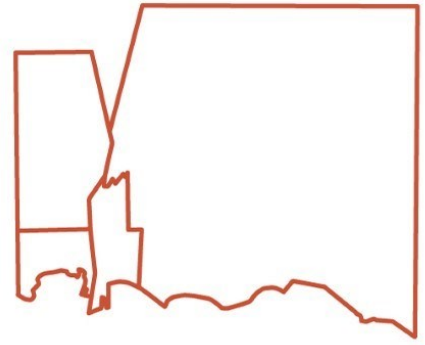




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Appendix A



PORT COLBORNE

WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW



2024/2025 Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review

City of Port Colborne

Final Report

June 23, 2025

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1. Introduction

The City of Port Colborne retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., Dr. Robert J. Williams and Dr. Zachary Spicer, hereinafter referred to as the Consultant Team, to conduct a comprehensive and independent Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review (C.C.W.B.R.).

The primary purpose of the study was to prepare Port Colborne's City Council to make decisions on whether to maintain the existing electoral structure or to make changes. This report provides two final options for City Council to consider based upon analysis, evaluation, research, and two rounds of public consultations with the residents and interested parties of Port Colborne. The Consultant Team recommends that City Council adopt one of the final options for implementation ahead of the 2026 municipal election.

The review is premised on the democratic expectation that Port Colborne's City Council would provide effective and equitable representation to residents, and its members would be elected in a system that is based on an accurate reflection of the contemporary and forecast distribution of communities and population across the City.

2. Study Objective

The project had several key objectives:

- Develop a clear understanding of the present electoral system, including its origins and operations as a system of representation;
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the present electoral system based on guiding principles adopted for the study;
- Develop and conduct an appropriate consultation process in accordance with Port Colborne's public engagement practices to ensure community support for the review and its outcome;
- Prepare population projections for the development and evaluation of alternative electoral structures for the 2026, 2030, and 2034 municipal elections; and
- Deliver a report that will set out recommended alternative council ward boundaries to ensure effective and equitable electoral arrangements for Port Colborne, based on the principles identified.



In November 2024, the Consultant Team prepared a series of Discussion Papers (available on the City's Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review webpage [¹]) that set out:

- The parameters and purpose for the review;
- The basic electoral arrangements in Port Colborne;
- Council's legislative authority to modify electoral arrangements in the City; and
- An initial assessment of the City's current ward boundary system.

Discussion Paper E provided a set of guiding principles that informed the study and the work of the Consultant Team, as follows:

- Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards (referred to as the "population parity" principle);
- Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities (referred to as the "community of interest" principle); and
- Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries (referred to as the "natural boundaries" principle).

Taken together, these principles will contribute to achieving the overarching principle of effective representation.

Each principle is described in detail in Discussion Paper E (see footnote 1). It should be noted that the population parity principle will be addressed in terms of two themes: the present population distribution among the wards (present population) and the future population distribution among the wards (population trends) that are combined to evaluate the achievement of population parity.

The purpose of this Final Report is to provide:

- A summary of the work completed;
- A summary of the information received from the public engagement sessions and tools, such as the surveys and website; and
- Final ward boundary options for City Council's consideration.

[¹] www.portcolborne.ca/wbr



3. Context

The basic requirement for any electoral system in a representative democracy is to establish measures to determine the people who will constitute the governmental body that makes decisions on behalf of electors. Representation in Canada is organized around geographic areas, units referred to as constituencies in the federal and provincial parliaments, and typically as wards at the municipal level, as is the case in the City of Port Colborne.

There are nine members of Port Colborne's City Council comprising the mayor (elected at-large) and eight councillors (two elected per ward). This system has been in place in the City since 1969, after a brief period in the 1960s when Council was elected in a three-ward configuration. Reviews of the ward system have been conducted by staff and electoral review committees in 2005, 2009, 2013, and 2014. The 2009 review led to minor boundary changes in Wards 2 and 4, but the overall configuration has not been modified.

A deputy mayor is assigned from among the current councillors on a rotating basis for a six-month period, as authorized by City Council's Procedural By-law. Rotation occurs in order of Ward 1 through Ward 4 and by the "seniority" of the councillors. The City is represented on Niagara Regional Council by the mayor and by one Regional councillor elected at-large who does not sit on the City Council.

At the time of the 2014 review, Port Colborne had a population of approximately 18,400 (2011 Census). Since then, the City's population has grown by almost 3,000, to 21,290 by 2025.

The Consultant Team approached this review with a view to maintaining the strengths of the existing system, while targeting potential revisions arising from its analysis and the evaluations collected in consultations with the community. As a result, the team had three main goals throughout the project:

- Correcting population disparities between certain wards now and into the future, while making minimal changes to wards that are providing for parity and strong representation;
- Rationalizing boundary lines where needed, ensuring that they follow natural and identifiable infrastructure; and



- Exploring options to provide better representation for all communities of interest within the City, while not disrupting communities of interest that are represented successfully within the current wards.

City Council adopted the terms of reference for the C.C.W.B.R. and work commenced on the project in Fall 2024. Through the review, the following work has been completed:

- Research and data compilation;
- Interviews with councillors, the mayor, and municipal staff; and
- Public consultation on the existing ward structure and preliminary alternatives.

Interviews with staff, City Council, and meetings with the clerk's office were conducted both virtually and in person. The first round of live public consultations occurred in December 2024 at City Hall, and the second round took place in May 2025 at the Vale Health & Wellness Centre. Information about these sessions is available on the project web page.

In April 2025, the Consultant Team submitted a Preliminary Options Report, which summarized much of the work done to that point. The report also provided preliminary options that present different council and ward configurations. These ward designs included four-ward options with two councillors elected per ward, three-ward options with two councillors elected per ward, six-ward options with one councillor elected per ward, and eight-ward options with one councillor elected per ward. It should be noted that the wards in these options were designated by letters (Ward A, Ward B, etc.) rather than by numbers to minimize confusion between the existing wards and wards proposed in the various options.

4. Existing Population and Forecast Growth in the City of Port Colborne

As previously mentioned, a fundamental principle of representative democracy in Canada is that the electoral districts should be roughly equal in population. To assess the current ward structure and explore potential alternatives for the City of Port Colborne in 2025, a detailed population estimate was prepared for the City, including its various wards and communities. The population figures in this report encompass both the Census data and the estimated undercount that is not captured by the Census.



The City of Port Colborne is expected to see population growth over the next decade and beyond. Therefore, it is crucial that this study evaluates representation by population for both the current and future populations. In accordance with the study terms of reference, the analysis considered representation of population over the next three municipal elections through to 2034. A population and housing forecast for the City was developed for the 2025 to 2036 period. The forecast is largely consistent with the City's 2024 Development Charges Background Study, with additional updates based on recent development applications and conversations with City staff. The forecast was prepared at a sub-municipal level and aggregated by ward. The results of this analysis are discussed below.

4.1 Existing Population and Structure

As stated above, this study needs to examine both the existing and future population distribution. Total population figures were derived for 2025 and 2036 utilizing the 2021 Census as the base. Port Colborne's 2021 Census population was reported at 20,033 (excluding the net Census undercount). The City's 2025 total population estimate, broken down by the existing ward structure, is presented in Table 4-1 with an optimal population of 5,323 for each ward. As shown below, Ward 1, which covers the southwest corner of Port Colborne, has the highest population of all the wards at 6,178, while Ward 2, across the canal, has the smallest population at 4,248, for a difference of over 1,900 between the smallest and largest wards.

Table 4-1
City of Port Colborne
2025 Population by Ward

Ward	Area (sq.km)	Number of Councillors	2025 Total Population ^[1]	Population Variance
Ward 1	4.5	2	6,178	1.16
Ward 2	5.3	2	4,248	0.80
Ward 3	17.0	2	6,083	1.14
Ward 4	96.8	2	4,782	0.90
Total	123.7	2	21,292	-
Average	-	-	5,323	-

^[1] Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 2.5%.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.



4.2 Forecast Population Growth, 2025 to 2036

In accordance with the City's 2024 Development Charges Background Study and discussions with City staff, Port Colborne's population is expected to increase to more than 25,000 by 2036 (including the net Census undercount). Anticipated population growth to 2036 was identified on a sub-municipal level and factors in the development of the Port Colborne Secondary Plan (Elite Homes development), the residential development along Killaly Street West (including the development east of the quarry ponds), as well as other developments in the planning stages. The results are presented by the existing ward structure in Table 4-2. As shown, the disparity between the smallest and largest wards grows to almost 2,500 by 2036.

Table 4-2
City of Port Colborne
2036 Population by Ward

Ward	Area (sq.km)	Number of Councillors	2036 Total Population ^[1]	Population Variance
Ward 1	4.5	2	6,997	1.12
Ward 2	5.3	2	4,566	0.73
Ward 3	17.0	2	6,863	1.10
Ward 4	96.8	2	6,581	1.05
Total	123.7	2	25,007	-
Average	-	-	6,252	-

^[1] Population includes Census undercount of approximately 2.5%.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.

5. Public Consultation

The public engagement component of this study was delivered both virtually and in person and was designed to:

- Inform residents of Port Colborne about the reasons for the C.C.W.B.R. and the key factors that were considered in the review; and
- Engage the residents in a manner that provides valuable input to the evaluation of the existing ward structure and the development of alternative ward boundaries.



Phase 1 included two public consultation sessions conducted on December 9, 2024, at City Hall. During Phase 2, one public consultation session was held on May 14, and another on May 15, 2025, at the Vale Health and Wellness Centre.

The public consultation information boards can be found in Appendix B and other information about the review is available on the City's website (see footnote 1 on page 2).

Through the public consultation sessions, the surveys, and the project engagement web page's online comment/feedback form, participants were invited to provide their input and opinions with respect to the following:

- Existing Council Structure – Is a four-ward system with two councillors per ward and one mayor the appropriate number? (Phase 1)
- Existing Ward Structure – What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current ward structure? (Phase 1)
- Guiding Principles – Which guiding principles should be given the greatest priority in the development of ward boundaries? (Phases 1 and 2)
- Alternative Ward Boundary Configurations – Nine alternative ward configurations were developed and presented to the public for further feedback. (Phase 2)

The feedback and comments collected through the public consultation process are reflected in the analysis presented below and helped inform the set of nine preliminary ward options. While public input from consultation provides valuable insight into the review, it is not relied on exclusively. The Consultant Team utilized the public input in conjunction with its professional expertise and experience in other C.C.W.B.R.s, along with best practices, to develop the final options presented herein.

5.1 Online Engagement

5.1.1 Engagement Page

A public-facing engagement web page was established to raise awareness about the C.C.W.B.R., to disseminate information about the process and to give the residents of Port Colborne an opportunity to provide feedback directly to staff and the Consultant Team. Through this platform, residents could access the online surveys, view proposed ward boundary options, and review background material. The engagement page also included links to the Preliminary Options Report. A purpose-built Whiteboard Animation



Video was also posted on the web page, which distilled some key information about the C.C.W.B.R. into an accessible format for each phase.

