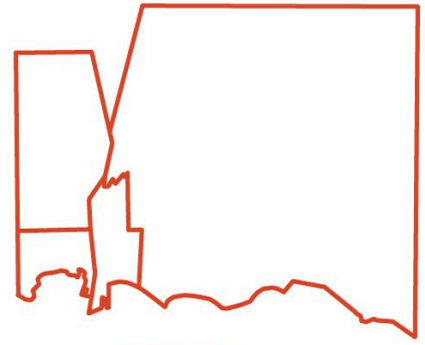




PORT COLBORNE

WARD BOUNDARY REVIEW



2024/2025 Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review

City of Port Colborne

Preliminary Options Report

April 29, 2025

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1. Background

The City of Port Colborne has 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 is to prepare the City of Port Colborne Council to make decisions on whether to maintain the existing electoral structure or to make changes. This report provides a set of alternative council composition and ward boundary designs that have been created based on preliminary research and the first round of public consultation with the residents of Port Colborne.

The review is premised on the democratic expectation that municipal representation in Port Colborne would be effective, equitable, and an accurate reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and people across the City.

2. Study Objective

The project has 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 awareness and feedback 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 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.

The Discussion Papers also provided a set of guiding principles that will inform 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 over-arching principle of effective representation.

Each principle is described in detail in Discussion Paper E and can be found on the City's web page.^[1]

The purpose of this Preliminary Options Report is to provide:

- A summary of the work completed to date;
- A summary of the information received from the public engagement sessions and tools, such as the survey and the website; and
- A series of preliminary ward boundary options for consideration.

3. Project Structure and Timeline

Council adopted the terms of reference for the C.C.W.B.R. in the spring of 2024. Work completed to date includes:

- Research and data compilation;

^[1] www.portcolborne.ca/wbr



- Interviews with councillors, the mayor, and municipal staff; and
- Public consultation on the existing ward structure.

Interviews with staff and Council and meetings with the clerk's office and other staff concerning this study were conducted both virtually and in person. The Consultant Team also conducted a workshop with Council on September 4, 2024, and two public open houses were held on December 9, 2024, at Port Colborne City Hall.

4. Existing Electoral Structure

The *Municipal Act, 2001*, establishes that the council of a “local municipality” must consist of “a minimum of five members, one of whom shall be the head of council” (subsection 217 (1) 1) and that the head of council (the mayor) “shall be elected by general vote” (subsection 217 (1) 3). Furthermore, the “members, other than the head of council, shall be elected by general vote or wards or by any combination of general vote and wards” (subsection 217 (1) 4).

There are nine members of Port Colborne City Council comprising the mayor (elected at-large) and eight councillors. Port Colborne therefore elects four more council members than the legislatively established minimum of five and its Council is the average size across other Niagara Region municipalities (see Discussion Paper B).

A deputy mayor is assigned from among the current councillors on a rotating basis for a six-month period, as authorized by 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.

Port Colborne's eight councillors are elected from four wards (two per ward) – a system that 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 current 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.

It is important for this review to note that a distinguishing feature of the Port Colborne Council is its “district magnitude” (that is, the number of seats to be elected in each ward). For decades, Port Colborne has elected two representatives per ward, in



contrast to the single-member ward system, which is widely used across Ontario municipalities. Since the *Municipal Act, 2001* makes no reference to these alternative arrangements, the “council composition” component of this review requires the Consultant Team to explore the implications of two-member wards as part of its evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of the present electoral system in Port Colborne – a perspective initially raised in Discussion Paper D and addressed further in Part 8 of this report.

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

As previously discussed, a basic premise of representative democracy in Canada is the notion that the geographic areas used to elect a representative should be reasonably balanced with one another in terms of population. Accordingly, a detailed population estimate for the City of Port Colborne, including its constituent wards and communities, was prepared using the most recent Census (2021). This estimate allows for the evaluation of the existing ward structure and contributes to the subsequent development of alternatives based on the population parity principle.

The City of Port Colborne is forecast to experience population growth over the next decade and beyond. For this reason, it is important that this study apply the population parity principle to both existing and future-year 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 for the 2025 to 2036 period, consistent with the City’s 2024 Development Charges Background Study and conversating with City staff was developed at a sub-municipal level. The results of this analysis are discussed below.

5.1 Existing Population and Structure

As mentioned, 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 5-1, 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 5-1
City of Port Colborne
2025 Population by Ward

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

5.2 Forecast Population Growth, 2025 to 2036

In accordance with the City's 2024 Development Charges Background Study, discussion 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 development along Killaly St. W (including the development east of the quarry ponds) along with other developments in the planning stages. The results are presented by the existing ward structure in Table 5-2.



Table 5-2
City of Port Colborne
2036 Population by Ward

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

6. Public Consultation

The first phase of the C.C.W.B.R. incorporated a public engagement component that was delivered both online and in-person and designed to:

- Inform Port Colborne residents 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.

Two in-person consultation sessions were conducted on December 9, 2024. The sessions were drop-in, carousel type sessions with presentation boards as well as City staff and the Consultant Team present to answer questions. Discussion papers, maps, informational videos are all available on the City's website: www.portcolborne.ca/wbr (see Appendix B for more details).

Through the public consultation sessions, a survey, and the project website's contact information, participants were invited to provide their input/opinions with respect to the following:



- Existing ward structure – What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current ward structure?
- Existing council composition – Does the two-councillor per ward system work for the City of Port Colborne?
- Guiding principles – Which guiding principles should be given the greatest priority in the development of ward boundaries?

The feedback and comments collected through the public consultation process are reflected in the analysis presented below and have helped inform the preliminary set of 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 C.C.W.B.R.s, along with best practices, to develop the preliminary options presented herein.

7. What We Heard

To promote public engagement in the C.C.W.B.R., the City of Port Colborne created a project web page for all documents necessary to give residents an informed voice. All subsequent communications could then direct people to that web page, through social media and other forms of outreach. Members of the public were able to visit the site, read up on context, download a background report and, most importantly, they were urged to complete a survey. The Consultant Team also prepared a whiteboard-style explainer video describing the overall process of the C.C.W.B.R.

The public survey was a key tool for collecting input from as many residents as possible and gave some of the best high-level insight into the views and perspectives of Port Colborne's residents. The survey had 80 people responding to some or all questions; the detailed summary of these results can be found in Appendix A. The survey results tended to confirm what earlier research had indicated:

- About one half of the survey respondents (51.22%) thought that having eight local councillors, with two elected from each ward, was too many. Meanwhile, 41.46% of respondents thought it was adequate for their needs, and 7.32% were unsure.
- Approximately 58.54% of respondents believe that they would not be better represented in a smaller ward with only one councillor elected in that ward, while 41.46% believe that they would.



- Most importantly for the next phase of the project, respondents prioritized representation by population (41.46%) as the most important guiding principle. The principles of “balancing the present and future population distribution” and “respecting established neighbourhoods and communities” were equally prioritized by respondents at 24.39%. Respecting geographical features and defining natural and infrastructure boundaries was prioritized by the fewest number of people (9.76%).

The survey also included several questions that were not multiple choice and, instead, were open-ended, giving respondents the opportunity to submit longer, written responses about issues they considered important. In total, 22 respondents gave their views on what they regard as the strengths of the existing ward system, and 21 respondents shared views on its weaknesses. There were two major recurrent themes that arose in these responses. First, many of the respondents gave further support to the prioritization of representation by population over the other guiding principles noting that the size of wards is inconsistent both geographically and in population. Second, many respondents voiced the importance of the respecting established neighbourhoods and communities’ principle, highlighting the differing community needs within Port Colborne (east and west of the canal, lakeshore, rural area, Sherkston, urban area).

8. Evaluation of the Existing Council Structure

Determining the composition of the Port Colborne Council involves addressing three interrelated questions: Will the City continue to be divided into electoral districts (wards) to elect councillors? If the City is divided into electoral districts, how many councillors will be elected in each one? In total, how many councillors will be elected? These topics were raised initially in Discussion Paper D for information purposes but will be considered more analytically here as they frame the preliminary options that follow.

As noted earlier, there are currently eight councillors elected in Port Colborne in a symmetrical arrangement (that is, two councillors are elected in each of the four wards). The mayor is elected at-large.

Setting aside for the moment the number of councillors, what are the implications of dissolving the wards so that all councillors are elected in a single multi-member electoral district: that is, in an at-large or general vote system? Such an arrangement is permitted under Ontario legislation and many cities (such as Niagara Falls, Brockville,



and North Bay) have chosen to elect councillors in this way. Advocates for an at-large model argue that voters have a greater choice since they can select the candidates who they think will do the best job for the municipality, rather than limiting their choice to the candidates who happen to run in their own ward. Others suggest that an at-large system both assumes and fosters a sense of overall community identity and encourages candidates and electors to consider the entire municipality rather than parts of it.

On the other hand, wards guarantee that different geographical communities have representation, and residents are more likely to feel that they have their own members on Council, who may be more accessible and willing to advance their concerns. At-large elections mean that many names may appear on the ballot, making it more difficult to decide which candidates to support. For example, in the 2022 municipal election, there were 29 candidates seeking 10 seats on City Council in Stratford and 26 candidates seeking eight seats on City Council in Niagara Falls.

In the perspective of the Consultant Team, the geography, economy, and present and future demographic features of Port Colborne would not be well served by dissolving the wards in favour of an at-large system. While elected councillors are expected to serve the interests of the whole City (as implied in their oath of office), a system in which each part-time councillor is accountable to more than 22,000 constituents may not be conducive to the achievement of effective representation. The C.C.W.B.R. will move forward on the basis that wards will be maintained in Port Colborne.

Following from that premise, what are the implications of two-member wards? In a municipal system with “part-time” representatives, ^[2] some believe it is an advantage to have two members serving in each ward. This implies to many constituents that there will be consistent representation and that someone will be able to receive requests for service and information as needed if one of the councillors is unavailable for whatever reason. A two-member ward provides two outlets for residents to access municipal services, in addition to municipal staff.

^[2] In Discussion Paper D, we observed that the term “part time” does not fully explain the complexity or time commitments required to be a municipal councillor. Nevertheless, the compensation and traditional characterization of municipal councillors in almost all Ontario municipalities assume they play a “part-time” role.



The potential downside, however, is that it also creates a blurred accountability structure between the two representatives who, on some questions on the Council agenda, may take opposite viewpoints, thereby cancelling out the view of residents of the ward. In two-member wards, both councillors are expected to respond to all residents, not half of them; as well, for various reasons, one councillor may be more responsive to residents than the other, leading to an unbalanced workload for the councillors. Finally, there may also be confusion about who is responsible for which requests for service or information from residents, thereby hampering effective representation.

