of charitable, non-profit and volunteer activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support inter-sectoral collaboration to address inequality, through weaving together data from existing initiatives. This will illuminate innovative solutions to reduce or remove barriers so that people can participate in the economy and community. • Examine results of research to describe precarious employment in Niagara from the perspective of how it affects people's ability to engage with the community. • Build on inter-generational initiatives already underway, to better connect youth and older people through shared learning, reciprocal mentoring opportunities and social connections. • Gather information to describe the socio-economic breadth and depth of the charitable and non-profit sectors in Niagara, including the impact of volunteers. • Describe the impacts of social isolation on health and wellbeing in Niagara.

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Crime, Safety and Security	<p>Protect Community Safety through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification and timely access to mental health and addictions services • Continuing to build inter-agency partnerships that combine complementary front-line skills to de-escalate emergency situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen impact of the Niagara Youth Court Screening Initiative (NYCSI) tool in St. Catharines and Welland, by emphasizing timely access to mental health and addictions services required by screened individuals. • Build on the benefits of integration between law enforcement and agency partners, to achieve balance between community safety measures and early identification of vulnerable individuals who require mental health and addictions services. • Continue to improve our understanding of the direct role factors such as food insecurity, lack of affordable housing, employment precarity and under-employment play in child abuse and domestic violence. This includes the impact lack of financial resources has on people remaining in unsafe domestic situations. • Support the work of the Niagara Suicide Prevention Coalition to decrease traumatic outcomes for individuals and families dealing with mental health and addictions challenges. • In alignment with Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter Principles, enhance working relationships between health system and social service organizations, to ensure a continuum of responsive services is available to meet the needs and requirements of individuals facing mental health and addictions challenges. • Pay attention to efforts underway to describe human trafficking in Niagara and take action to reduce its effects on individuals and the community.

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Economic Prosperity	<p>Strengthen Niagara's Trajectory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #Rethink Niagara by weaving together data to reduce or remove barriers so that more people are able to build up their own ability to be financially secure, and to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create the conditions for increasing quality of jobs and productivity, and growing the talent pool that attracts businesses to Niagara. Do this by focusing on building a continuum of opportunity that allows people to get to the next level of employment and advance on career pathways. • Continue to engage Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in building a more inclusive Niagara in all aspects, by working together to increase respect, understanding, and participation of Indigenous people in community, social and economic relationships. • Pay attention to new ways people in Niagara are building economic prosperity, through increasing numbers of Independent Workers; online connectivity and global digital reach; social enterprise; and demographic trends that support inclusivity, social succession and inter-generational mentoring and investment. • Build on Data and Knowledge Niagara Reference Group work to describe how data is being used by people, organizations, businesses and networks in Niagara. • Advance #Rethink Niagara by weaving together data from existing initiatives, to remove or reduce barriers so that people can participate in the economy and have the capacity to be able to build up their own financial security.

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The Environment	<p>Increase Resilience Through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy, secure food systems • Empowering people to mitigate climate effects • Measures of progress that support a balanced approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support work underway to build socio-economic resilience for Niagara in the face of advancing climate impacts, such as development of a regional agriculture irrigation strategy that optimizes farmers' ability to efficiently respond to drought impacts. • Gather diverse players working in the area of the environment in Niagara, to develop measures of progress that support a balanced approach to creating resiliency for a stronger future. Align this work with measuring progress toward implementing recommended actions from the various Climate Action and Sustainability Action Plans previously published in the region. • Describe the Niagara-wide continuum of planning for green space, tree planting to improve air quality, and valuing our region's natural capital. Opportunities exist to empower people in Niagara to see they can strengthen their own future and be more connected to their community by taking everyday actions to contribute to a healthy environment. • Gather information to understand the Niagara-wide landscape for biodiversity preservation and recovery. This will show biodiversity's vital role in economic and social development, and help planning in Niagara to align with provincial and national strategies related to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. • Identify opportunities arising from Niagara food systems mapping completed in 2015-2016, to strengthen the ways a healthy secure sustainable food system contributes to a stronger future for Niagara.

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Health and Wellness	<p>Promote Wellness, with a focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obesity • Mental health and addictions • Equitable access to community and health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Niagara Opioid Overdose Prevention and Communication Network efforts to address growing numbers of opioid cases in Niagara and raise awareness of harm reduction resources. • Intentionally build and strengthen partnerships between doctors, nurse practitioners, health sector agencies and community-based agencies, with a focus on promotion of wellness, and prevention of illness. • Strengthen the business case for the Integrated Community Lead model of care. Incentivize consistency in planning for transitions to services. • Address ageism in Niagara by shifting the story about older people to a true picture of what it means to grow older in today’s context. Recognize these people as contributors to supporting the health care system and the overall wellbeing of the community. • Build on work underway to improve access and programming experiences for those children and youth and their families who are seeking mental health supports. Continue to strengthen partnerships between core mental health service agencies for children and youth and other community partners, to implement the provincial Moving on Mental Health plan in Niagara.