From December 2024 to May 2025, the engagement web page garnered a total of 713 page views. Of these page viewers, 135 completed the survey, and 101 watched the whiteboard video.

5.1.2 Surveys

Of those who visited the C.C.W.B.R. engagement web page, a number of visitors also opted to provide feedback through the public surveys. The surveys provided the Consultant Team with an opportunity to evaluate public preferences using both qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques. Surveying was done at two different stages of the public consultation process – an initial round to evaluate public priorities and perspectives on the existing council composition and ward structure (Phase 1) and a later survey that asked respondents to assess and rank a set of preliminary ward boundary options (Phase 2).

The Phase 1 survey was open from December 9 to December 30, 2024, and resulted in 80 responses. Respondents were asked to discuss whether City Council was the adequate size for the City of Port Colborne, the strengths and weaknesses of the existing wards, and to rank the guiding principles in terms of priority. An in-depth discussion of the Phase 1 survey results is available in the Preliminary Options Report, which can be found on the City of Port Colborne's C.C.W.B.R. project web page. In summary, residents indicated that representation by population should be the priority for this review (41.46% of respondents). Balancing the future population distribution and respecting established neighbourhoods and communities were both ranked as the second most important guiding principle by 24.39% of survey respondents, followed by respecting geographical features and defining natural and infrastructure boundaries, which was ranked as most important by 9.76%. In addition, a little over one-half of the survey respondents (51.22%) thought having eight local councillors, with two elected from each ward, was too many. Conversely, 41.46% of respondents thought it was adequate for their needs, and 7.32% were unsure.

There was a greater level of engagement with the Phase 2 survey, with 135 participants. Survey respondents were asked which of the preliminary ward boundary options they preferred. Preliminary Option A was selected by approximately 34.83% of the residents of Port Colborne and was most preferred. Second favoured was



Preliminary Option C by 12.36%. Preliminary Option G was favoured by 11.24%, Preliminary Option E was favoured by 8.99%, Preliminary Option I was favoured by 5.62%, Preliminary Option B, F, and H were favoured by 4.49%, and Preliminary Option D was least favoured by 3.37% of respondents.

In interpreting these results, it is important to highlight that this survey does not constitute a representative sampling of the population and is by no means a scientific assessment of public preferences. The level of participation in this survey was reasonable with respect to surveys completed in studies for other municipalities, but relative to Port Colborne's population, the sample is small and not randomly selected. Additionally, approximately 40% of the respondents are from Ward 4, and it should be recognized that some of the survey results could reflect the opinion of specific communities. Moreover, several survey respondents did not answer all questions, but about two-thirds did select a preferred Preliminary Option (65%). The surveys were nevertheless a valuable source of insight for the Consultant Team but should be viewed as one of several resources informing the recommendations provided in this report.

5.1.3 Social Media Engagement

Social media proved an effective platform for disseminating information about the C.C.W.B.R. to the public. Notices were posted on Facebook and Instagram, raising awareness and directing the public to the feedback survey. In total, posts related to the C.C.W.B.R. reached over 6,500 people with over 13,600 total views. In addition, four Facebook event pages regarding the public engagement open houses generated interest from a total of 71 people. Lastly, paid ads garnered over 8,200 views.

5.2 Public Consultation

The Consultant Team also held a series of public consultation sessions with Port Colborne residents. Four public open houses were conducted (two in-person session on December 9, 2024, and two in-person sessions in May 2025). Feedback from these sessions was used to inform the final recommendations provided in this report.

During these sessions and in the on-line surveys, members of the public had opportunities to provide their impressions of the current council composition and ward system, their preferences for the guiding principles, and their thoughts on the alternative options. Residents who responded to the survey in the first phase of the review were



more inclined to view present and future population distribution as the highest priority. In the second survey, however, the “community of interest” principle was given top priority. Given that the largest number of survey respondents indicated they live in the largely rural Ward 4, this change in perspective may not be surprising.

Those participating in the public engagement activities also gave their feedback on nine preliminary options, gravitating in the survey responses towards Preliminary Options A, C, and G, all of which provided relatively good population parity into the future. Two options (Preliminary Options A and C) were designed to elect eight councillors, one in two-member wards and the other in single-member wards. The third option (Preliminary Option G) proposed that City Council be reduced to six members, elected in three wards. The implications of these configurations will be discussed again in relation to the two final options in section 7.

5.3 Interviews and Direct Community Outreach

In addition to the public engagement, it was crucial for the Consultant Team to benefit from the perspectives of those serving in Port Colborne’s government. A series of interviews were conducted with the mayor, members of City Council, and senior City staff during Phase 1 of the review. In May 2025, a second set of workshops were held with the same people, either individually or in small groups.

The feedback and comments received through the consultation process are reflected in the analysis and have helped inform the findings and recommendations. As has been mentioned previously in this report, public input from consultation provides valuable insight into the review, but it is not relied on exclusively. This is in part because only a subset of the population participated in the C.C.W.B.R., which may not be representative of Port Colborne’s population as a whole. The Consultant Team interpreted the public input using its professional expertise and experience in C.C.W.B.R.s, along with knowledge of best practices, to develop the recommended options.

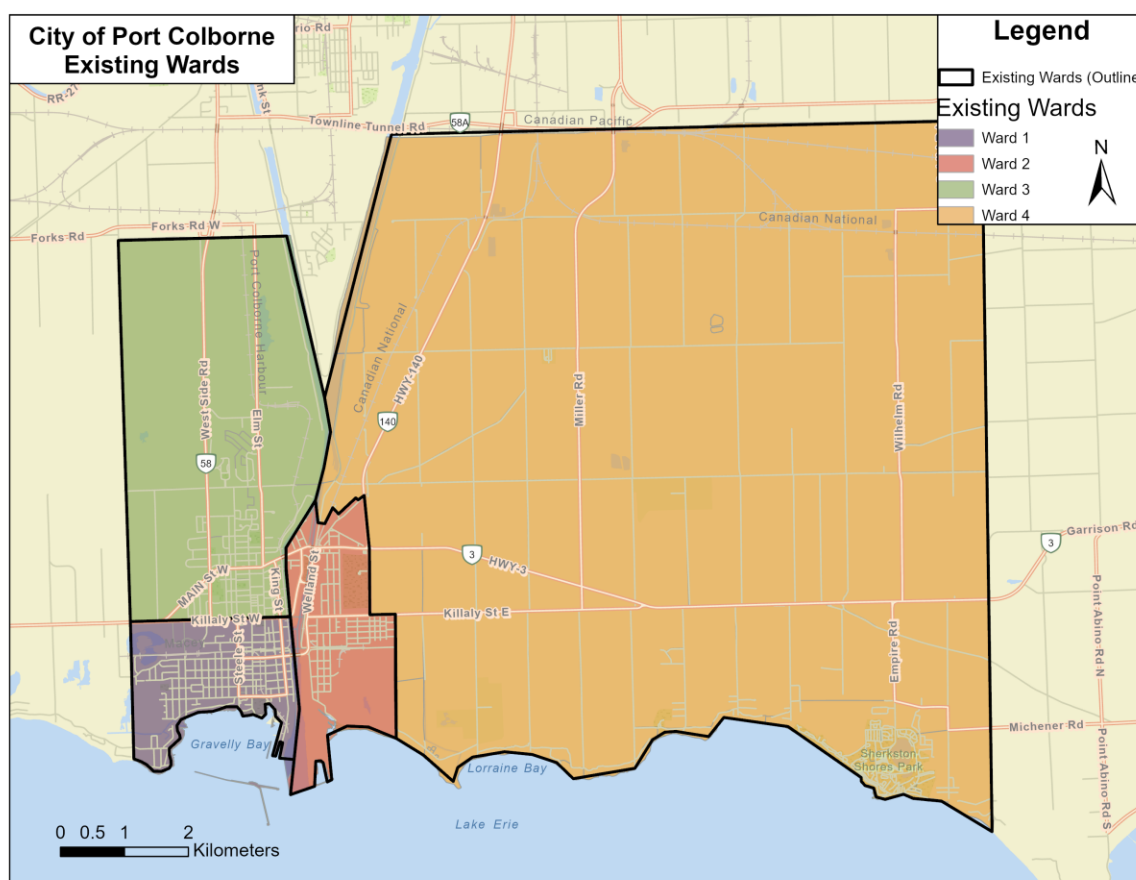


6. Evaluation of the Existing Ward Structure

A preliminary evaluation of the existing ward structure, included in Discussion Paper F and section 8 of the Preliminary Options Report addressed the wards in terms of the guiding principles.

This section revisits those evaluations, integrating information received during the public consultations and addressing certain challenges identified in parts of the existing ward system, as heard from residents of Port Colborne. For reference, the current wards are presented in Figure 6-1.

Figure 6-1
City of Port Colborne
Existing Ward Structure



The current system has been evaluated based on three guiding principles that fall under the overarching principle of effective representation. Since these principles are discussed at length in section 8 of the Preliminary Options Report in relation to the



present wards, they will not be addressed again in this Final Report. The Consultant Team has thoroughly considered the importance of each principle and has conducted a careful evaluation of which of the principles is most important for determining an appropriate system of representation for the 2026 municipal election and beyond in Port Colborne.

The principles are intended to contribute to a system that provides for equitable ongoing access between elected officials and residents, but they may occasionally conflict with one another. Accordingly, it is expected that applying the overriding principle of effective representation will be important in arbitrating conflicts between principles. Any deviation from the specific principles must be justified by other principles in a manner that is more supportive of effective representation.

The priority attached to certain principles makes some designs more desirable in the eyes of different observers. Ultimately, the ward design adopted by City Council should be the one that best fulfills as many of the guiding principles as possible.

The evaluation of the current ward system in Port Colborne suggests that there are identifiable but not insurmountable shortcomings when evaluated against the guiding principles for this review. Our evaluation of the existing wards is summarized in Table 6-3 below.

Two main challenges for the City of Port Colborne's ward system follow from this evaluation: identifying a ward configuration that ensures population parity before the 2026 municipal election (and beyond if possible) and designing wards that reflect the various urban, rural, and lakeshore communities of interest across the City.

The objective of population parity (every councillor generally representing an equal number of constituents within their respective ward) is usually the primary goal of an electoral redistribution, with some degree of variation acceptable considering population densities and demographic factors across the City. The indicator of success in a ward design is the extent to which all the individual wards approach an "optimal" size.