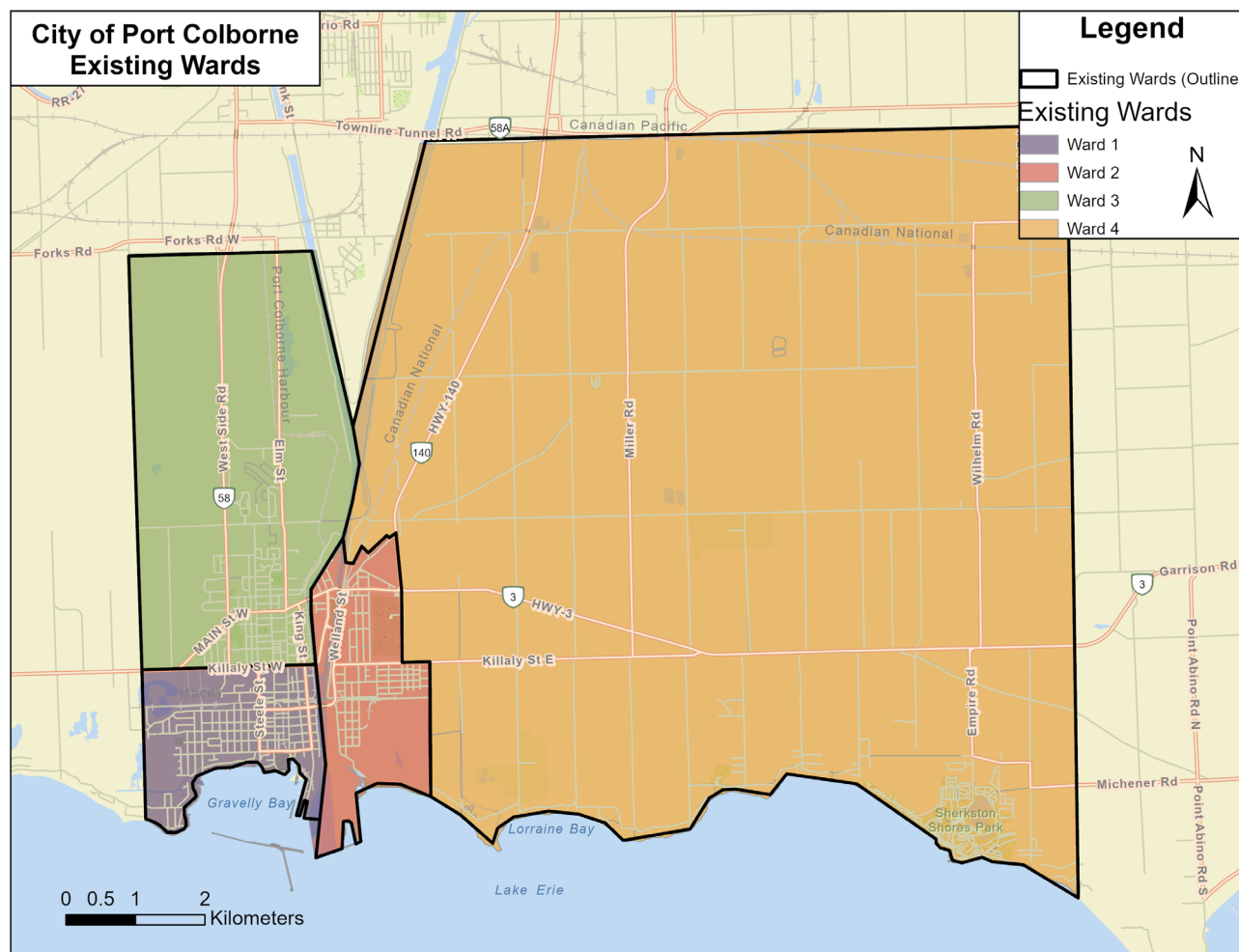
If Port Colborne residents are prepared to consider one-member wards, there are additional implications in relation to the composition of council. For example, the overall size of council could be changed more easily while still meeting the threshold set in the *Municipal Act, 2001*. Even if there are still eight councillors, the wards could be smaller in area and population. Both changes could improve the possibility of reaching the goal of effective representation.

The Consultant Team is not recommending one model over the other at this point but will offer Preliminary Options that retain the four-ward, two-member combination, as well as others that include three wards with two members, as well as six and eight wards with single members. Implicit in these options is the possibility that the size of future councils in Port Colborne could be different.

A preliminary evaluation of the existing ward structure included in Discussion Paper F addressed the wards in terms of the four guiding principles. For reference, the current wards are presented in Figure 8-1. The survey conducted as part of the initial phase of public consultation asked respondents to assess the current wards in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. This section revisits that evaluation, integrating information received during consultation and addressing certain challenges identified in the existing ward system.



Figure 8-1
City of Port Colborne
Existing Ward Structure





8.1 Balancing Present and Future Population Distribution Among the Wards

One of the basic premises of representative democracy in Canada is the belief that the geographic areas used to elect a representative should be reasonably balanced with one another in terms of population. This is the concept of representation by population (“rep by pop”) or “one person, one vote” – where the vote of any one person carries roughly the same weight as that of any other person. In some places (such as parts of the United States), this principle of population parity is enforced rigorously – almost to the exclusion of any other factor – so that there is no noticeable variation in the population of electoral units within a particular jurisdiction.

In the Carter decision,^[3] however, the majority of the Supreme Court understood that Canadian electoral law has never been driven by the need to achieve “full parity” in the population of electoral divisions. The Court concluded that some degree of variation from parity (“relative parity”) may be justified and, at times, even necessary “on the grounds of practical impossibility or the provision of more effective representation.”

Since there are variations in the densities and character of communities and neighbourhoods across Port Colborne, the guiding principles make clear that some flexibility in applying the principle of representation by population is acceptable. That is, the concept of “equitable” (that is, fair) representation – not necessarily “equal” representation – is legitimate, although the closer the population of the wards is to parity, the more the entire design can be assessed as successful.

As a working premise, a range of variation of 25% above or below the optimal ward population will be considered acceptable in this review. This is a generous range of tolerance from parity, and more restrictive than long-standing parameters for the federal redistribution process, but in the absence of any guidance in the *Municipal Act, 2001* or provincial regulations, it is a reasonable range of variation for a municipality like Port Colborne.

The goal in any case will be to reduce the range of variation among the wards as much as possible. In the Consultant Team’s experience, developing wards within a narrower

^[3] Reference re: Provincial Electoral Boundaries (Saskatchewan) [1991] 2 S.C.R.



range of population variation can make the successful achievement of the other recognized guiding principles more difficult.

The degree of parity in each ward will be determined through the calculation of what will be called an “optimal” ward population in Port Colborne, a figure computed by dividing the population by the number of wards in the City (see Table 8-1). The population of a ward will be considered “optimal” when it falls within 5% above or below that number (noted in green). A ward population would be considered within the acceptable population range if it is between 5% and 25% of the “optimal” population (noted in pink). Populations that are above or below 25% of the “optimal” population are considered outside the acceptable range (noted in red). It is important to remember that, as the overall population of the City changes, the “optimal” population size of a ward will also change.

Table 8-1
City of Port Colborne
Optimal Range for a Four-Ward System

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

As noted above, in Discussion Paper F the Consultant Team provided a preliminary evaluation of the ward boundary system. It was determined that the current system was largely successful in respecting established neighbourhoods and partially successful in respecting geographical features and infrastructure boundaries – two of the specific guiding principles. The Consultant Team concluded, however, that there were some challenges related to the distribution of the City’s population across the four wards. Although the population of all the wards was found to be within the optimal/average



range ($\pm 25\%$), as addressed in Discussion Paper F and below, using 2021 Census population data, the two present wards west of the Welland Canal (Wards 1 and 3) were significantly higher than optimal, while the two present wards east of the Canal were significantly lower than optimal. Overall, it was argued that the ward system did not fully provide effective representation for the residents of Port Colborne, concluding that a review of the wards is due.

Based on the figure calculated for the City's overall 2025 population (21,929) and a four-ward system, the optimal population would be 5,323, as shown in Table 8-2.

Table 8-2
City of Port Colborne
Estimated Population by Existing Ward, 2025

Ward	2025 Total Population	2025 Population Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	6,178	1.16	O+
Ward 2	4,248	0.80	O-
Ward 3	6,083	1.14	O+
Ward 4	4,782	0.90	O-
City-wide	21,292	-	-
Optimal Population	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.

Population data suggests that by the 2026 municipal election, the four present wards will all be within the acceptable range of variance ($\pm 25\%$). However, there remains a sizable disparity between the population of the smallest and largest wards. The 2025 population distribution shows a gap of 1,900 between the largest and smallest wards. To repeat a point made just above, this disparity is mostly seen when comparing the eastern and western portions of the City on either side of the Welland Canal. Wards 1 and 3 on the western side of the canal have far higher populations than the two on the eastern side (Wards 2 and 4).

As in the previous population principle, the goal is to design a system that will comprise wards that are generally in equilibrium to one another as growth takes place. The



concept of an optimal ward size (with an associated range of variation) will again be used to assess the success of the individual wards and the overall configuration, making use of a population and housing forecast for Port Colborne and its communities for the 2021 to 2036 period.

Table 8-3
City of Port Colborne
Population Distribution in the Existing Wards in 2025 and 2036

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	-	-

^[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.

These forecasts show that the pattern of population imbalance present in 2025 is maintained and is forecast to worsen by 2036 in the sense that the gap between the largest and smallest wards rises to over 2,400. Based upon the empirical evidence, the present wards are unlikely to ensure that the population growth principle can be met over the next decade. In addition, and as mentioned earlier, the imbalance in population between the east and west side of the Canal also hinders the representation by population principle.

8.2 Respecting Established Neighbourhoods and Communities

The community of interest principle addresses two perspectives: what is divided by ward boundaries and what is joined together? The premise is that a municipality like Port Colborne is home to numerous residential neighbourhoods that may have deep historical roots, but they can also be social, economic, or religious in nature.



The first priority is that communities ought not to be divided internally; as a rule, lines are drawn around communities, not through them. Secondly, as far as possible, wards should be cohesive units composed of areas with common interests related to representation, not just contrived arithmetical divisions of the City.

Wards should have a “natural” feel to those who live within them, meaning that they should have established internal communication and transportation linkages and boundaries should be drawn taking existing connections into consideration. This is done to avoid creating wards that combine communities with dissimilar interests and no obvious patterns of interaction.

Port Colborne has traditionally been composed of several identifiable communities of interest of varying sizes and types. Several of these communities are in the City’s large rural ward (Ward 4). Parts of Wards 2 and 3 could also be considered to have rural populations. In the public consultations, some participants also referred to an “east-west divide” of sorts, with communities on either side of the Welland Canal having different demographics, values, and cultures (see also section 8.3).

At present, most ward boundaries respect these communities within Port Colborne. Wards 1 and 2, for instance, each include well-established residential neighbourhoods and Ward 4 includes much of the rural population of the City. Ward 4 also contains the Sherkston Shores community in its entirety. The one exception to this is Ward 3, which includes both suburban residential neighbourhoods and rural lands roughly between Stonebridge Drive and the northern municipal boundary.

Given the complexity of the entire urban community, it is unlikely that all the current wards consist of coherent collections of communities of interest, but the configuration can still be considered largely successful in meeting the principle.

8.3 Respecting Geographical Features and the Defining Natural and Infrastructure Boundaries

Ward boundaries should be easily recognizable and take advantage of natural and built geographic features such as arterial roads, waterways, and railway lines. Often these features already tend to separate communities within the City, which usually explains their historical use as boundary lines between existing wards and as informal boundaries for residential communities.



Port Colborne's most significant physical boundary is the Welland Canal, which effectively bisects the community and is presently the boundary between Wards 1 and 3 on the west and Wards 2 and 4 on the east. In the first round of consultations, 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.

The northern boundary of Ward 1 runs along Killaly Street from the Canal to the western municipal boundary with Wainfleet Township, a slightly arbitrary boundary that cuts across the existing urban community. The boundary between Wards 2 and 4 does not follow well-known or easily identifiable features in the north.

On the whole, the present Port Colborne wards cannot be said to consistently reflect natural or infrastructure boundaries.

8.4 Effective Representation

As stated in Discussion Paper C, the guiding principles are subject to the overarching principle of “effective representation,” meaning that, to the extent possible, each resident should have comparable access to an elected representative and each councillor should speak on behalf of an equal number of residents. Deviations from population parity can be justified if they contribute to more effective representation.

Effective representation is not based on the performance of incumbent councillors. It is, rather, a concept that is premised on serving the ongoing relationship between residents and elected officials, not just on the way the resident is “counted” on election day, although that is an important component of a fair system of representation. The expectation should be that the wards support the capacity of councillors to represent their constituents, rather than hinder councillors performing those responsibilities. Are the individual wards plausible and coherent units of representation? Are they drawn in such a way that representatives can readily play the role expected of them? Do they provide equitable (that is, fair) access to councillors for all residents of the municipality?

