

Appendix 18.1 - EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

SETTLEMENT AREA BOUNDARY REVIEW (SABR)

At the time of adopting a new Official Plan, the Region can expand or adjust settlement boundaries. Outside of a new Official Plan, there are limited opportunities to do so.

The Region has 3 draft criteria processes included in this section, covering:

- Urban Area Boundary Expansions, for urban areas;
- Rural Settlement Boundary Expansions, for areas designated as rural settlements or hamlets; and
- Technical Mapping Update, to fix mapping errors and similar matters.

Key considerations are as follows:

- The Region has exclusive jurisdiction to make decisions over settlement area boundaries.
- The need for a settlement area boundary expansion is determined through the Land Needs Assessment (LNA), described in **Appendix 3.2**, which sets out the amount of the land required to accommodate growth for each local municipality.
- The draft criteria to evaluate boundary expansions is based on the requirements of the *Provincial Policy Statement, 2020* ("PPS") and *Growth Plan*. The Region's decision on expansions must conform to, or be consistent with, those documents.
- The Region is considering all boundary requests received from private owners and local Council endorsed preferences.
- In order to ensure responsible growth, the Region must review the entire settlement area boundary of a candidate municipality to determine the most appropriate location for expansion.
- **The criteria included is draft. The Region will receive feedback for consideration. No boundary recommendations are made at this time.**

Integration Guide for Sub-sections Reported in PDS 17-2021			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Regional Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Archaeology
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Employment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Land Needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SABR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Aggregates
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Natural Heritage incl.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water Systems Options
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	District/Secondary Plans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Watershed Planning

Integration Guide for Sub-sections Reported in PDS 17-2021	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Design	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate Change

The *Growth Plan* directs where and how growth will occur in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Concentrating development within urban areas and prioritizing intensification will ensure more efficient use of land. The *Growth Plan* requires municipalities review its available land within existing urban boundaries to more efficiently direct investment and development.

The *PPS* requires that municipalities maintain the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum of 15 years through residential intensification and redevelopment.

Both the *PPS* and *Growth Plan* have specific policies directing how and when boundary expansions may occur. Primarily, settlement area boundary expansions occur through a Municipal Comprehensive Review (“MCR”) process. In Niagara’s case, the MCR is the new Niagara Official Plan.

The SABR process must be considered with the Regional Structure and LNA, amongst other Regional work. It cannot be considered independently.

The Regional Structure provides strategic growth areas where more significant growth will be directed, intensification rates for built-up areas where redevelopment and infilling will occur, and Designated Greenfield Areas where new growth on vacant lands can be planned comprehensively.

The land need of a municipality is determined using a LNA Methodology issued by the Province. Applying the Provincial methodology sets out the amount of land needed to accommodate the forecasted growth to 2051.

The LNA sets out whether a local municipality requires additional lands (or has excess lands) to accommodate forecasted growth.

If a municipality does not have enough land available to accommodate its growth, it may be eligible for an urban area boundary expansion.¹

¹ Regardless of need, expansions in to the Greenbelt Plan specialty crop area are not eligible for boundary expansions.

The above discussion relates to the threshold requirement of “need” for an expansion. If this need is met, a boundary expansion requires significant additional justification.

This additional justification is covered in the Region’s draft expansion criteria and process. The criteria is based on the policies of the *PPS* and *Growth Plan*.

In addition to the “need” test, the criteria includes consideration of the following, among others:

- existing and planned infrastructure and transportation capacity and proximity
- environmental constraints
- the agricultural area (including Minimum Distance Separation formulae and soil class)
- potential impacts to the agri-food network
- how the proposed additional lands will contribute to a complete community

As of writing, in March 2021, the Region has received approximately 42 urban area boundary expansion requests. These requests will be considered, along with the Region’s review of additional potential locations that may not have been requested.

The Region must review the full extent of urban area boundaries for municipalities that do not have enough land as identified through the LNA. This complete review ensures boundaries are expanded in the most appropriate location.

The urban area boundary expansion criteria and process is attached as **Appendix 18.2**. The draft was circulated to local municipal planners in February 2021 for review and feedback. Accordingly, some adjustments were made, as provided in the attached document.

The Region will continue to receive input on the draft criteria and will refine as needed following this Report.

The following is a guide to the Region’s SABR program over the coming months:

2021	Task
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare process administration.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare mapping for municipalities eligible for Urban Area Boundary Review.

2021	Task
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize review team.
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and organize all requests. • Technical exercise to review applicable requests with review team. • Consultation with local municipal planning staff.
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive Local Council endorsements. • Any additional consultation with local municipal staff on findings and recommendations.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize process and recommendations to be included in next Niagara Official Plan report.

In addition to the consideration of urban area boundary expansion discussed above, the Region has developed criteria for rural settlement (hamlet) boundary expansions, attached as **Appendix 18.3**.

Provincial policies sets out that rural settlement areas should not be the focus of growth and therefore rural settlement boundary expansions will be limited. As of writing, in March 2021, the Region has received approximately 22 rural settlement boundary expansion requests.

The Region is working with municipalities that will likely have a need for rural settlement area boundary expansions: Wainfleet and West Lincoln. These municipalities have rural settlement areas outside of the *Greenbelt Plan* area.

For Wainfleet, growth is primarily allocated to its rural settlement areas.

For West Lincoln, the majority of its growth will be directed to Smithville as its only urban area. A small portion of growth will be directed to its rural settlement areas.

The *Growth Plan* also includes policies that allow municipalities to consider a boundary expansion “in advance of” an MCR process, subject to specific criteria. Policies related to this process will be included in the NOP in conformity with the Growth Plan. These policies are found in the Regional Structure section in **Appendix 4.3**.

A municipality may also consider boundary adjustments outside of a MCR process where the result is no net increase in land within settlement areas.

Boundary expansions in advance of an MCR, and adjustments, require extensive study and justification. For this reason, they must be undertaken carefully and under precise circumstances.

The Region is currently in its MCR process. It has not received any of the above-noted requests and, should one be received, it would not process it since such request is not “in advance of” an MCR. All boundary requests can be processed as part of the existing MCR, i.e. the Official Plan process itself.

In addition to the settlement boundary expansions, the Region is considering technical mapping updates. This is needed to fix mapping errors to align Regional and local urban area boundary mapping.

The Region developed criteria for considering technical mapping updates. It includes a GIS-based mapping exercise to identify and fix the errors.

The technical exercise is not directly related to the SABR expansion process as it is not intended for growth management purposes. This is an administrative or housekeeping exercise, but as it deals with urban area boundaries, is being reported with SABR-related matters.

Regional staff are presently working with local municipal planning staff to complete this technical exercise. Additional information on the criteria and process are found in **Appendix 18.4.**

The Region will continue to accept requests for settlement area boundary expansion following this Report, up until July 2, 2021. Following this date, the Region will Report on the requests and will not review late requests for that Report.

Policies related to the SABR are included with the Regional Structure policies at **Appendix 4.3.**