Optimal size can be understood as a mid-point on a scale where the term "optimal" (O) describes a ward with a population within 5% on either side of the calculated optimal size. The classification "below/above optimal" (O+ or O-) is applied to a ward with a population between 6% and 25% on either side of the optimal size and is considered an acceptable variation. A ward that is labelled "outside the range" (OR+ or OR-) indicates



that its population is greater than 25% above or below the optimal ward size. The adoption of a 25% maximum variation was part of the terms of reference established by the City and can reasonably be applied in municipalities like Port Colborne that include both urban and rural areas. These ranges are presented in Table 6-1; population by ward for the City of Port Colborne is presented in Table 6-2.

Table 6-1
Optimal Population Ranges for a Four-Ward System – 2025 and 2036

Symbol	Description	Variance	2025 Population Range	2036 Population Range
OR+	Outside Range - High	25% and above	>6,654	>7,814
O+	Above Optimal but Acceptable	5% to 25%	5,589–6,654	6,564–7,814
O	Optimal Population Range	+/- 5%	5,057–5,589	5,939–6,564
O-	Below Optimal but Acceptable	-5% to -25%	3,992–5,057	4,689–5,939
OR-	Outside Range - Low	-25% and below	<3,992	<4,689

Table 6-2
City of Port Colborne
Existing Wards' 2025 and 2036 Population Distribution

Ward Number	Number of Councillors	2025 Total Population	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Total Population	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	2	6,178	1.16	O+	6,997	1.12	O+
Ward 2	2	4,248	0.80	O-	4,566	0.73	OR-
Ward 3	2	6,083	1.14	O+	6,863	1.10	O+
Ward 4	2	4,782	0.90	O-	6,581	1.05	O+
Total	8	21,292	-	-	25,007	-	-
Average	-	5,323	-	-	6,252	-	-

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.



Table 6-3
Present Port Colborne Ward Configuration Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Partially Successful	Current population figures suggest that all wards are in the acceptable range (i.e., 25% variation) in 2025 but no wards are optimal (i.e., 5% variation) and there is a population imbalance between the east and west side of the canal. The disparity between the most and least populated wards is significant and is forecast to worsen over time.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Current ward boundaries largely contain identifiable communities of interest. Future residential growth and new secondary plans will likely result in new communities of interest.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Largely Successful	Most lines are clear, but some boundary lines are inconsistent in usage at times.
Effective representation	No	Accelerating population imbalances, some inconsistent boundary lines, and new future residential communities hinder effective representation.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).



Data presented in Table 6-2 confirms that the pattern of population imbalance present in 2025 is maintained and worsened by 2036, with only the existing Ward 4 growing close to an “optimal” population and one of the existing wards falling below the acceptable range of variation by 2036. Implicit in this population trend is the change in the established residential and community patterns in the present Ward 4 through the addition of close to 1,800 residents in new suburban neighbourhoods, thereby creating a diversity of interests not found in the current ward which is characterized largely by rural and lakefront communities. As well, the forecast growth results in three wards with reasonably balanced populations but one that is far larger in area than the others. This combination of population and area in the present Ward 4 poses a challenge for elected officials to represent its residents effectively.

Overall, analysis of the current and future population trends, along with feedback received during the public consultations and other features of Port Colborne in 2025, leads to the conclusion that while the existing system does an adequate job of addressing most of the guiding principles, City Council should consider adopting an alternate ward configuration to address some of the identified shortcomings as the City’s population grows.

7. Final Ward Boundary Options

In the Preliminary Options Report, the Consultant Team provided nine preliminary options for consideration by the community than can be grouped in two ways: first, those that retained eight councillors (Preliminary Options A, B, C and D) and those that reduced the number of councillors to six (Preliminary Options E, F, G, H, and I) and, secondly, those that retained two-member wards (Preliminary Options A, B, E, F, and G) and those that proposed single-member wards (Preliminary Options C, D, H, and I). Each of the options was described in detail and evaluated by the Consultant Team in the Preliminary Options Report (see footnote 1 on page 2) but in light of public consultation and further professional evaluation by the Consultant Team, only two of those options will be recommended to Council as alternative ward configurations for the 2026 municipal election and beyond.

Discussion Paper D (see footnote 1 on page 2) set out some advantages and limitations of two-member and single-member wards to give residents some insight into the two systems. Overall, however, the Consultant Team heard very little support for modifying Port Colborne’s electoral structure from its present two-member model to single-



member wards. Whether this preference is based on familiarity (“we’ve always done it that way”), reluctance to make significant structural changes at this time, or satisfactory experiences with the two-member model, selecting an alternative ward configuration that retains two-member wards must be viewed as a deliberate choice in this review. Four preliminary options that proposed the single-member alternative were open for consideration but did not receive strong endorsement. The Consultant Team takes that feedback seriously and will recommend two final options for two-member wards, one of which proposes to modify the composition of City Council.

A recurring theme that emerged from both phases of the review related to the impact of an inherent “east-west” divide” in the City on the political, social, economic, and demographic fabric of Port Colborne created by the Welland Canal. As noted in the Preliminary Options Report (page 17), “the Consultant Team heard very different responses to how significant the Canal is to Port Colborne. Some argued that the history on each side creates a meaningful divide that should remain. Others believed that while an historic divide was present, the communities on both sides of the canal are similar enough to be placed into a single ward.” After careful review of public commentary on this question and lengthy consideration of the implications of maintaining the Canal as an ongoing ward boundary, the Consultant Team has concluded that there is a convincing case to be made that at least some future wards should cross the Canal. Therefore, the two options that will be recommended to Council in this report include proposed wards that do just that.

7.1 Final Option 1 (Four Wards, Eight Councillors)

Final Option 1 was originally presented as Preliminary Option B and is discussed in more detail in the Preliminary Options Report (pages 25 to 28). As observed there, this option presents a “minimal change” approach since it retains the eight councillors elected in a two-member ward arrangement and strongly resembles the existing ward map, even though all the proposed wards are modified versions of the existing wards.

In this option, one of the four wards crosses the Canal: the proposed Ward 2 adds an area in the present Ward 1 south of Killaly Street and east of Elm Street to the present Ward 2. In Preliminary Option B, Ward 2 concluded at Main Street East. In Final Option 1, the northern boundary is shifted to Concession Road 2, to absorb territory slated for development (described more fully below).



The only modifications to the present Ward 4 are a minor boundary adjustment between the proposed Wards 2 and 4 at the north end of the present Ward 2 to follow 2nd Concession Road instead of the irregular line now used, and the addition of a part of the present Ward 2 between Elizabeth Street and Lorraine Road between Highway 3 and Killaly Street East. The present Wards 1 and 3 are reconfigured into three wards, with the area west of Regional Road 58 (West Side Road) between Killaly Street and Barrick Road added to the area of the present Ward 1 west of Steele Street, the area east of Elm Street south of Killaly Street West is included in the proposed Ward 2, and the proposed Ward 3 to include the remainder of the present Ward 3 plus “the island.”

In contrast to the present wards, however, the population distribution is better balanced in the short and longer term, with two wards at the optimal point in 2025 and two in 2036. The proposed Ward 1 boundaries divide urban residential neighbourhoods north and south of Killaly Street, resulting in the alignment of some of those neighbourhoods (primarily the central business district) with residential areas east of the Welland Canal.

The proposed Ward 2 crosses the Canal but is extended to the east to include territory (the Port Colborne Secondary Plan) where an additional 1,800 residents are expected over the next decade, a community that would have more obvious affinity with the urban neighbourhoods in the proposed Ward 2 than the largely rural proposed Ward 4. In keeping with the “minimal change” approach, the proposed Ward 4 is roughly as large as the other three wards combined but would be modified, as just noted, to exclude the main residential developments forecast east of the Canal. By doing so, Final Option 1 places a greater priority on the community of interest principle than the future population principle to reflect the distinctive rural characteristics of the present Ward 4. On balance, this configuration meets the guiding principles, even though it takes the population of Ward 4 to the lower end of the bounds of acceptable population variation.

Table 7-1 provides population data for Final Option 1.



Table 7-1
City of Port Colborne
Final Option 1 – Population by Ward

Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward 1	5,880	1.10	O+	6,795	1.09	O+
Ward 2	5,143	0.97	O	7,290	1.17	O+
Ward 3	5,568	1.05	O	6,152	0.98	O
Ward 4	4,700	0.88	O-	4,770	0.76	O-
Total	21,292	-	-	25,007	-	-
Average	5,323	-	-	6,252	-	-

^[1] Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 2.5%.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.