Overall, Port Colborne's present wards come close to achieving effective representation in 2024. Primarily, population imbalances undermine the achievement of this principle



over the next decade and in a few cases have an impact on the capacity of some councillors to serve residents today. As well, the significantly different geographic sizes of Wards 1 and 4 have some implications for both the residents and councillors associated with those wards in providing effective representation.

It is possible to meet all these shortcomings by redividing the municipality to provide better, more effective representation through the application of the entire set of guiding principles, as will be demonstrated below.

Background Paper F and this report provide an initial evaluation of the current ward system, and the analysis has revealed aspects that fall short in some regards to meet the ward boundary principles set out for the C.C.W.B.R. The Consultant Team has since taken the feedback received through the various engagement activities and, for the most part, members of the public have confirmed many of the initial perceptions. Overall, the present wards constitute a plausible system for the 2026 municipal election but the same cannot be said about the system's capacity in the future as evaluated in Figure 8-2. Additionally, if Council wanted to consider a change to the composition/size of council, alternative ward configurations would need to be evaluated.



Figure 8-2
City of Port Colborne
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	No	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). The disparity between the most and least populated wards is significant and will worsen over time. Population imbalance between east and west side of canal.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Current ward boundaries largely contain identifiable communities of interest. Future residential growth and new secondary plans are likely to 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. It is noted that the existing system does an adequate job of addressing most of the guiding principles but that alternate configurations could be considered to address some of the identified shortcomings.

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



9. Alternative Ward Boundary Options

The evaluation of the current ward system in Port Colborne suggests that there are some identifiable shortcomings when evaluated against the guiding principles for this C.C.W.B.R. Council could still choose to retain the status quo by turning down all recommended options for an alternative ward configuration. That decision, however, could result in a petition submitted under section 223 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* requesting Council to amend the ward boundaries. The analysis presented here suggests that, while the current system works reasonably well, there are aspects (i.e., some wards' population disparity, future growth) that could benefit from a change in the ward boundaries.

If Council decides to change the ward boundary system, what would alternatives look like? The Consultant Team has prepared preliminary options for consideration at this stage of the C.C.W.B.R. The preliminary options attempt to keep the identifiable communities of interest intact, creating wards with roughly equal populations, and providing for effective representation throughout Port Colborne. Balancing all the guiding principles can pose a challenge, however, given the large geography and uneven population distribution in some areas across the City.

The Consultant Team has prepared nine preliminary options for consideration: two 4-ward options, two 8-ward options, three 3-ward options and two 6-ward options. The four- and eight-ward options would not change the composition of council while the three- and six-ward options involve a reduction in the size of council by two members. The following section provides some commentary on the rationale for the options and an evaluation of each of them in terms of the guiding principles. For this stage of the review, the present and future population distributions will be assessed separately to allow for scenarios that might be more successful in meeting short-term population parity or long-term parity rather than both. What we hear from the community at this stage of the C.C.W.B.R. will assist the Consultant Team in making final recommendations to Council.



9.1 Preliminary Option A (4 wards, 8 councillors)

Preliminary Option A is a status quo option that retains four wards in Port Colborne that would elect eight councillors in two-member wards (the present arrangement).

The four wards presented in Preliminary Option A were developed to try and balance the various guiding principles. That is, provide good population parity amongst the wards while maintaining focus on important communities of interest. Two of the proposed wards are predominantly urban in nature and two combine extensive rural areas with pockets of urban neighbourhoods. Overall, the four wards contain plausible groupings of residents, although the proposed Wards C and D are much larger geographic areas than the two urban wards (proposed Wards A and B). The proposed boundary lines are all clean and straightforward.

The proposed Ward A is identical to the present Ward 1 except for a small area north of Clarence Street that is included in the proposed Ward B. That ward is based on the present Ward 3 since it includes the entire area west of Elm Street between Killaly Street West/Highway 3 and the municipal boundary with Welland. The proposed Ward C includes all territory south of Killaly Street East /Highway 3 between the Canal and the municipal boundary with Fort Erie plus the area between Killaly Street East and Highway 3 east of Lorraine Road. The proposed Ward D crosses the Canal to include all territory east of Elm Street north of Killaly Street East and West except the portion of the present Ward 4 included in the proposed Ward C.

This Preliminary Option achieves a good population distribution in both 2025 and 2036; although the proposed Ward D is in the lower range of population variation in 2025 it includes a major residential development that is forecast to bring it just over the optimal point by 2036. The population disparity between the smallest and largest wards in 2025 was 1,681 but shrinks to 1,000 by 2036, indicating a balanced ward system.



Table 9-1
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option A – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-1
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option A

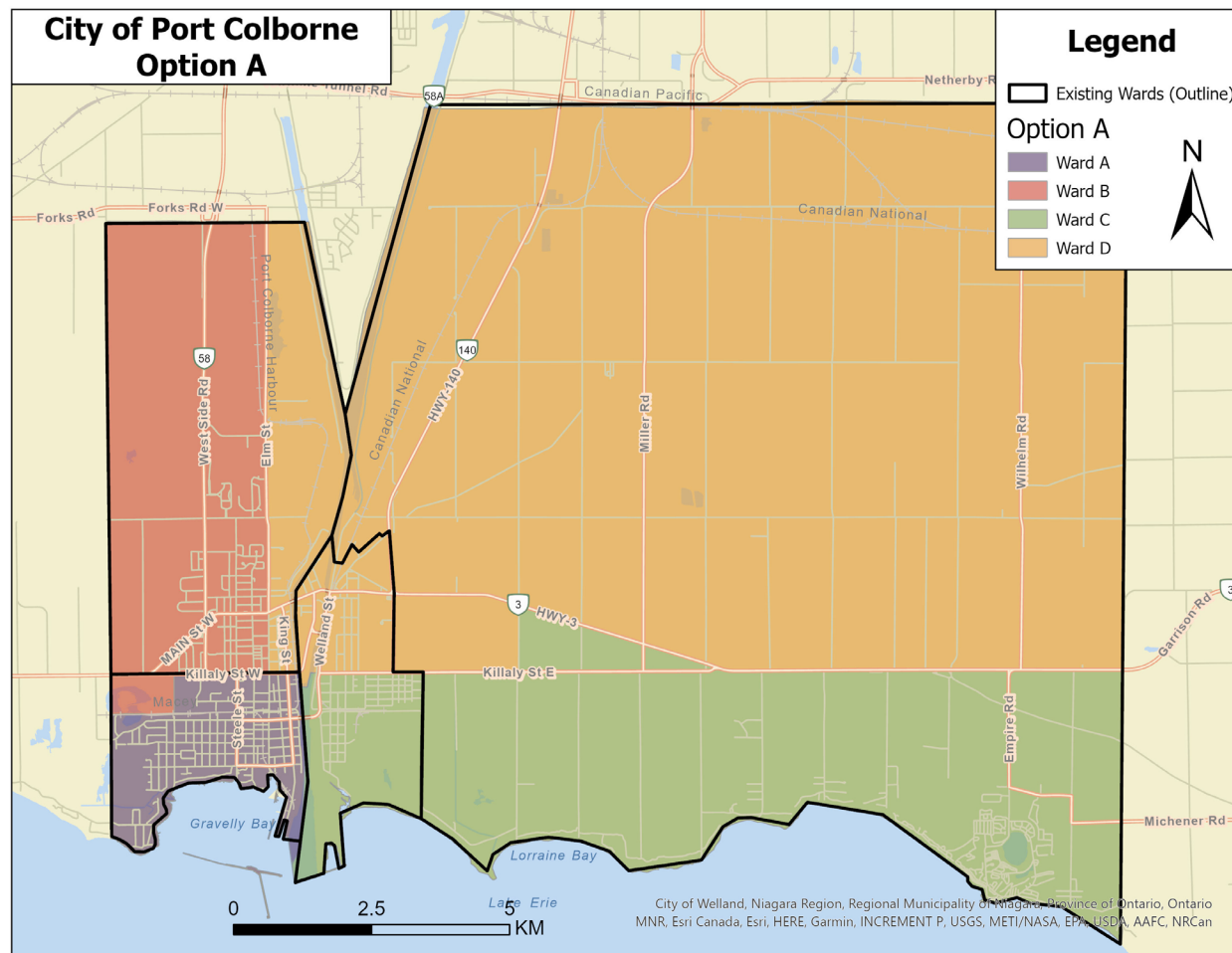




Figure 9-2
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option A – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	Population parity is largely achieved.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Yes	Population parity is maintained to 2036.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Communities of interest are largely comfortably included in single wards, including rural Port Colborne.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Yes	Markers used as boundaries of the wards are straightforward.
Effective Representation	Yes	This option successfully meets the set of 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).



9.2 Preliminary Option B (4 wards, 8 councillors)

Visually, Preliminary Option b presents a “minimal change” map since it strongly resembles the existing ward map even though all the proposed wards are modified versions of the present wards. As is the case with Preliminary Option A, this option retains four wards in Port Colborne that would elect eight councillors in two-member wards (the existing arrangement).

In this Option one of the four wards crosses the Canal: the proposed Ward C adds an area in the present Ward 1 south of Killaly Street and east of Steele Street to the present Ward 2. The only modifications to the present Ward 4 are a minor boundary adjustment between the proposed Wards C and D at the north end of the present Ward 3 to follow Main Street East instead of the irregular line now used and the addition of a part of the present Ward 4 between Elizabeth Street and Lorraine Road between Highway 3 and Killaly Street East. The present Wards 1 and 3 are reconfigured into two 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 and the proposed Ward B 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 one in 2036. The proposed Ward A boundaries divide urban residential neighbourhoods south of Killaly Street, resulting in the alignment of those neighbourhoods with other residential areas east of the Welland Canal. As noted earlier in this report, that arrangement would be seen as acceptable by some residents who suggested to the Consultant Team that communities on both sides of the Canal are similar enough to be placed into a single ward.



Table 9-2
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option B – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-3
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option B