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Housing and Shelter	<p>Strengthen Housing Choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share data and measurements among groups addressing various aspects of housing and homelessness • Offer a spectrum of housing options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to HEART project suggestions for patient-centered health system reforms that will impact homeless individuals in Niagara, by reducing barriers to access, strengthening systems of support, and creating the conditions for health equity. • Strengthen linkages through sharing of data and measurements between groups addressing aspects of complex issues of housing and homelessness in Niagara, including the A Home for All Task Force, the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter Action Network, the Age-Friendly Niagara Network and the Coalition to End Violence Against Women. • Develop and understand return on investment in the housing and homelessness sector by weaving together information gathered through HIFIS and other system data. HIFIS (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System) was launched in 2017 as a data collection and case management tool for all providers of homelessness services in Niagara. • Identify creative opportunities to offer a spectrum of housing options, including incentives for developers to create these options. • Focus on reducing ongoing long wait lists for affordable housing in Niagara.

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Learning and Education	<p>Emphasize Lifelong Learning, with a focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early learning and development with referrals to specialized services • Building up individuals' resilience and workplace competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to focus on increasing secondary school and post-secondary graduation rates, and student access to experiential and work-integrated learning opportunities. • Take a holistic approach to reducing barriers to people achieving post-secondary education, by building awareness of the opportunity at an early age. Address complex factors affecting individual student success, including lack of access to resources such as adequate nutrition, technology and necessities of life. • Support development of a comprehensive picture of adult literacy in its modern forms at the neighbourhood level in Niagara, to inform coordinated community planning for increased individual, family and neighbourhood prosperity. • Strengthen work underway to promote mental wellness throughout the lifespan in Niagara, as a critical success factor in developing a resilient community and productive workforce. • Emphasize access to a range of lifelong learning and education options, to enhance people's capacity to be adaptable in the modern workplace, and to live meaningful lives at all ages.

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People Getting Started	<p>Empower Children, Youth, and Newcomers starting out, through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion • Equitable access to mental health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance efforts to strengthen newcomer integration in Niagara, through cultural and language facilitation; access to mental health services; empowerment of women; and increasing inclusion. • Augment collaborative work being done to better understand the importance of infant mental health; to increase children’s mental health well-being; and to increase access to mental health services by integrating these efforts with the broader work of the Niagara Mental Health and Addictions Charter Action Network. • When examining evidence related to retention of people in the 35-44 age cohort, look through the lenses of improving quality of jobs, and getting started as a young family in Niagara. • Focus on an upstream approach to providing equitable access to mental health services for everyone in Niagara, including newcomers who require language– and culturally–appropriate supports. • Build on momentum from collaborative work done by the Niagara Refugee Assistance Committee, to support Syrian refugee settlement.

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Recreation and Sports	<p>Affirm Socio-Economic Benefits of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People having access to recreation and sport activities and facilities • Volunteer activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the Data and Knowledge Niagara Reference Group and Niagara Connects to work with Canada Summer Games 2021 organizers to identify opportunities to gather, share and learn from event-related data. This will help to measure the Games’ impact, and support planning for the future. • Build our understanding of the time and expertise people invest in volunteering to support sport activity; the importance of volunteering to the recreation and sports ecosystem in Niagara; and how volunteering in recreation and sports relates to the broader landscape of volunteer activity in the region. • Pay attention to national data showing that women are far less likely to participate in sport than men, and mothers’ participation in sport has a positive effect on children’s participation rate. Relate this to Niagara efforts to promote healthy, active lifestyles to reduce and prevent childhood overweight and obesity. • Support making sport programs accessible for families living on low income. National data shows that Canadian families spend on average \$953 annually for one child to play in organized sport. • Focus on fun, fair play, and inclusive values to encourage people of all ages to enjoy the benefits, competencies and sense of belonging that come from participating in recreation and sport activities.

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Transportation and Mobility	<p>Improve Transportation Choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in what’s equitable and accessible for people in Niagara • Further develop consolidated transit, to align with the implementation of daily GO train service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to how data is collected, shared, used, and leveraged to inform next steps for Transportation Demand and System Management elements of the 2017 Niagara Region Transportation Master Plan (TMP). • Ensure implementation of actions identified in the 2017 Niagara Region Transportation Master Plan (TMP). Consider creating a Transportation Demand Management/ System Management position to coordinate ongoing implementation of the TMP. • Further develop consolidated transit service in the Niagara region, including future transit infrastructure improvements that align with implementation of daily GO train service. • Continue to address road safety behaviors with a focus on reducing distracted and impaired driving. • Follow through on the 2017 TMP focus on Transportation Choice by ensuring investments around choice align with what’s accessible for people in Niagara. • Build on work already done to systematically increase access to health and human services for vulnerable people in Niagara, by continuing to invest in advancing the <i>Ride Share</i> and <i>Getting There</i> models.

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Work and Employment	<p>Increase Quality of Jobs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a continuum of opportunity that allows people to advance to the next level of employment • Grow the talent pool that attracts business to Niagara • Map adult literacy in the context of modern-day workplace competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support collaborative data-sharing and planning to help strengthen quality of jobs and reduce employment precarity in Niagara. • Advance work being done to build a map of Niagara that describes adult literacy rates in the context of modern-day workplace competencies. • Encourage students and jobseekers to see entrepreneurship as a viable career path or as a shorter-term option that may lead to full-time employment. • Build upon work already done to describe the relationship between workplace mental wellness and productivity in the Niagara context. • Pay attention to changes made through the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy, to ensure community members are informed so that they are able to leverage increased funding for OSAP, child care, the energy support program and health benefits for youth up to age 24.

Reference

¹ **Social Determinants of Health (SDH)** are social and economic factors that influence people’s health. (*Commission on Social Determinants of Health, World Health Organization, 2008*)