Figure 7-1
City of Port Colborne
Final Option 1

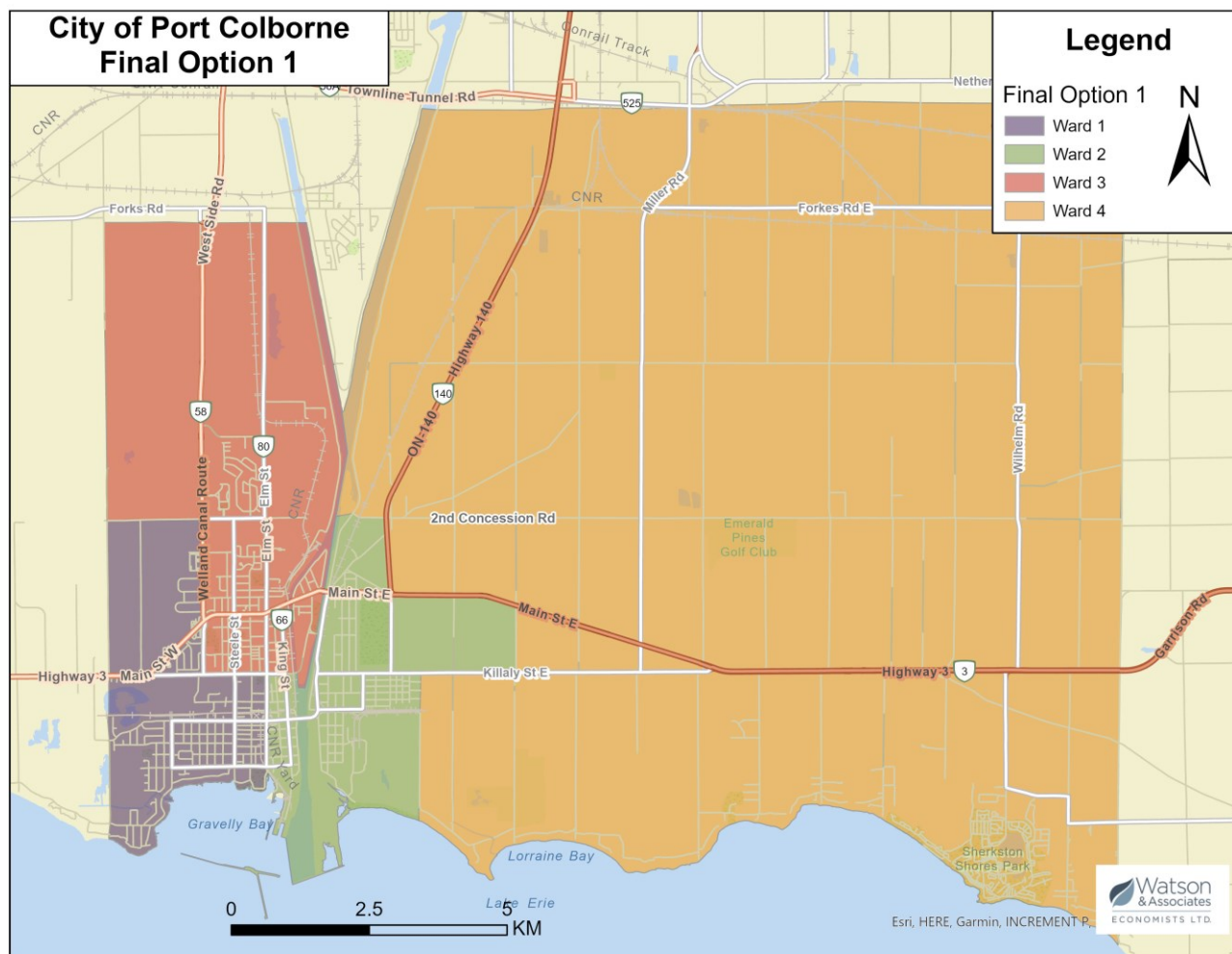




Table 7-2
City of Port Colborne
Final Option 1 Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	Population parity is acceptable.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Yes	Population parity is maintained.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	All wards include plausible groupings of communities of interest; urban neighbourhoods divided.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Yes	Most markers used as boundaries of the wards are carried over from the present system.
Effective representation	Largely Successful	Acceptable population parity in the short and longer term but still includes a very large rural ward.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).

7.2 Final Option 2 (Three Wards, Six Councillors)

Final Option 2 was originally presented as Preliminary Option G and is discussed in more detail in the Preliminary Options Report (pages 44 to 47). Final Option 2, like Final Option 1, preserves two-member wards and assigns the rural population to a single ward that includes territory on both sides of the Welland Canal while realigning the urban area into two wards in an east-west format that cross the Canal.



The option proposes a simple map with basically only three lines on it: the proposed Ward 1 includes the present Ward 1 in its entirety plus all the present Ward 2 south of Killaly Street East. The proposed Ward 2 is essentially a rectangle bounded by the eastern boundary of the present Ward 2 but extended to Concession Road 2, Barrick Road, the municipal boundary with Wainfleet Township, and Killaly Street. The proposed Ward 3 includes the present Ward 4 plus the area in the present Ward 3 north of Barrick Road.

This option places an emphasis on communities of interest within Port Colborne by assigning two wards to the urban neighbourhoods and one ward to the rural area. This arrangement maintains groupings of urban residents west of the canal, as in the present system, where Killaly Street West is the boundary and is a plausible line to use east of the Canal. The proposed Ward 2 is innovative in the sense that it attaches neighbourhoods east of the Canal to the similar suburban community north of Killaly Street West rather than maintaining the traditional alignment that parallels the Canal. Of note, this ward moves further east along Killaly Street than the original Preliminary Option G to absorb the entirety of the proposed Elite Homes Development lands. The proposed Ward 3 captures the bulk of rural Port Colborne in a single distinctive ward rather than attaching rural areas – especially those west of the Canal – with suburban neighbourhoods.

Despite applying the communities of interest guiding principle as the priority in this option, all wards are within the acceptable range of population variation in 2025, with one within 5% of optimal. By 2036, the forecast population growth does not disturb the shorter-term population balance and, in fact, population parity improves. Given the present and forecast population distribution across the City, one of the wards (in this case proposed Ward 3) must include a disproportionate part of the City's geography as is the case in the present ward configuration. Doing so, and in consideration of the unique nature of this community, accepting population disparities in the future is a legitimate trade-off to maintain the continuity of this community.

The major innovation in Final Option 2 is the proposed change in the composition of Port Colborne's City Council: a reduction in the number of councillors from eight to six. As explained in Discussion Paper B (see footnote 1 on page 2), the size of municipal councils in Ontario is only addressed as a minimum: there must be no fewer than five members, "one of whom shall be the head of council" (the mayor). Port Colborne's nine-member City Council is similar in size to most municipalities in Niagara Region, but



a reduction by two councillors was supported for various reasons during the consultations. Among the comments heard: the workload of and expectations on part-time councillors can still be met by fewer members (especially in two-member wards); possible changes to governance structures across the province and Niagara Region, that could include directions to reduce the size of councils so this is an opportunity to “get ahead of the curve”; and the more general contention that “we have too many politicians.” Even without these perspectives at play, the Consultant Team discovered that a three-ward east-west alignment in Port Colborne was largely successful in meeting the guiding principles.

A complete evaluation of Final Option 2 is presented in Table 7-4.

Table 7-3
City of Port Colborne
Final Option 2 – Population by Ward

Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward 1	8,547	1.20	O+	9,279	1.11	O+
Ward 2	6,902	0.97	O	9,543	1.14	O+
Ward 3	5,843	0.82	O-	6,186	0.74	OR-
Total	21,292	-	-	25,007	-	-
Average	7,097	-	-	8,336	-	-

^[1] Population includes a net Census undercount of approximately 2.5%.

Note: Numbers may not add precisely due to rounding.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., 2025.



Figure 7-2
City of Port Colborne
Final Option 2

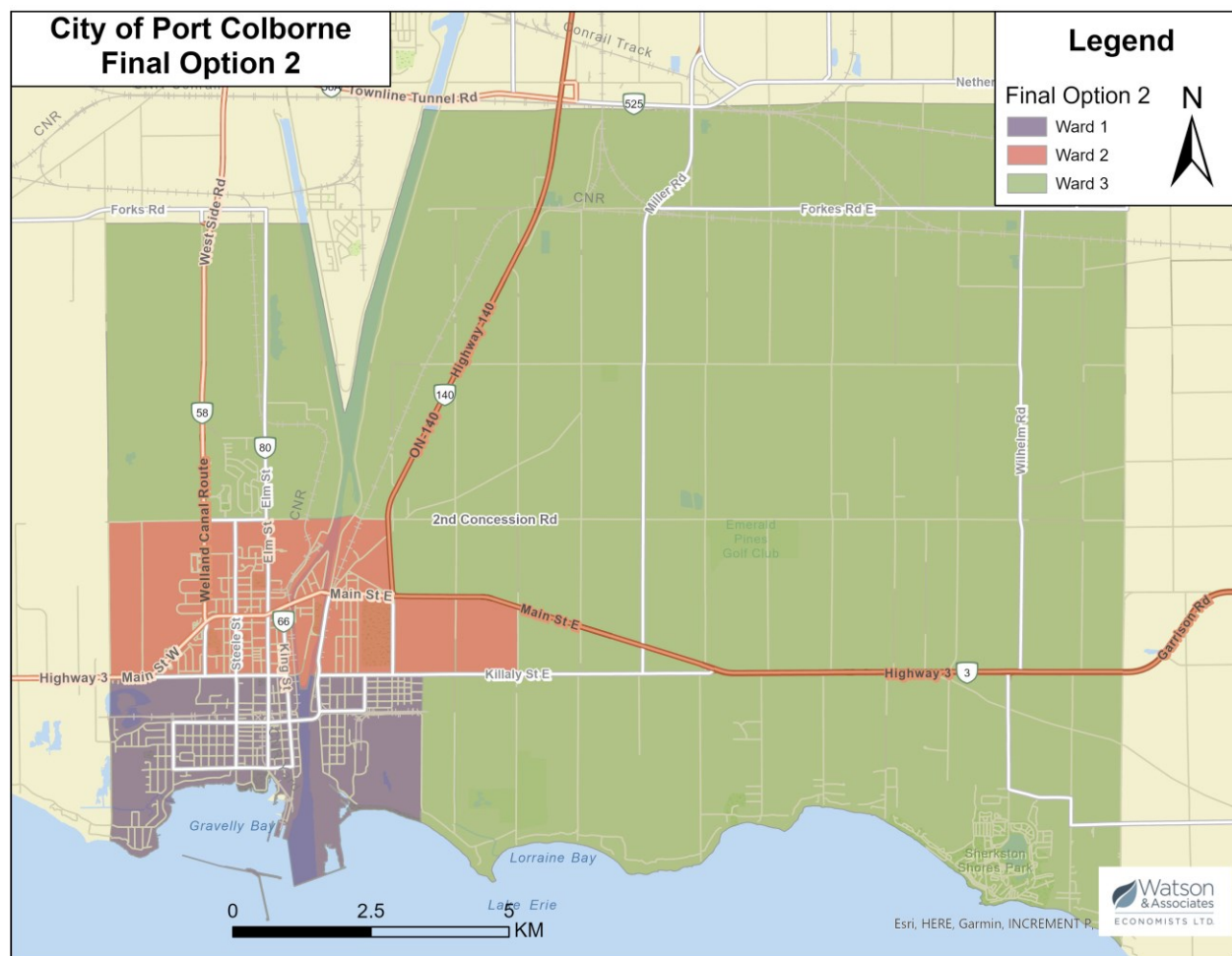




Table 7-4
City of Port Colborne
Final Option 2 Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	Population distribution is acceptably balanced in 2025.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Yes	Population distribution is acceptably balanced in 2036.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Wards contain plausible groupings of communities although the rural ward is a large geographic area.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Yes	Markers used as boundaries for the wards are straightforward.
Effective representation	Largely Successful	This option provides a familiar design that balances the various guiding principles.

The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as “**Yes**” (fully satisfied), “**Largely Successful**,” “**Partially Successful**,” or “**No**” (not satisfied).



8. Next Steps and Council Decisions

The Consultant Team believes that the two final options provide the residents of the City of Port Colborne with an opportunity to establish a revised ward system that better aligns with forecast population growth while adhering as closely as possible to the guiding principles adopted for this review.

Within this report, the Consultant Team has highlighted some strengths and deficiencies in the current ward boundary system in relation to the guiding principles. The deficiencies have led the Consultant Team to conclude that there could be alternative ward boundary systems that can serve the residents of Port Colborne well and provided options for Council to consider without needing to make major modifications to the present system.

8.1 Recommended Option

The Consultant Team believes that both final options included in this report would serve the City of Port Colborne better than the existing system. We detail their various attributes, including strengths and weaknesses, above. Despite the strengths of both, the Consultant Team recommends that the “minimal change” option – Final Option 1 – provides the best system for Port Colborne over the next three election cycles. Council can consider this the Recommended Option. As noted earlier, possible changes to governance in Niagara Region could include directions to reduce the size of local and regional councils. In the instance where a reduction of council is directed, the City of Port Colborne could choose an alternative option (such as Final Option 2) that reduces council to be in line with this direction.