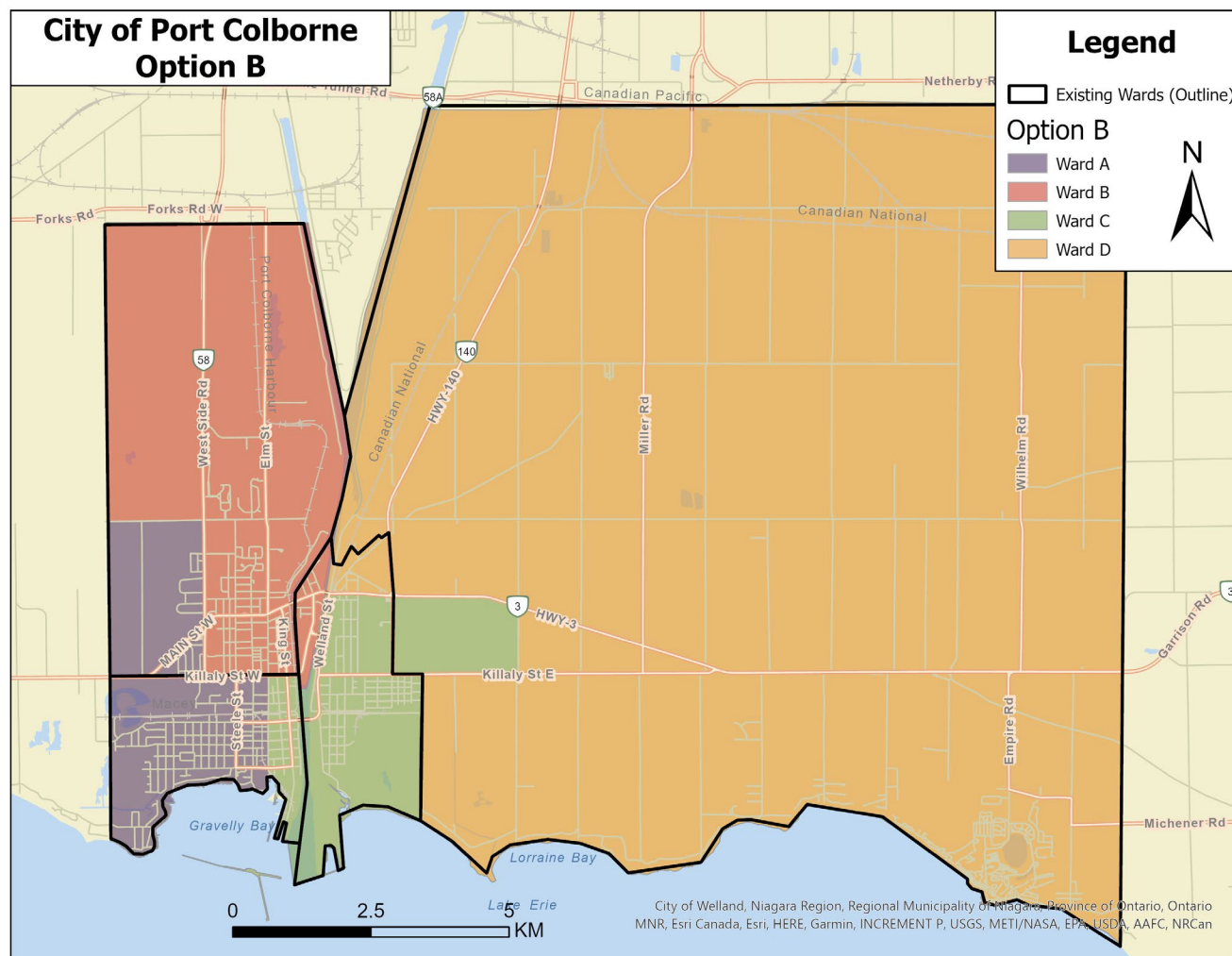




Figure 9-4
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option B – Evaluation Summary

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 achieved.
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).



9.3 Preliminary Option C (8 wards, 8 councillors)

Preliminary Option C is designed to maintain the present composition of Council but proposes that the eight Councillors be elected in one-member wards. Some of the implications of this format for electing Councillors has been discussed in section 4 above but in terms of mapping an eight-ward system, certain limitations implicit in earlier options can be addressed. Most importantly, dividing the City of Port Colborne into eight wards can provide for a ward that reflects an important demographic/geographic feature that is subsumed under the “rural” classification in other options. That is, an eight-ward system makes it possible to distinguish between the rural, primarily agricultural, community of interest and the lakefront communities, notably the residential clusters in and around Sherkston.

In Preliminary Option C, three wards are proposed for the area east of the Welland Canal and four for the area west of the Canal with one ward that crosses the Canal. This configuration roughly parallels the population distribution in the City in 2025 since ~60% resides west of the Canal and in 2036 that is projected to increase to 64%.

The urban neighbourhoods south of Main Street West are included in three proposed wards. The proposed Ward A includes the southwestern part of the City bounded by Steele and Clarence Streets, while the proposed Ward B runs from the Canal to Steele Street and north of Clarence Street between Killaly Street West and the railway. The remaining part of the present Ward 3 is allocated to a proposed ward south of a line joining Barrick Road, West Side Road and Main Street West. The population of the proposed Wards A and B is higher than the other six wards in 2025 but is forecast to remain relatively stable to 2036 with the proposed Ward B at the optimal point. The population of the two other proposed wards west of the Canal are also stable and balanced with one another, with the proposed Ward C at the optimal point.

East of the Canal, the proposed Ward G is the largest ward in area, by far, since it includes most of the present Ward 4 and the proposed Ward H is oriented along the lakeshore, east of Lorraine Road and south of Killaly Street/Highway 3. While there is some agricultural activity in the ward, the configuration recognizes the lakeshore community as different from the remainder of the present Ward 4. The proposed Ward F includes the neighbourhoods west of the canal, south of Killaly Street in the present Ward 2 and extends east to Lorraine Road.



The eighth proposed ward is “mixed” in the sense that it includes urban neighbourhoods on both sides of the canal and rural areas west of the canal. The area moved from the present Ward 4 into the proposed Ward E is expected to experience significant residential development to 2036 to become the largest ward by population but will remain within the acceptable range of variation. It should also be noted that in this option, the proposed residential secondary plan (Elite Homes) would be split between the proposed Wards E and G.

Table 9-3
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option C – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-5
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option C

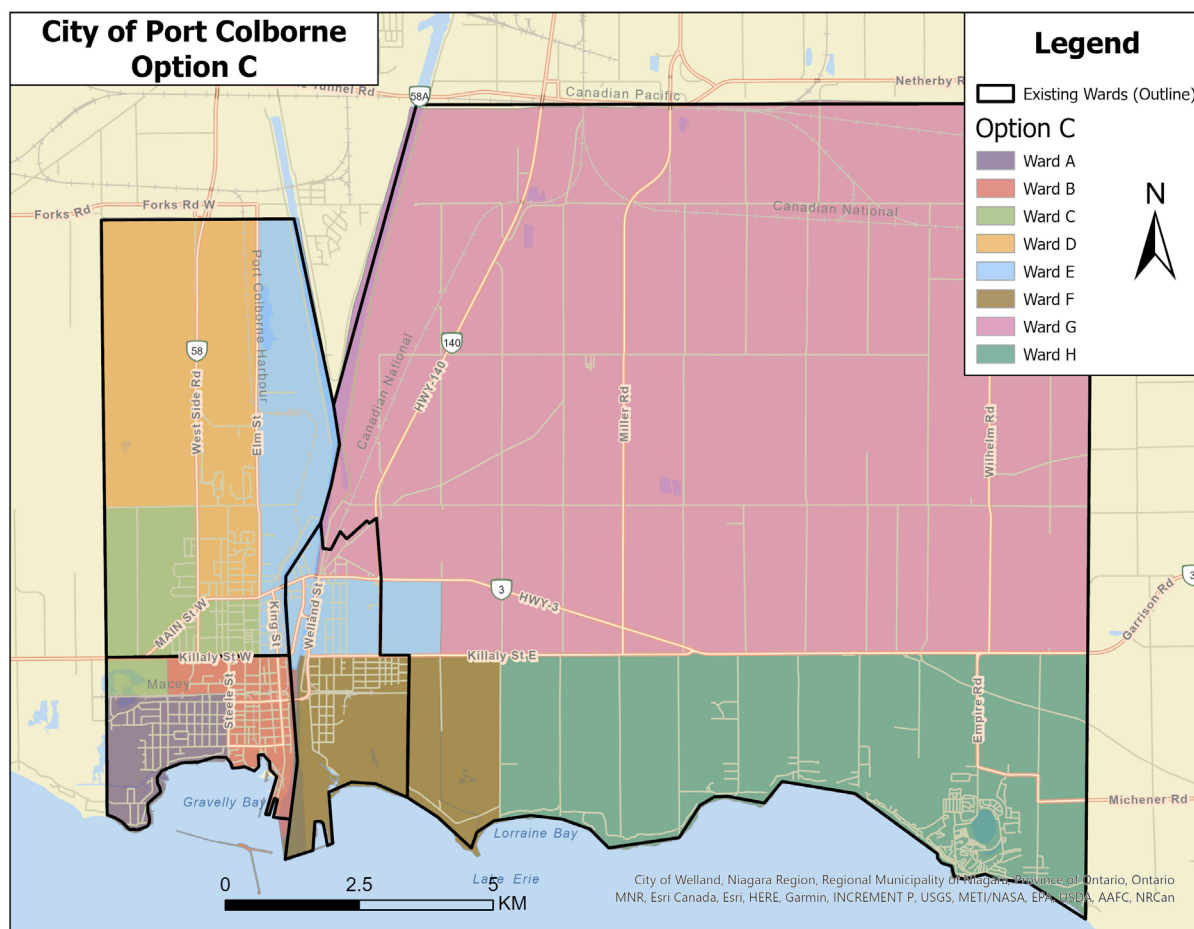




Figure 9-6
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option C – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	Population parity is achieved.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Yes	Significant population growth successfully addressed; three wards are expected to be within the 5% variation range by 2036 election cycle.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Yes	Communities of interest across the City are incorporated into the system as a whole and successfully reflected in most individual wards.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Yes	Markers used as boundaries of the wards are straightforward.
Effective Representation	Yes	Achieves 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).



9.4 Preliminary Option D (8 wards, 8 councillors)

Preliminary Option D, like Preliminary Option C is also designed to maintain the present composition of Council and proposes that the eight Councillors be elected in one-member wards.

The main differences between Preliminary Option C and Preliminary Option D stem from reducing the size of the proposed ward that crosses the Canal and realigning the rural and lakeshore area east of the Canal. In this Option, the eastern boundary of the proposed Ward H is moved from Lorraine Road to Pinecrest Road, and the proposed Ward G is extended to the lakeshore, absorbing that territory south of Killaly Street as well as the corridor between Highway 3 and Killaly Street that was included in the proposed Ward H in Preliminary Option 8-1. The proposed Ward F is located entirely east of the Canal south of Killaly Street and west of Lorraine Road. The proposed Ward E is essentially a square bounded by Killaly Street, Elizabeth Street, Concession Road Two/Barrick Road and Elm Street that includes neighbourhoods on both sides of the Canal.

Proposed wards west of the Canal follow clear markers with two wards south of Clarence Street divided at Steele Street, one ward aligned east-west between Clarence Street and Main Street and the fourth ward consisting of the remaining area of the present Ward 3 with the exception the part assigned to proposed Ward E.

While these proposed wards are all reasonable means of representing existing neighbourhoods and communities of interest in Port Colborne, the more important feature of Preliminary Option D is the successful balancing of the City's population across the eight wards in 2025. Two of the proposed wards are at the cusp of moving outside the acceptable range of population variance (one above and one below) but four of the eight proposed wards are within the 5% variation range. If the priority in this W.B.R. is to address the population imbalance in the present ward system for the 2026 municipal election, this Option appears to be one of the best of the nine options presented in this report.

Preliminary Option D is less successful in its capacity to maintain relative parity while absorbing population change, since by 2036 the forecast shows two proposed wards well above the acceptable range of variation. The most notable change is the doubling of population in the proposed Ward G brought about by the implementation of the



secondary plan east of Elizabeth Street (Elite Homes) in what has traditionally been a rural part of the City. If Council approves a new ward system in Port Colborne using Preliminary Option D, there will likely need to be another W.B.R., possibly after two elections depending on how population growth materializes throughout the City.

Although Preliminary Option D can provide effective representation for residents of Port Colborne for the 2026 municipal election and successfully meets the other guiding principles, it cannot be assessed as fully satisfactory because of potential future population imbalances.