This recommendation is based upon several considerations. The first is that the current system is familiar to residents and has certain strengths, including very good representation for community of interest. The system, however, has several population disparities that prevent it from fully providing effective representation for the City of Port Colborne. Throughout two rounds of public consultation, the Consultant Team heard from residents that these population disparities are a cause for concern. The Recommended Option corrects these disparities and provides for a very good population distribution moving towards 2036.



The Recommended Option is also familiar to residents despite the boundary adjustments proposed since they are all relatively minor and it does not reduce the number of representatives making decisions for residents around the council table.

It is important to recognize that there remains some question about how much growth will be realized by 2036 (and where that growth will occur), given the current uncertainty around the economy, tariffs imposed by the United States on key building materials, interest rates, and the ability of development firms to fully complete projects to plan. As a result, many residents gravitated towards an option that is familiar, builds on existing strengths in the map, and corrects some of the deficiencies in the current system rather than placing emphasis on forecast population growth.

This recommendation, therefore, comes with a caveat. The Consultant Team agrees that there is some uncertainty around growth but encourages the City to monitor this growth if this recommendation is accepted. An accelerating or diminishing pace of growth would necessitate a new review sooner than anticipated. In that vein, City Council may wish to adopt a policy or by-law that mandates a review of the ward boundaries on a pre-determined basis to ensure that effective representation is being monitored regularly. One premise of a review might be related to the adoption of an urban boundary expansion or simply linking it to an election cycle (after every two or three elections, for example). The key word in this commentary is “review,” not necessarily change. Confirming that the City has a ward (or composition) configuration that is working is a sound basis for reassuring electors that their voices can be fairly heard at election time; should that not prove to be the case, there would be evidence to justify modifications.

City Council can respond to this report in three ways:

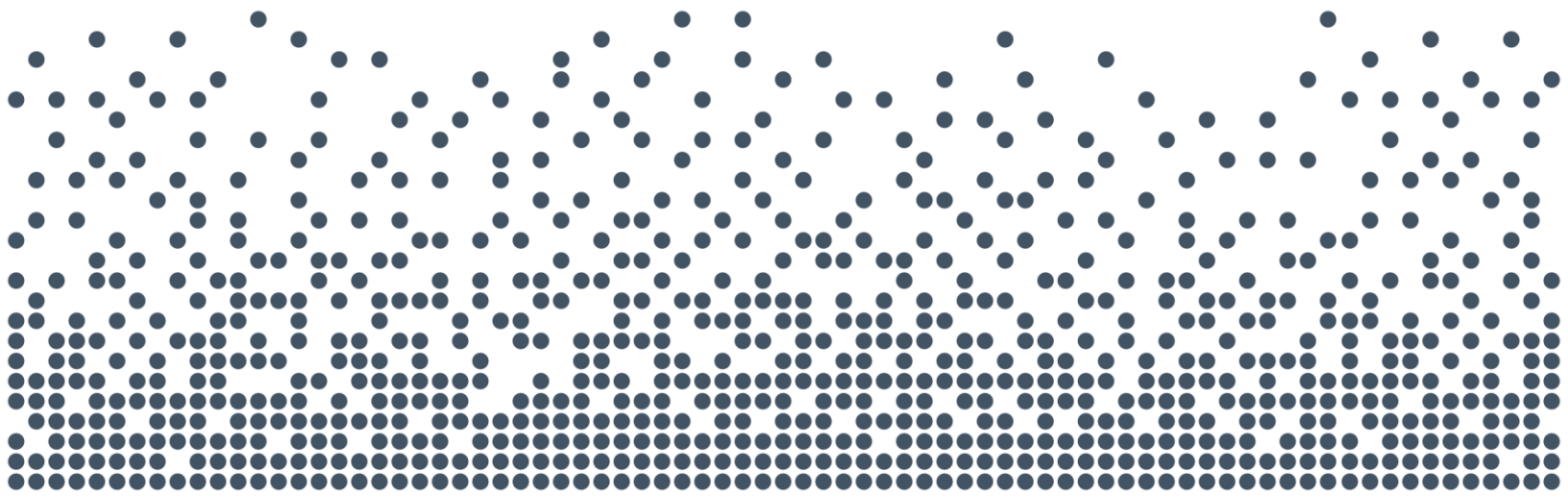
- City Council can adopt the Recommended Option, with or without minor modifications, and later ratify a by-law to implement changes to the boundaries of the wards. Such a by-law is open to appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal, but the Consultant Team is confident that it could withstand such an appeal.
- City Council can select one of the other preliminary options that were presented to the public (with or without modifications).
- City Council can take no action at all; that is, it may view the current ward system as adequate and, by default, endorse it by not selecting an alternative option. If it declines to act, City Council must clearly understand that such a decision



essentially indicates to the City's residents that it believes retaining the existing ward system still serves Port Colborne well.

In that context, it is also important to note that taking no action is a form of decision that can still be appealed to the Ontario Land Tribunal, albeit indirectly. Section 223 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* indicates that one percent of the electors or 500 of the electors in the municipality, whichever is less, may "present a petition to the council asking the council to pass a by-law dividing or redividing the municipality into wards or dissolving the existing wards." If Council does not pass a by-law in accordance with such a petition within 90 days after receiving the petition, any of the electors who signed the petition may apply to the Ontario Land Tribunal to have the municipality redivided into wards.

If Council's decision is to endorse one of the final options contained in this report, a by-law to implement that option is expected to occur as soon as possible. The by-law would describe the boundaries associated with the approved wards and assign numbers (or names) to them that may be different than those included in Figure 7-1 and Figure 7-2.



Appendices



Appendix A

Public Engagement Overview



Figure A-1
List of Public Engagement Tools

Tool	Description
Port Colborne Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review (C.C.W.B.R.) Web Page	A dedicated engagement website was developed for the review at: https://www.portcolborne.ca/wbr . The web page included one informative whiteboard video, links to public engagement sessions and surveys, and up-to-date messaging to inform the public of the status of the C.C.W.B.R.
Public Open Houses	Two open houses were held during Phase 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• December 9, 2024 (x2). During Phase 2, two additional open houses were held: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 14, 2025• May 15, 2025
Public Engagement Surveys	A survey was posted on the C.C.W.B.R. web page intended to discern whether the existing council size and ward system was adequate and which guiding principles were prioritized by the community, as well as to discern which preliminary option was preferred. The Phase 1 survey had 80 responses and the Phase 2 survey had 135 responses. All wards were well represented in these responses, with the majority of responses from long-term residents of Port Colborne. See Appendices C and D for a summary of the results.
Interviews with Members of Government	The mayor and each member of City Council were invited to participate in a one-hour discussion with the consultant.
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total reach of over 6,500.• Over 13,600 total views.



Appendix B

Public Engagement Sessions Information Boards



Port Colborne

COUNCIL COMPOSITION & WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW

Process



Review
Current
System



Think about
the Guiding
Principles



Examine the
Preliminary
Options

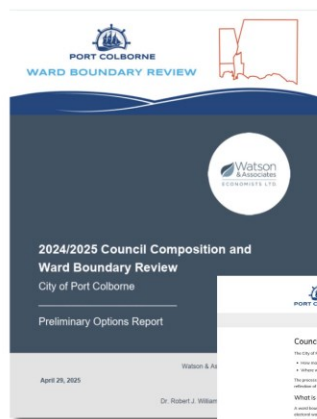


Provide
Feedback at
the Survey


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& Associates
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Review the Materials



Found on the project page
www.portcolborne.ca/wbr



Open Houses

May 14 - 2-4PM
Vale Health &
Wellness Centre

May 15 - 5-7PM
Vale Health &
Wellness Centre

Have
Your Say

SCAN ME





City of Port Colborne 2024/2025 Council Composition & Ward Boundary Review

www.portcolborne.ca/wbr



Public Information Session Ward Boundary Review



Learn more!
SCAN ME



www.portcolborne.ca/wbr

Let's talk!

May 14 - 2-4PM
Vale Health & Wellness Centre

May 15 - 5-7PM
Vale Health & Wellness Centre

Have your say!
SCAN ME



www.surveymonkey.com/r/PC_WBR2



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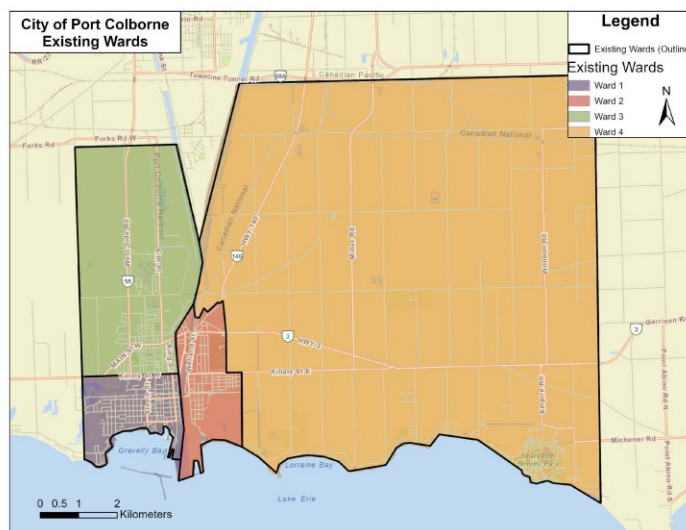
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City of Port Colborne 2024/2025 Council Composition & Ward Boundary Review

www.portcolborne.ca/wbr

Existing Wards



Ward Number	2025 Total Population ⁽¹⁾	Variance	Optimal Range	2036 Population ⁽¹⁾	Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	6,178	1.16	O+	6,997	1.12	O+
Ward 2	4,248	0.80	O-	4,566	0.73	OR-
Ward 3	6,083	1.14	O+	6,863	1.10	O+
Ward 4	4,782	0.90	O-	6,581	1.05	O-
Total	21,292	-	-	25,007	-	-
Average	5,323	-	-	6,252	-	-

Guiding Principles

REPRESENTATION BY POPULATION

Residents should be equally represented, and wards should have reasonably equal population totals. Population parity should be a primary goal of ward boundary reviews;

BALANCING THE PRESENT AND FUTURE POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Ward boundary reviews should take into consideration anticipated changes in population for a period of twelve years, or three elections;

RESPECTING GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES AND THE DEFINING NATURAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE BOUNDARIES

Wards will be drawn impartially and with consideration to using distinct physical and geographic features;

RESPECTING ESTABLISHED NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES (COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST)

Existing communities of interest and neighbourhoods within the municipality should not be fragmented. Where possible, existing and future communities of interest should not be divided between multiple wards.

EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION

The four articulated principles contribute to achieving the over-arching principle of effective representation.