Table 9-4
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option D – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-7
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option D

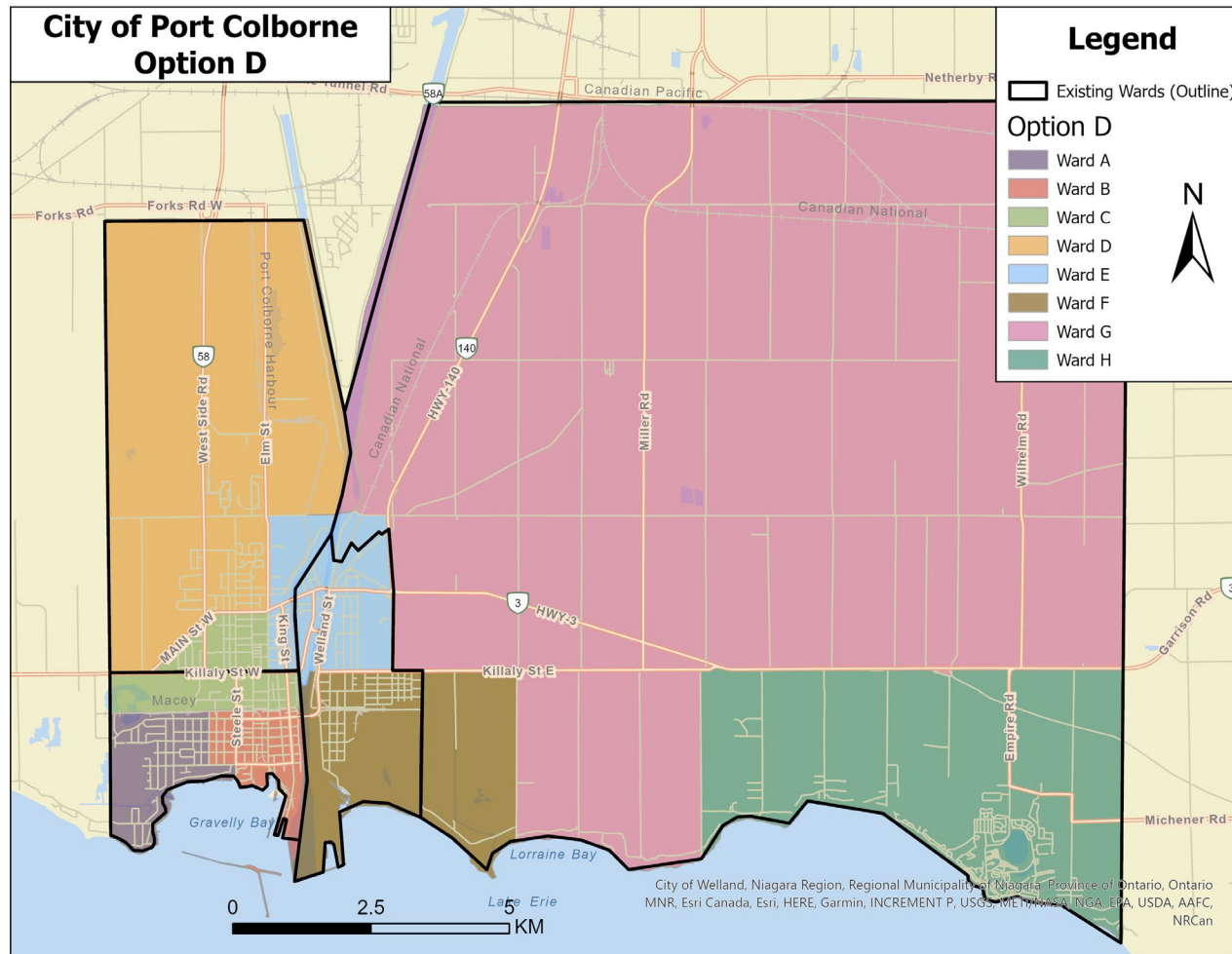




Figure 9-8
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option D – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Largely Successful	Population parity is largely achieved, with four of the wards within the 5% variation range. One ward at the bottom of the range of variation.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	No	One ward outside the 25% variation range by 2036, five others greater than $\pm 10\%$.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Yes	Communities of interest across the City are incorporated into the system as a whole and successfully reflected in most individual wards.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Yes	Markers used as boundaries of the wards are straightforward.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	The impact of population changes limits the achievement of effective representation in the longer term.

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



9.5 Preliminary Option E (3 wards, 6 councillors)

Preliminary Option E can be considered somewhat of a “minimal disruption” option since it preserves two-member wards and assigns most of the rural population to a single ward. The most notable change, however, is the reduction of the number of Councillors from eight to six while targeting the current and future population disparities identified in other options and proposing a ward that crosses the Welland Canal north of Killaly Street.

Specifically, the present Ward 1 south of Killaly Street is modified to add the northern part of the City between West Side Road and the municipal boundary with Wainfleet Township. The proposed Ward B retains the rest of the northern part of the City and adds residential areas east of the Welland Canal between Killaly Street East and Main Street from the present Ward 2 as far east as Snider Road (actual boundary is Census Canada Dissemination Block boundary line). The proposed Ward C includes all the remaining area east of the Canal.

This option was designed to retain some of the existing ward characteristics while addressing the short- and longer-term population distribution issues found in the present system. None of the proposed wards is outside the acceptable range of variation in 2025 and 2036 while one proposed ward is at the optimal point in 2025 and all three in 2036. Most of the forecast population growth is in the proposed Ward B with the gap between the largest and smallest ward falling to 602 residents over that time. The growth is accounted for by including part of the secondary plan east of Elizabeth Street in the proposed Ward B. If there is an appetite to reduce the size of Port Colborne council from nine members to seven and retain two-member wards, Preliminary Option E provides a well-balanced ward configuration.



Table 9-5
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option E – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-9
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option E

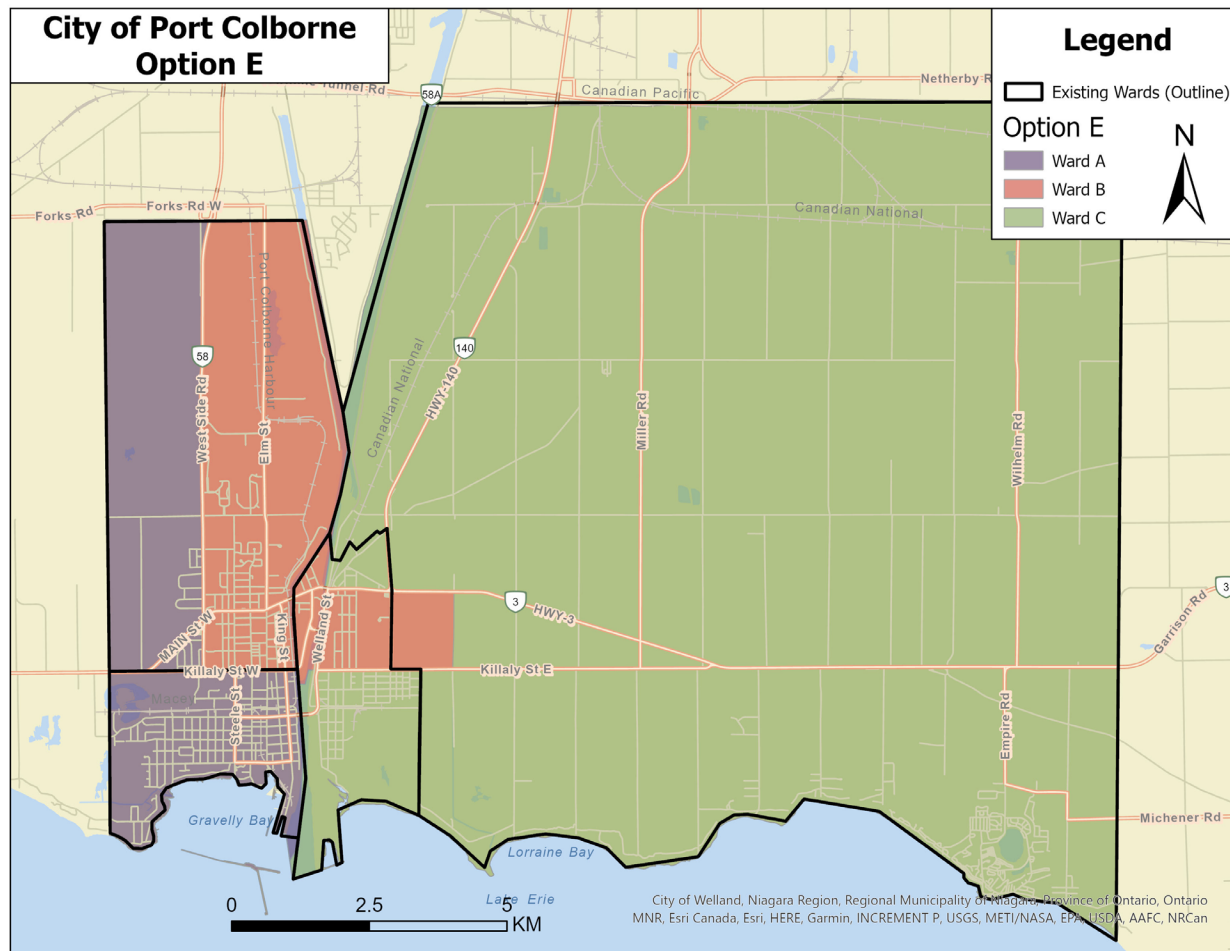




Figure 9-10
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option E – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	Population distribution is balanced in 2025.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Yes	Population distribution is excellent in 2035.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Most communities of interest are located in single wards, although the ward including rural Port Colborne 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).



9.6 Preliminary Option F (3 wards, 6 councillors)

The single difference between Preliminary Option E and Preliminary Option F is the extension of the proposed Ward B to Lorraine Road, thereby including the entire secondary plan east of Elizabeth Street in the proposed Ward B. The net effect is to push the forecast population of the proposed Ward B above the optimal point and the forecast population of the proposed Ward C below the optimal point but both still well within the acceptable range. The overall population distribution is still successful, and the adjustment means the new residential development will be included in a ward that already includes urban neighbourhoods.

Table 9-6
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option F – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-11
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option F

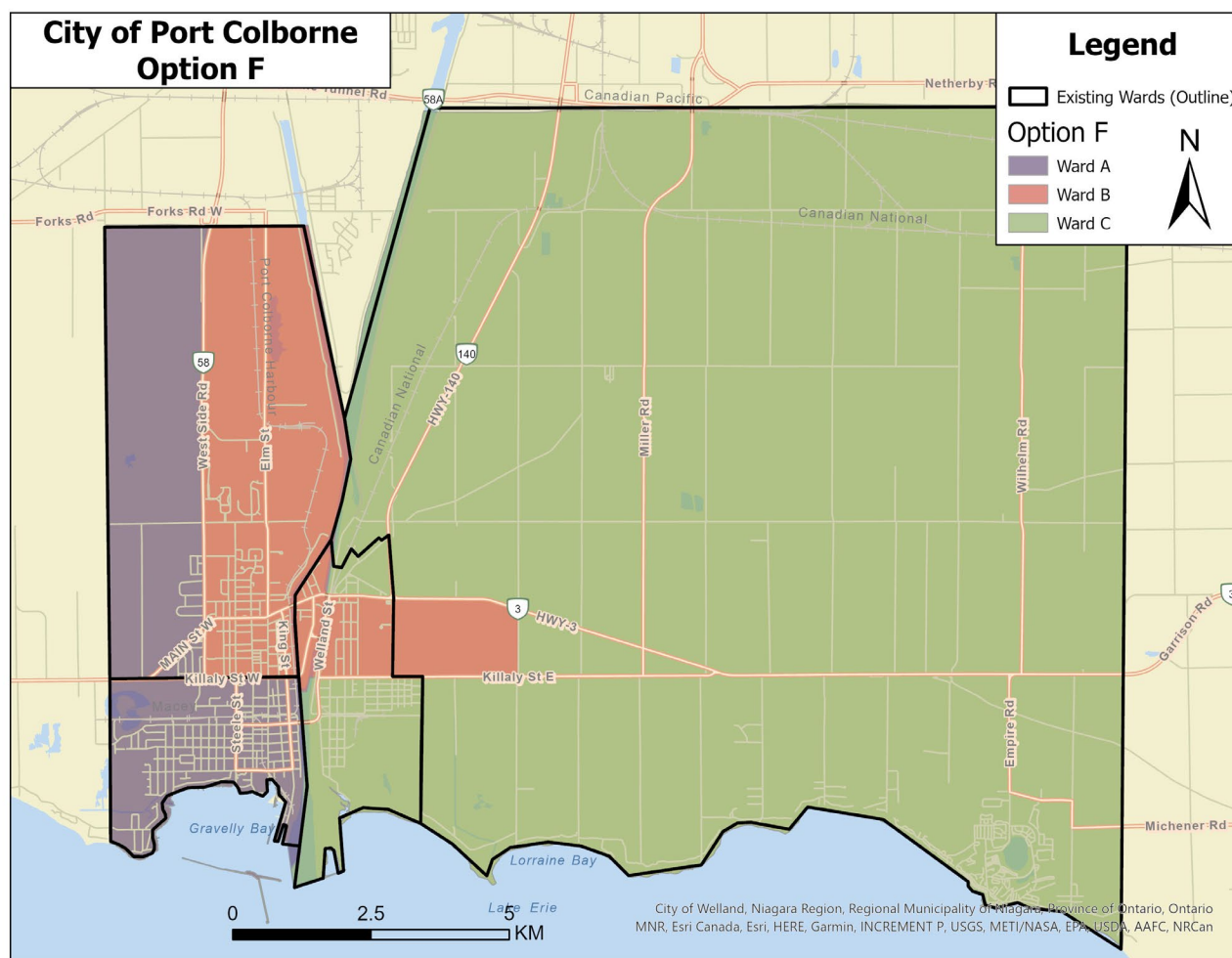




Figure 9-12
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option F – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	Population distribution is balanced in 2025.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Yes	Population distribution is balanced in 2036.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Most communities of interest are located in single wards, although the ward including rural Port Colborne 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).