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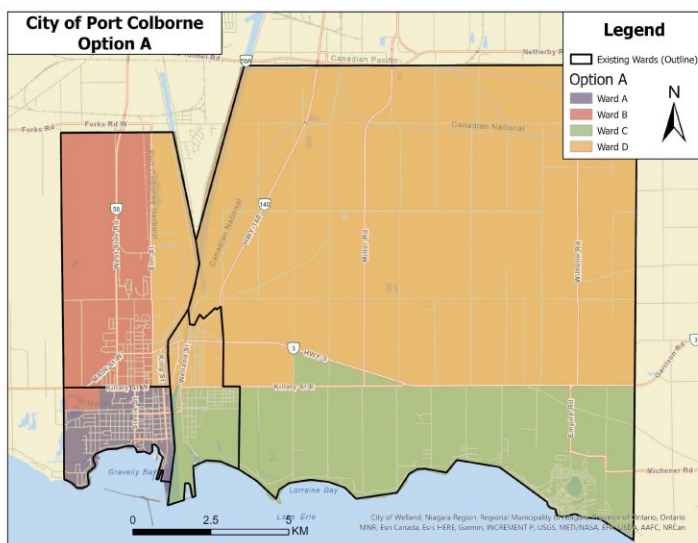


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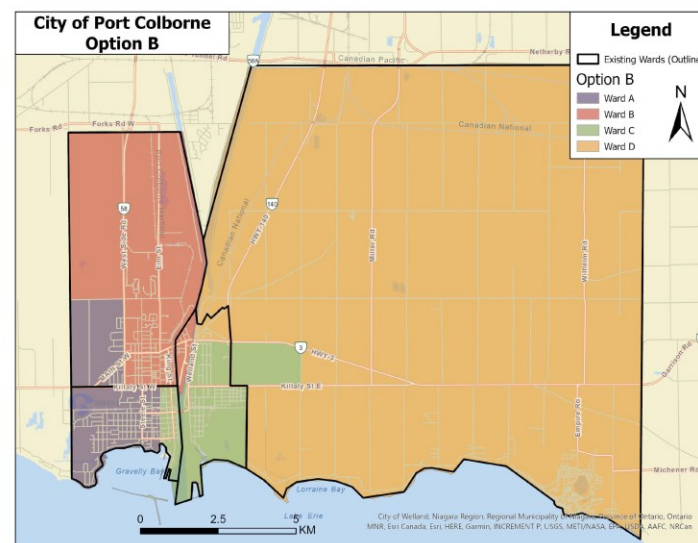


Option A



Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	6,141	1.15	O+	6,498	1.04	O
Ward B	5,115	0.96	O	6,355	1.02	O
Ward C	5,575	1.05	O	5,578	0.89	O-
Ward D	4,460	0.84	O-	6,577	1.05	O+
Total/Average	21,292	5,323		25,007	6,252	

Option B



Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	5,880	1.10	O+	6,795	1.09	O+
Ward B	5,568	1.05	O	6,152	0.98	O
Ward C	4,583	0.86	O-	6,384	1.02	O
Ward D	5,261	0.99	O	5,676	0.91	O-
Total/Average	21,292	5,323		25,007	6,252	

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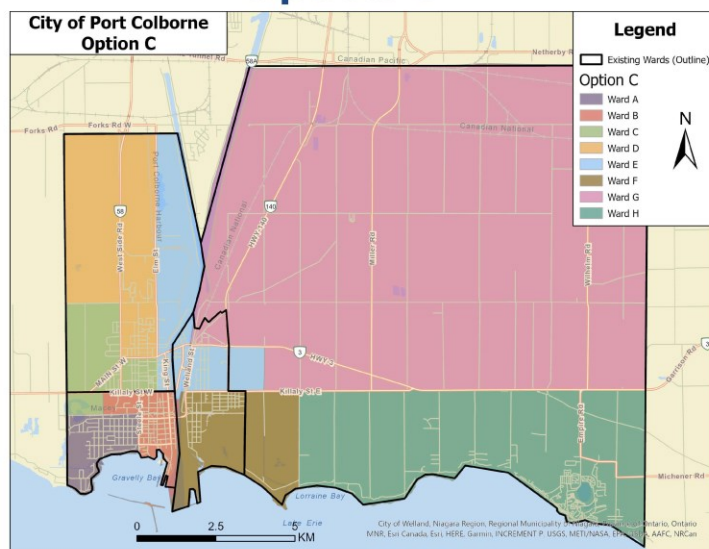


City of Port Colborne 2024/2025 Council Composition & Ward Boundary Review

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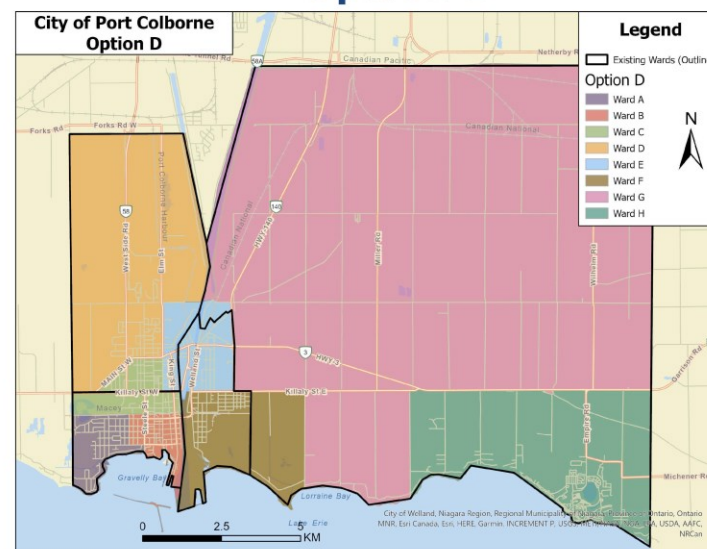


Option C



Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	3,226	1.21	O+	3,101	0.99	O
Ward B	2,915	1.10	O+	3,397	1.09	O+
Ward C	2,298	0.86	O-	2,998	0.96	O
Ward D	2,817	1.06	O+	3,357	1.07	O+
Ward E	2,368	0.89	O-	3,296	1.05	O+
Ward F	2,581	0.97	O	2,621	0.84	O-
Ward G	2,218	0.83	O-	3,406	1.09	O+
Ward H	2,868	1.08	O+	2,832	0.91	O-
Total/Average	21,292	2,661		25,007	3,126	

Option D



Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	2,644	0.99	O	2,541	0.81	O-
Ward B	2,535	0.95	O	2,536	0.81	O-
Ward C	2,816	1.06	O+	3,775	1.21	O+
Ward D	3,317	1.25	O+	4,056	1.30	OR+
Ward E	2,840	1.07	O+	3,248	1.04	O
Ward F	2,581	0.97	O	2,621	0.84	O-
Ward G	1,996	0.75	O-	3,700	1.18	O+
Ward H	2,561	0.96	O	2,530	0.81	O-
Total/Average	21,292	2,661		25,007	3,126	

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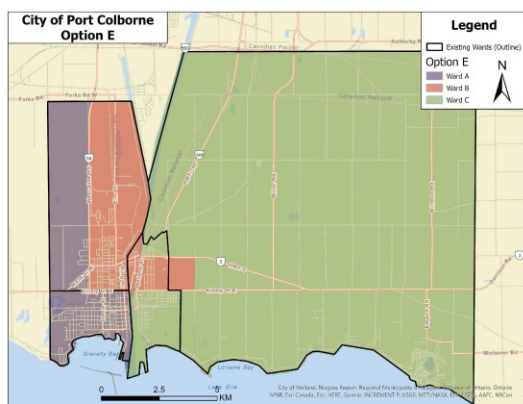


City of Port Colborne 2024/2025 Council Composition & Ward Boundary Review

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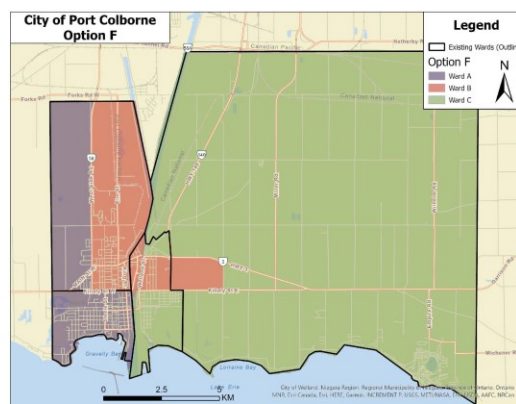


Option E



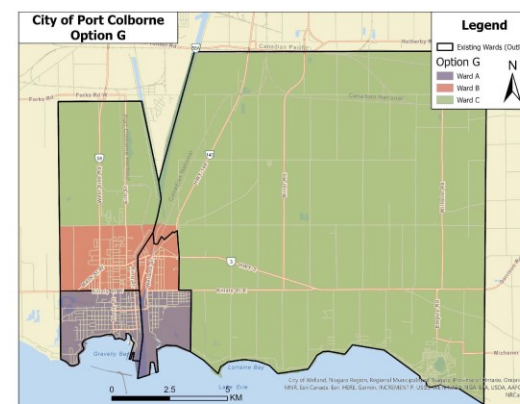
Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	7,072	1.00	O	8,075	0.97	O
Ward B	6,552	0.92	O-	8,073	0.97	O
Ward C	7,667	1.08	O+	8,859	1.06	O+
Total/Average	21,292	7,097		25,007	8,336	

Option F



Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	7,072	1.00	O	8,075	0.97	O
Ward B	6,590	0.93	O-	8,975	1.08	O+
Ward C	7,630	1.08	O+	7,957	0.95	O
Total/Average	21,292	7,097		25,007	8,336	

Option G



Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	8,547	1.20	O+	9,279	1.11	O+
Ward B	6,832	0.96	O	7,744	0.93	O-
Ward C	5,912	0.83	O-	7,985	0.96	O
Total/Average	21,292	7,097		25,007	8,336	

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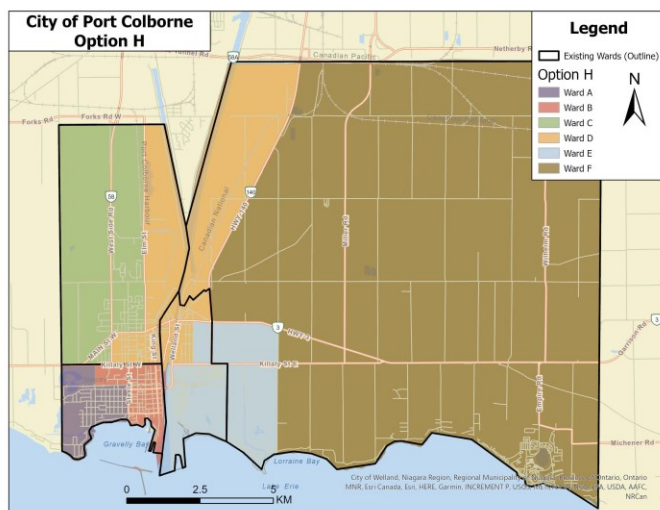