9.7 Preliminary Option G (3 wards, 6 councillors)

Preliminary Option G, like Preliminary Options E and F, preserves two-member wards and assigns the rural population to a single ward while realigning the urban area into two wards in an east-west format that cross the Welland Canal. The third ward also includes territory on both sides of the Canal.

This option proposes a simple map with only three lines on it: the proposed Ward A includes the present Ward 1 in its entirety plus all the present Ward 2 south of Killaly Street East. The proposed Ward B is essentially a rectangle bounded by the eastern boundary of the present Ward 2 but extended to Concession Road Two, Barrick Road, the municipal boundary with Wainfleet Township and Killaly Street. The proposed Ward C 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 B is innovative in the sense that it attaches neighbourhoods east of the Canal to the similar suburban community north of Killaly Street rather than maintaining the traditional alignment that parallels the Canal. The proposed Ward C 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 considering 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 2035, the forecast population growth does not disturb the shorter-term population balance and in fact, population parity gets better.



Table 9-7
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option G – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-13
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option G

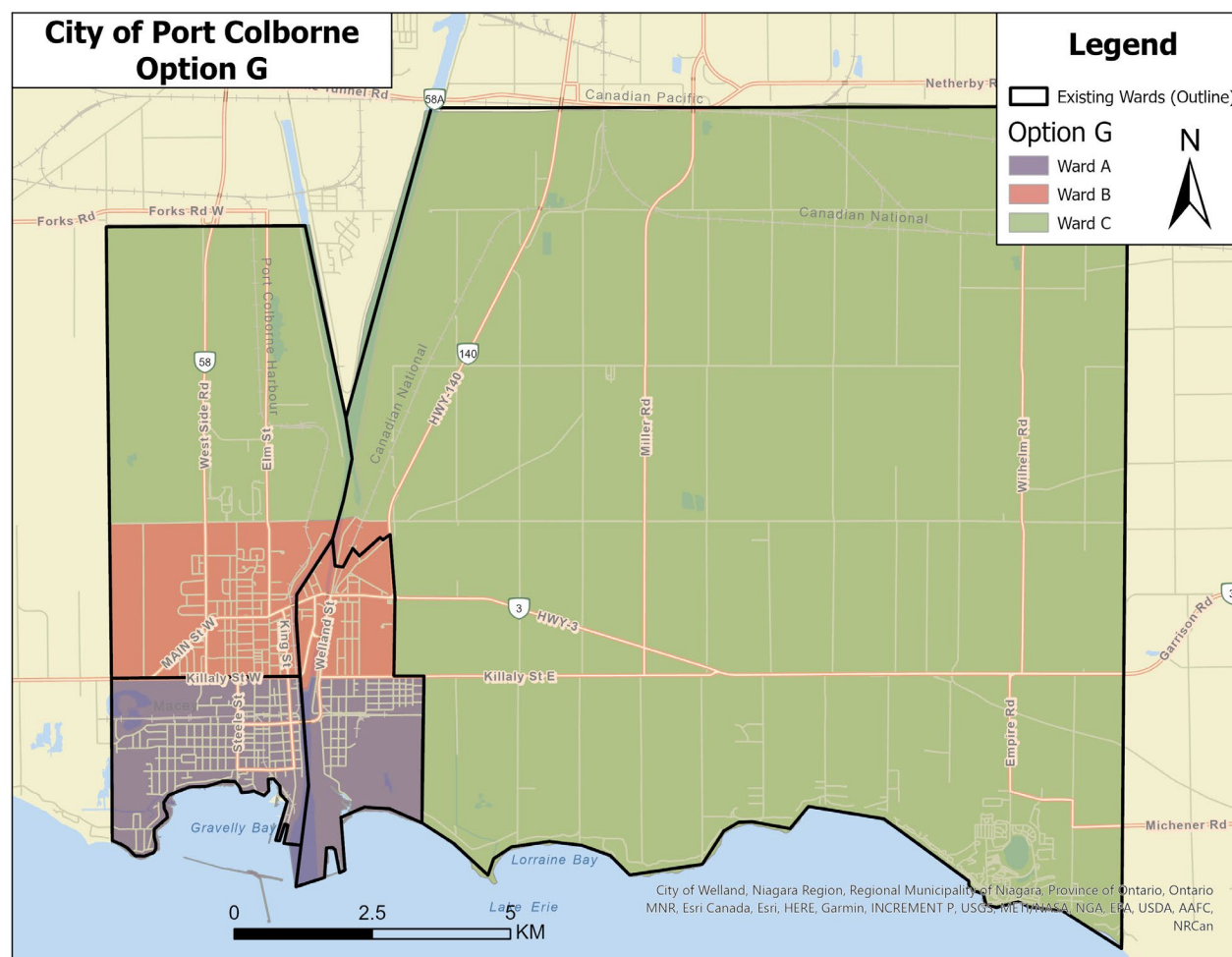




Figure 9-14
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option G – Evaluation Summary

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).



9.8 Preliminary Option H (6 wards, 6 councillors)

Preliminary Option H, like Preliminary Options E to G, is designed to provide for fewer councillors than at present. Where the aforementioned options assumed two-member wards, Preliminary Option H assumes 6 single-member wards.

The map includes three proposed wards west and two east of the Welland Canal with one crossing the Canal. The existing Ward 1 becomes two wards of roughly equal population with the boundary between them running along Steele Street, Clarence Street and the railway. A proposed Ward C takes in a large part of the present Ward 3 north and east of a boundary following Killaly Street, Main Street and Elm Street. The proposed Ward E is east of the Welland Canal from Lake Erie as far north as Main Street and south of Main Street to Pinecrest Road while the proposed Ward F boundary is Highway 140 from the northern municipal boundary as far as Main Street and Pinecrest Road. As such, the proposed Ward F includes most of the territory in the present Ward 4. The proposed Ward D is a V-shaped area on either side of the City of Welland between Highway 140 as far as Main Street on the east and Elm Street on the west but also including a triangular area between Main Street and Killaly Street East.

In the short term the population distribution is reasonably balanced with a variation of about 1,200 residents between the largest and smallest wards in 2025, forecast to drop to less than 800 by 2036. All proposed wards are within the acceptable range of variation in 2025 as are three in 2036; in 2036 the other three (proposed Wards A, B and F) are at the optimal point. Five of the six wards (the exception being proposed Ward D) are plausible groupings of neighbourhoods and communities, although the proposed Ward F is a very large area and the proposed Wards A and C divide the established downtown residential neighbourhoods.

Changes on this scale may make Preliminary Option H less easy to grasp initially but it has merit since it provides a capacity to grow into population parity.



Table 9-8
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option H – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-15
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option H

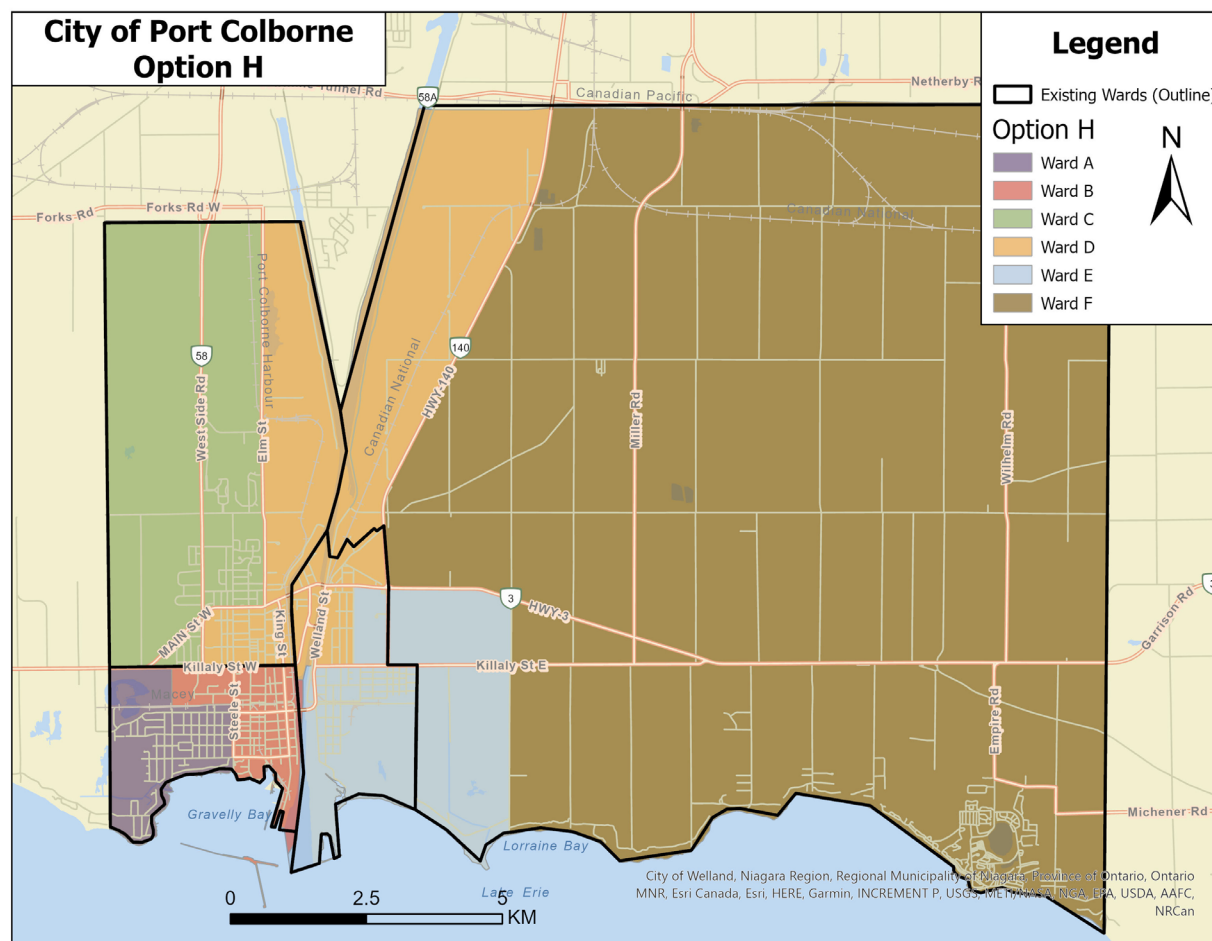




Figure 9-16
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option H – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	Population parity is achieved.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Yes	Population parity is achieved.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Five wards include plausible groupings of communities of interest; urban neighbourhoods divided.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Yes	Markers used as boundaries of the wards are straightforward.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Achieves population parity in the short- and long-term but still includes a 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).



9.9 Preliminary Option I (6 wards, 6 councillors)

Like Preliminary Option H, this option assumes 6 local councillors would be elected in one-member wards. Two of the proposed wards are identical to those in Preliminary Option H (proposed Wards A and C) with significant modifications proposed for the neighbourhoods along Killaly Street east and west of the Canal.

The map proposes three entire wards west and one east of the Welland Canal with two crossing the Canal. All the present four wards are divided in this Option.

The proposed Ward B is a compact urban area west of the Canal that includes both sides of Killaly Street between Clarence Street and Main Street, while the proposed Ward A consists of the rest of the present Ward 1 west of Steele Street. The proposed Ward C is identical to the proposed Ward C in Preliminary Option H: that is, it covers the part of the present Ward 3 north and east of a boundary following Killaly Street West, Main Street and Elm Street.

The boundaries for proposed Ward F are Highway 140 and Elizabeth Street running from the northern municipal boundary as far as Killaly Street East and Pinecrest Road, thereby placing the eastern area of the City in a predominantly rural ward. In this Option the proposed Ward E boundary is drawn along Pinecrest Road and Killaly Street as far as Reuter Road, then along Durham Street on the east side of the canal, the railway on the west side of the canal, to Steele Street. The result is a ward aligned east-west that mixes rural areas east of Durham Street with a portion of the urban neighbourhoods east and west of the Canal.

As in Preliminary Option H, the proposed Ward D is a V-shaped area on either side of the City of Welland between Highway 140 as far as Main Street and Elizabeth Street on the east and Elm Street on the west. In this design, rather than taking in an area west of Elm Street, the proposed ward extends south to Durham Street on the east side of the canal.

Five of the six wards are well balanced in population in 2025 with only the proposed Ward 6 over 4,000 residents and all others between approximately 3,200 and 3,750. Based on forecast population changes to 2036, however, the population difference between the largest and smallest wards moves from 975 to over 1,250 even though two wards are at the optimal point. In addition, two of the wards are primarily urban



(proposed Wards 1 and 2) and one primarily rural (proposed Ward 6) so that half of the wards successfully combine communities with shared interests.

Table 9-9
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option I – Population by Proposed Ward

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	

^[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 9-17
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option I

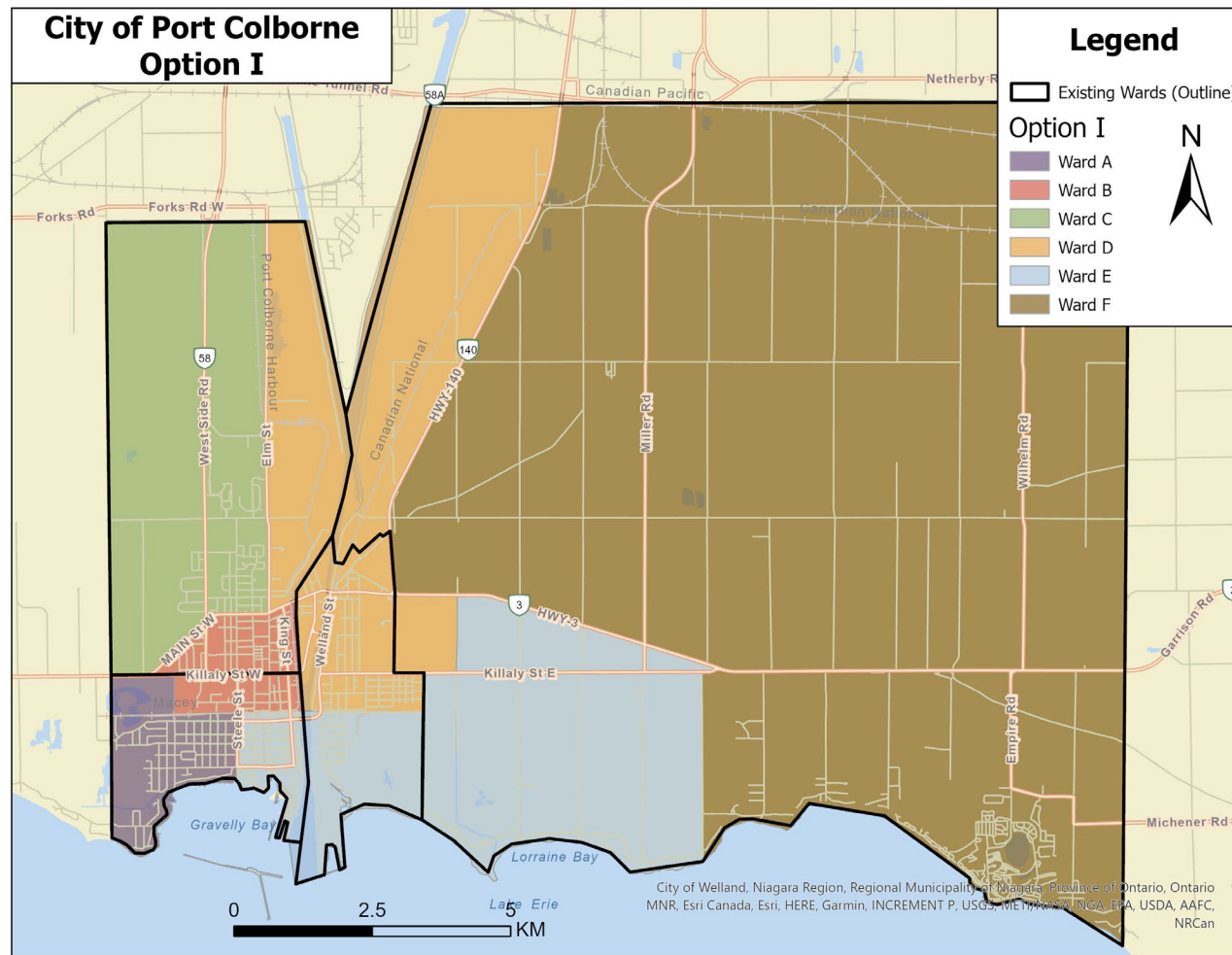




Figure 9-18
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Option I – Evaluation Summary

Principle	Does the Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle?	Comment
Representation by Population	Yes	Population parity is achieved.
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	Yes	Population parity is achieved.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Three wards include groupings of communities with shared interests; urban neighbourhoods divided.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Yes	Markers used as boundaries of the wards are straightforward.
Effective Representation	Largely Successful	Population parity achieved in 2025 and 2036, but some wards include mixed interests.

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



9.10 Evaluation Summary

The Consultant Team has set out reasons why it has concluded that the current ward system in Port Colborne is adequate in the short-term but does not fully provide for effective representation when considering future population growth and all the guiding principles. The Consultant Team, therefore, recommends that considering alternative designs, could better accommodate population change within the City and protect communities of interest, both existing and future.

Designing an electoral system that will deliver effective representation to such a diverse and changing community requires some accommodation: designs that put an emphasis on representation by population today can hinder fair representation for residents who will locate in growing parts of the City in the coming decade. Designs that place a priority on grouping selected neighbourhoods can result in the over- or under-representation of the residents of those communities around the council table.

The nine options provided in this report provide a spectrum of potential alternatives, including the possibility of changing the composition of Council from the present eight Councillors to six and a change to three 2-member wards, or six or eight single-member wards. The different Preliminary Options place varying emphasis on certain guiding principles and attempt to apply them to the present and future Port Colborne community. Some Preliminary Options include minimal changes to the present ward configuration while others may be seen as drastic or inconsistent with arrangements in place since the late 1960s.

Both perspectives should figure into Council's eventual decision: what is the best way to elect City Councillors in 2026 and beyond?

A summary evaluation of the options is provided in Figure 9-19.



Figure 9-19
City of Port Colborne
Preliminary Options – 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

Yes	Largely Successful	Partially Successful	No
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Higher Rating

Lower Rating



9.11 Further Considerations

The options presented herein are preliminary; they reflect the application of the core principles for this review to the distribution of population and communities within Port Colborne. The purpose of this report is to stimulate discussions in Port Colborne and encourage residents to consider their preferred ward boundary configurations for the City. The options included are deliberately called “preliminary” since much of the next phase of this review involves gathering the perspectives of residents on these alternatives.



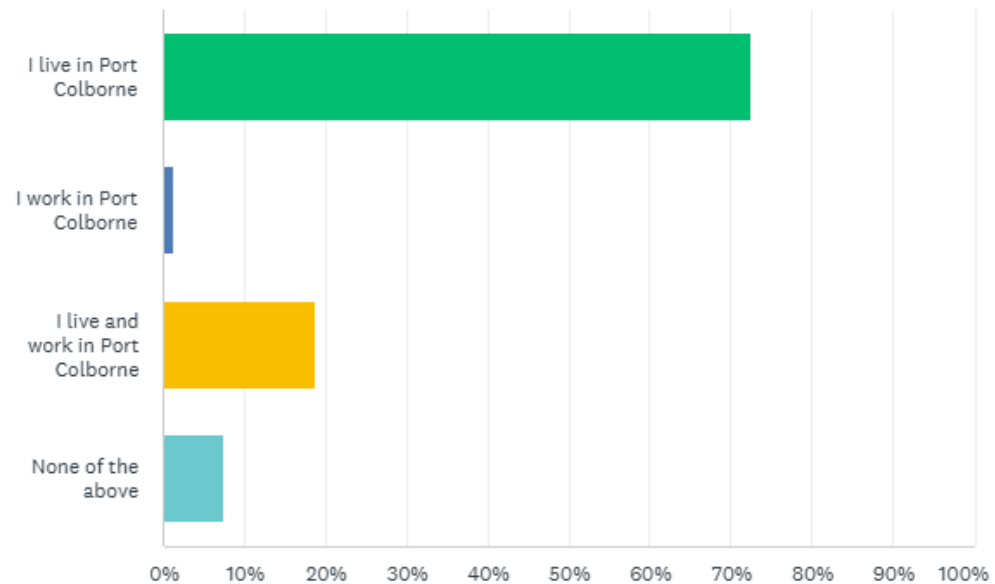
Appendix A

Survey Results



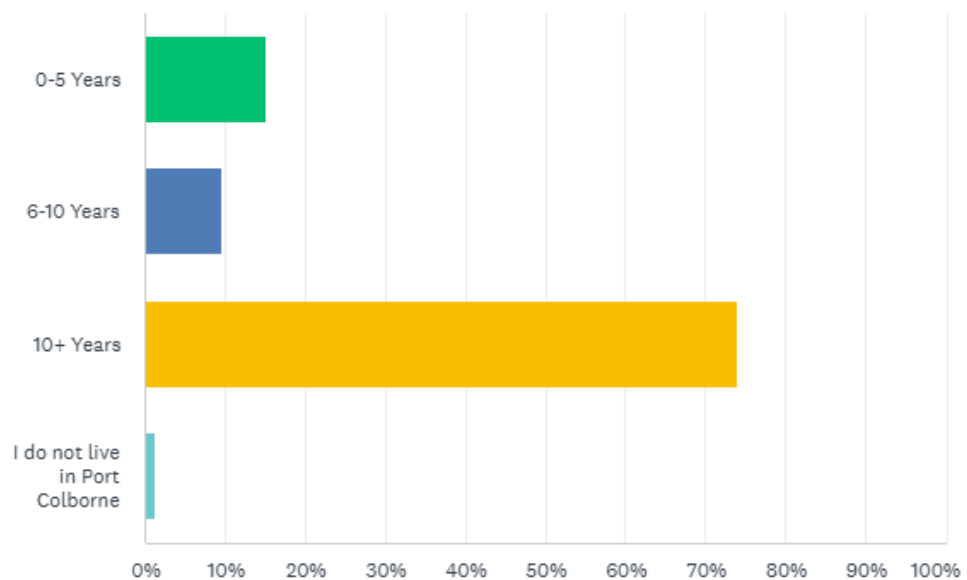
What best describes you?

Answered: 80 Skipped: 0



How long have you lived in Port Colborne?