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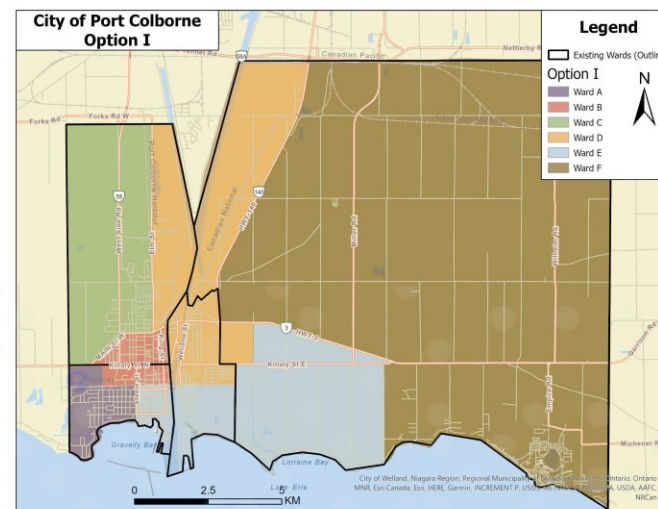


Option H



Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	3,263	0.92	O-	3,600	0.86	O-
Ward B	2,915	0.82	O-	3,397	0.81	O-
Ward C	3,615	1.02	O	4,340	1.04	O
Ward D	4,238	1.19	O+	4,684	1.12	O+
Ward E	2,869	0.81	O-	4,651	1.12	O+
Ward F	4,391	1.24	O+	4,335	1.04	O
Total/Average	21,292	3,548		25,007	4,168	

Option I



Ward	2025 Population	2025 Population Variance	2025 Optimal Range	2036 Population	2036 Population Variance	2036 Optimal Range
Ward A	3,263	0.92	O-	3,600	0.86	O-
Ward B	3,632	1.02	O	4,135	0.99	O
Ward C	3,261	0.92	O-	4,001	0.96	O
Ward D	3,784	1.07	O+	4,985	1.20	O+
Ward E	3,367	0.95	O-	4,354	1.04	O
Ward F	3,984	1.12	O+	3,933	0.94	O-
Total/Average	21,292	3,549		25,007	4,168	

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City of Port Colborne 2024/2025 Council Composition & Ward Boundary Review

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Evaluation Summary

Preliminary Option	Council Composition	Representation by Population	Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Effective Representation
Existing	4 wards 8 councillors	Largely Successful	No	Largely Successful	Largely Successful	No
Option A	4 wards 8 councillors	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Yes	Yes
Option B	4 wards 8 councillors	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Yes	Largely Successful
Option C	8 wards 8 councillors	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Option D	8 wards 8 councillors	Largely Successful	No	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful
Option E	3 wards 6 councillors	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Yes	Largely Successful
Option F	3 wards 6 councillors	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Yes	Largely Successful
Option G	3 wards 6 councillors	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Yes	Largely Successful
Option H	6 wards 6 councillors	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Yes	Largely Successful
Option I	6 wards 6 councillors	Yes	Yes	Largely Successful	Yes	Largely Successful

Levels of evaluation for how the Guiding Principles are met



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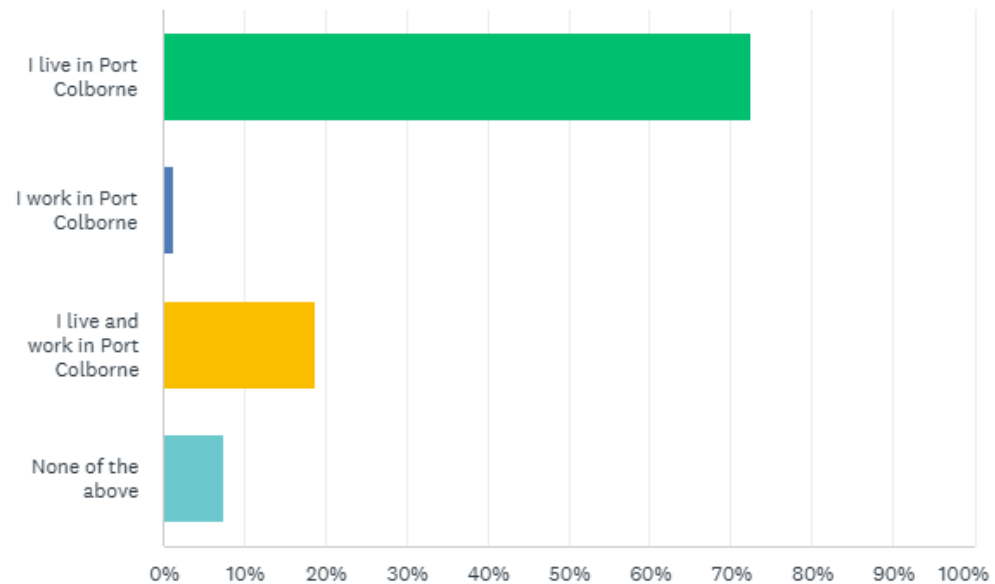
Appendix C

Survey Results (Phase 1)



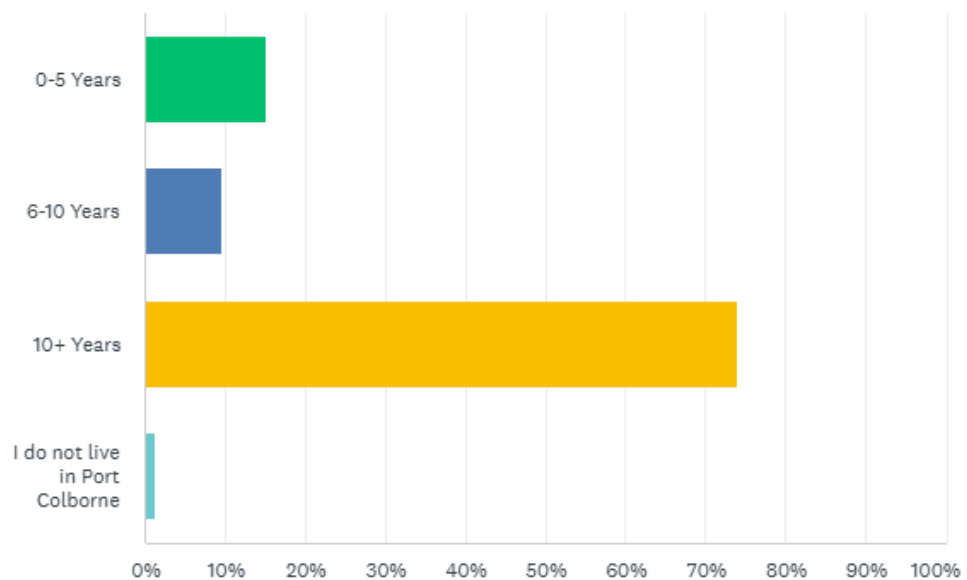
What best describes you?

Answered: 80 Skipped: 0



How long have you lived in Port Colborne?

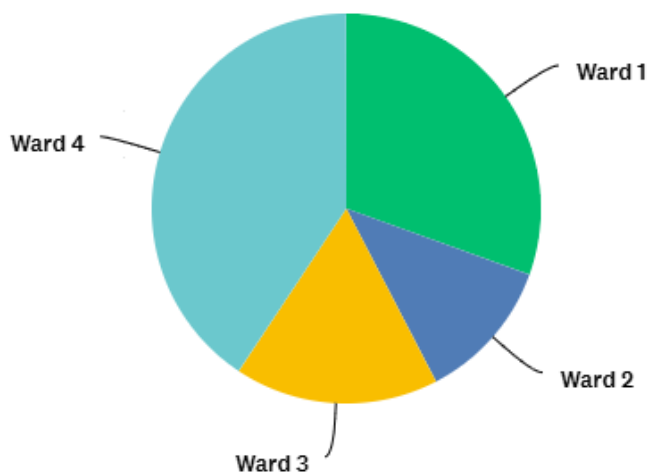
Answered: 73 Skipped: 7





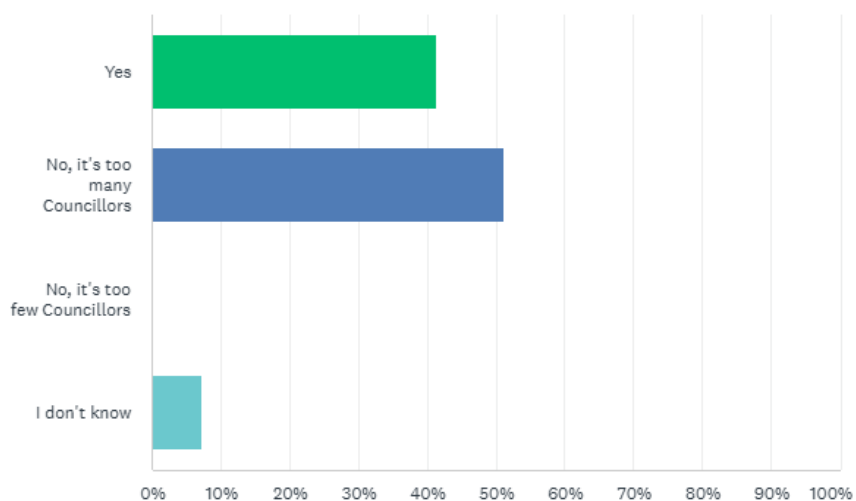
Which ward do you live in?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 21



With Local Councillors representing approximately 5,000 constituents per ward, is a four-ward system with eight Local Councillors (2 per ward) the appropriate number?

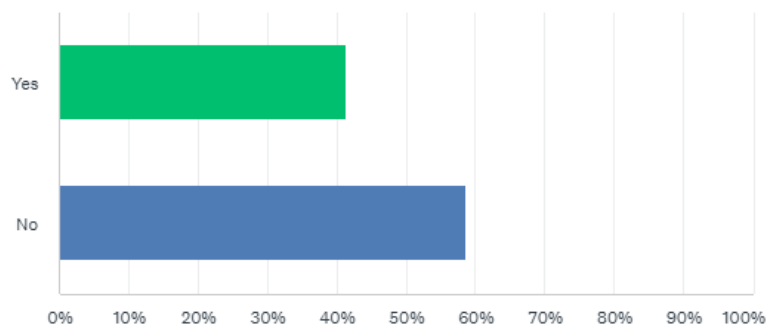
Answered: 41 Skipped: 39





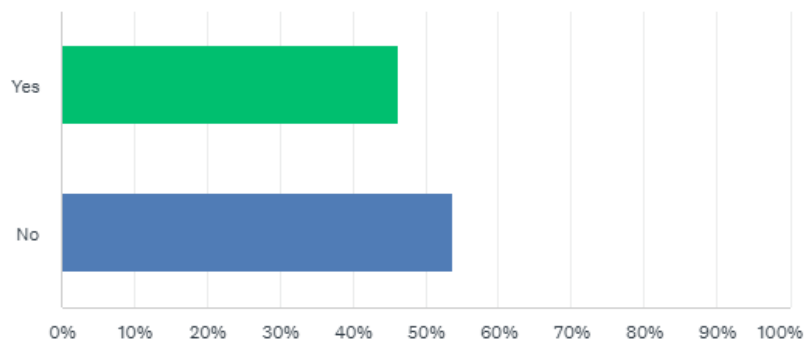
Do you believe that you could be better represented in a smaller ward with only one Councillor elected in that ward?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 39



Do you feel that the workload and/or access to your councillor is evenly divided between your ward's two councillors?

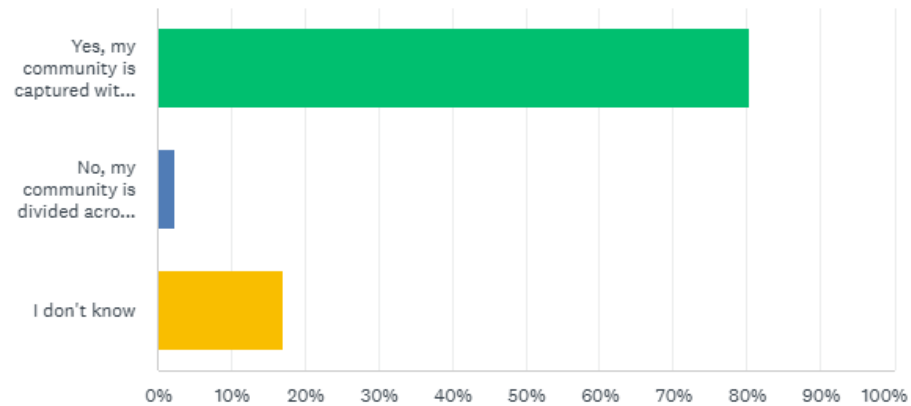
Answered: 41 Skipped: 39





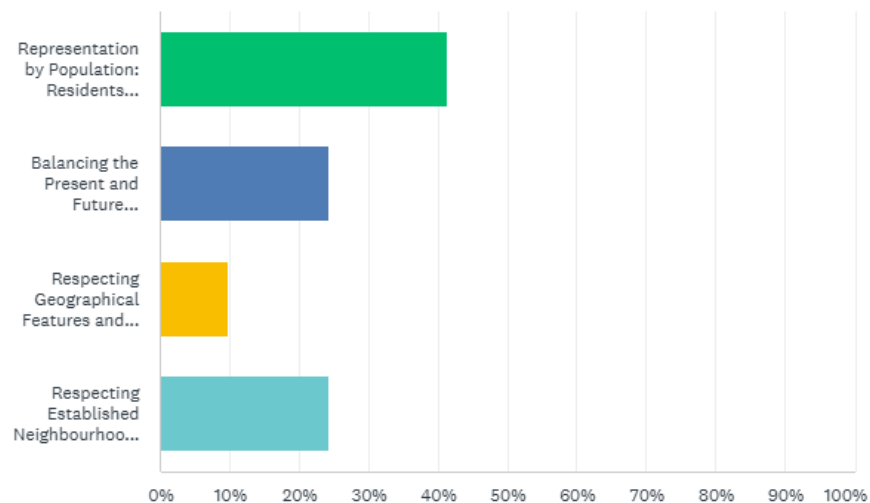
Do the boundaries of the ward you live in capture your community?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 39



Please indicate the ONE guiding principle that should be given the highest priority to ensure effective representation in Port Colborne:

Answered: 41 Skipped: 39





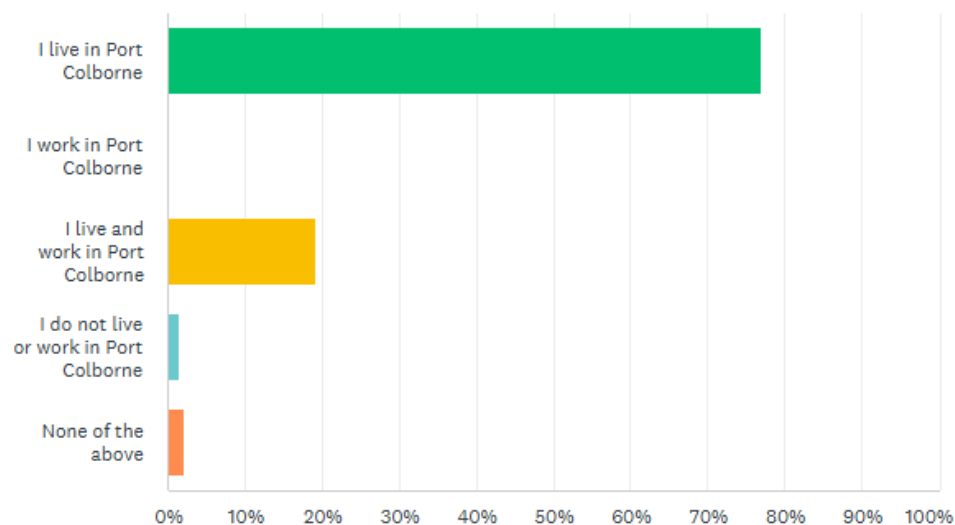
Appendix D

Survey Results (Phase 2)



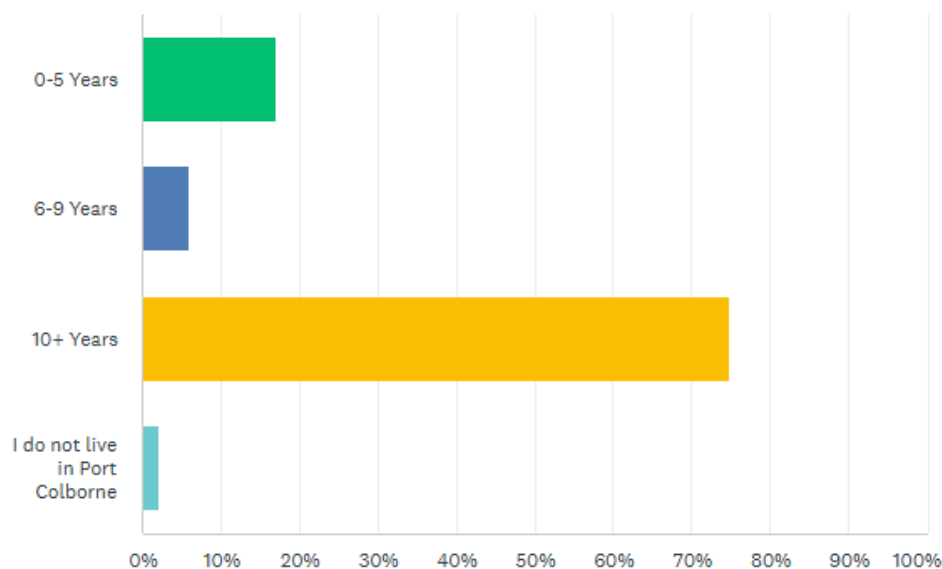
What best describes you?

Answered: 135 Skipped: 0



How long have you lived in Port Colborne?

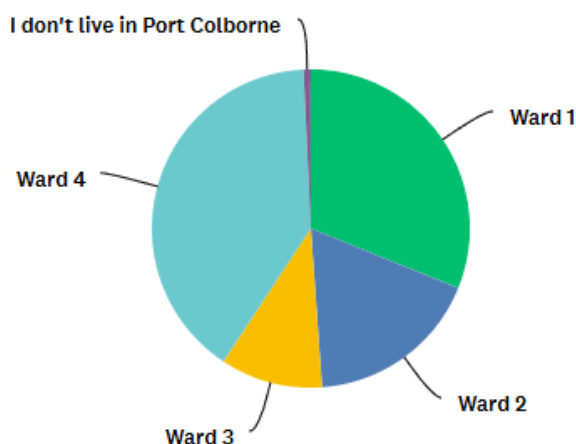
Answered: 135 Skipped: 0





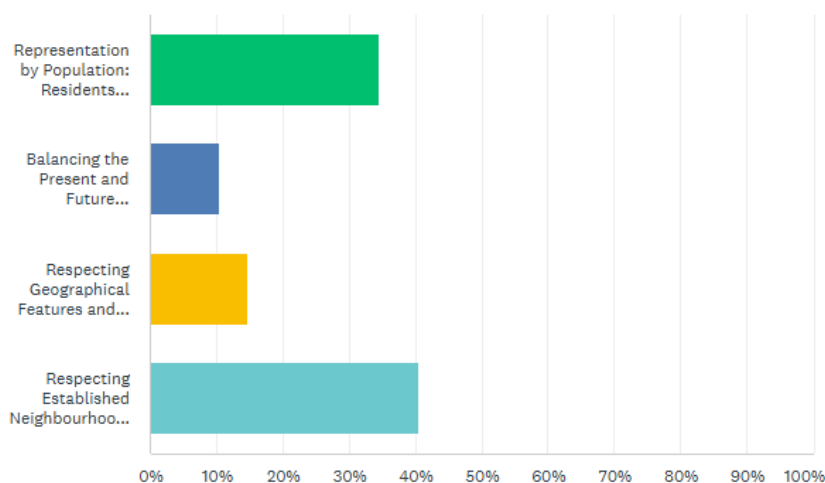
Which ward do you live in?

Answered: 135 Skipped: 0



Please indicate the ONE guiding principle that you believe should be given the greatest priority to ensure effective voter representation as we assess the current ward makeup in Port Colborne:

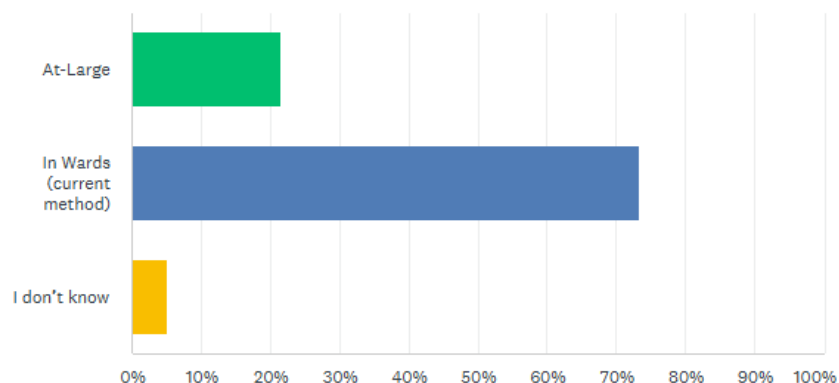
Answered: 116 Skipped: 19





Do you support the election of City councillors in wards or in an at-large system (where all candidates appear on a single City-wide ballot)?

Answered: 116 Skipped: 19



Which of the preliminary options do you prefer?

Answered: 89 Skipped: 46