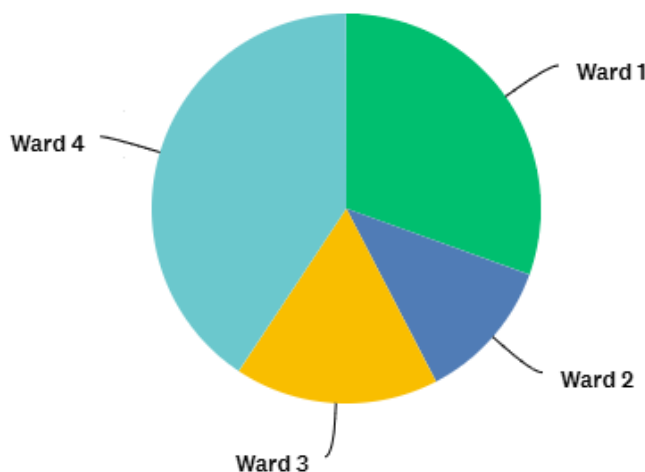
Answered: 73 Skipped: 7





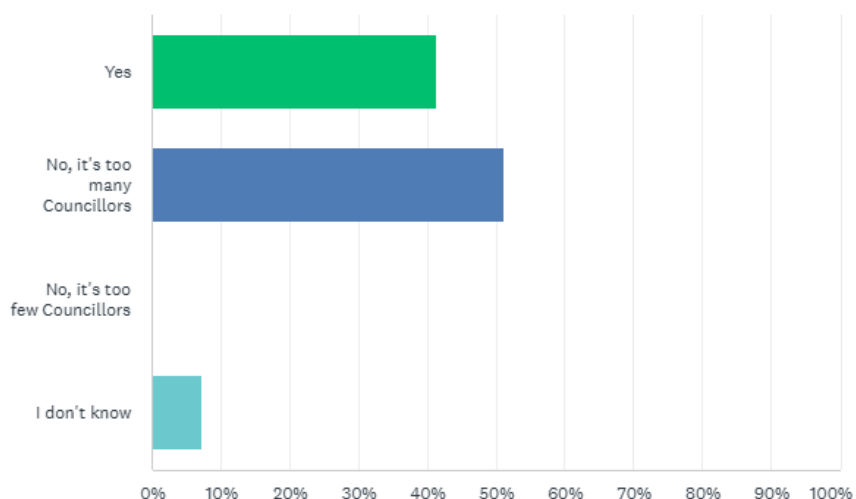
Which ward do you live in?

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?

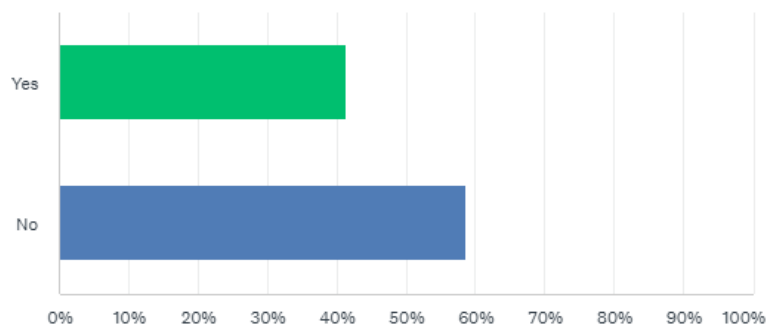
Answered: 41 Skipped: 39





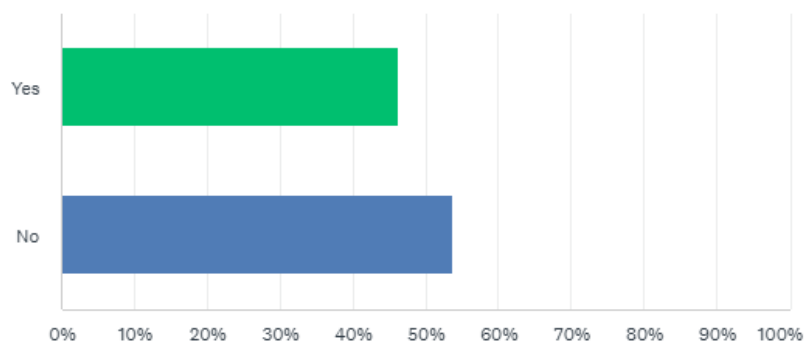
Do you believe that you could be better represented in a smaller ward with only one Councillor elected in that ward?

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?

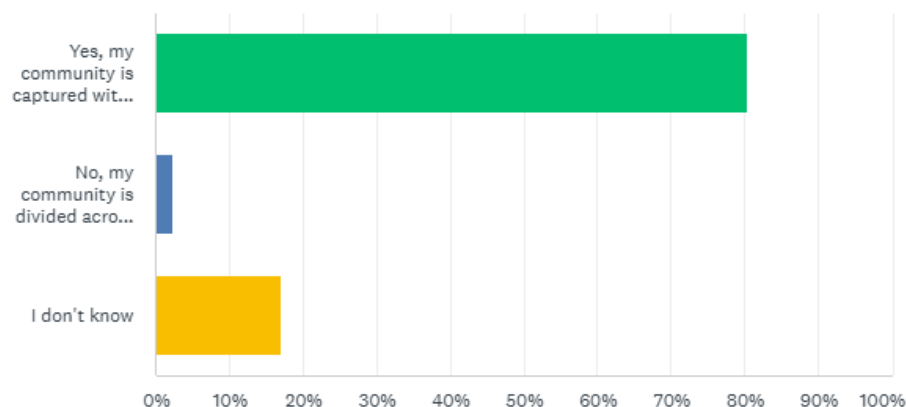
Answered: 41 Skipped: 39





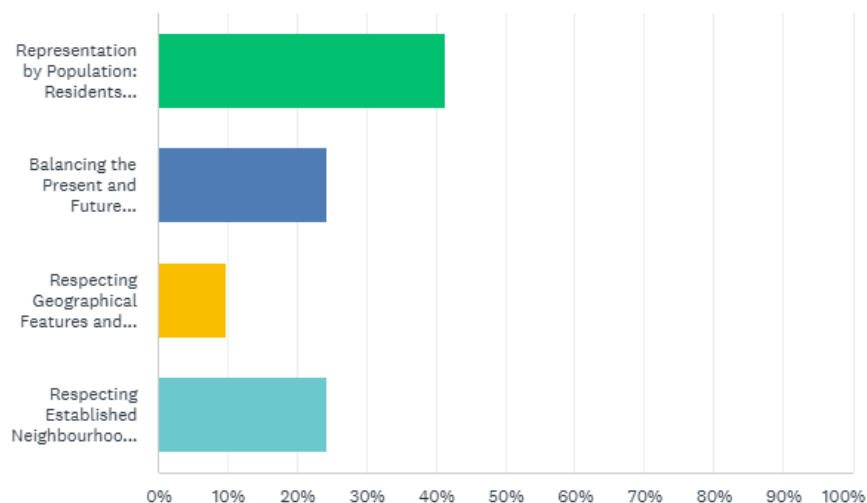
Do the boundaries of the ward you live in capture your community?

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 B

Public Consultation

WELCOME

Port Colborne Council Composition & Ward Boundary Review

How many local councillors should Port Colborne have?



Where should ward boundaries be drawn and why?

Process



Review Current System



Think about the Guiding Principles

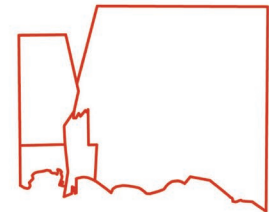
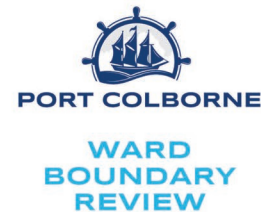


What is the Ideal Outcome?



Provide Feedback at the Survey

Please provide your feedback:



City of Port Colborne 2024 Council Composition & Ward Boundary Review

www.portcolborne.ca/wbr



Public Information Session Ward Boundary Review



We want to hear from you!



For more information, visit
www.portcolborne.ca/wbr

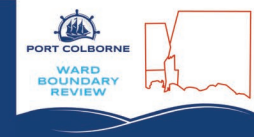
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Project Overview and Objectives

The City of Port Colborne has retained Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., Dr. Robert J. Williams, Dr. Zachary Spicer to undertake the 2024 Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review.

The primary purpose of the review is to prepare Municipal Council to make decisions about whether to maintain the existing council composition (size) and ward structure or to adopt an alternative arrangement.

Key Objectives Include:

-  Develop a clear understanding of the present ward system, including its origins and operations as a system of representation;
-  Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the present ward system on the basis of identified guiding principles;
-  Conduct an appropriate consultation process to ensure community support for the review and its outcome;
-  Identify plausible modifications to the present ward structure; and
-  Deliver a report that will set out recommended alternative ward boundaries to ensure effective and equitable electoral arrangements for the City of Port Colborne, based on the principles identified.

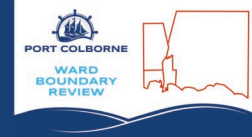


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Existing Council Structure



Mayor

+



**2 Councillors for
Each Ward**



**Niagara Regional
Councillor**
Elected at Large
**not a member of local
council*



The Mayor is elected at-large.



8 Councillors are elected, 2 for each ward.



1 Regional Councillor is elected at-large to serve on Niagara
Regional Council but NOT on Port Colborne City Council.

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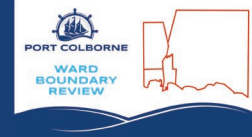
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Population per Council Size Comparison

Municipality	2021 Population	Area (sq.km)	Local Council Members (excluding Regional Councillors)	Avg. Population per Member
St. Catharines	136,803	96.2	13	10,523
Niagara Falls	94,415	210.25	9	10,491
Welland	55,750	81.16	13	4,288
Fort Erie	32,901	166.24	7	4,700
Grimsby	28,883	68.71	9	3,209
Lincoln	25,719	162.74	9	2,858
Thorold	23,816	83.29	9	2,646
Port Colborne	20,033	121.99	9	2,226
Niagara-on-the-Lake	19,088	131.35	9	2,121
Pelham	18,192	126.35	7	2,599
West Lincoln	15,454	387.02	7	2,208
Wainfleet	6,887	217.53	5	1,377
Average	39,828	154.4	9	4,104

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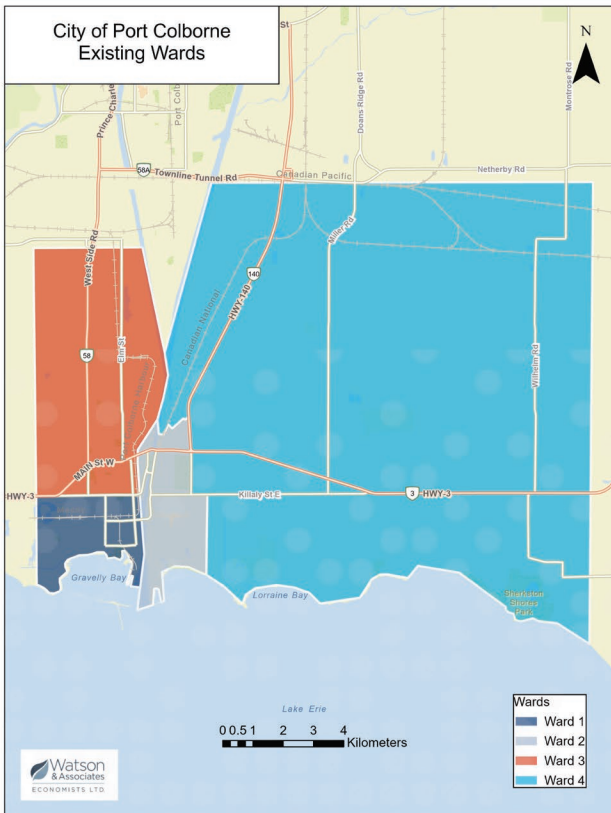
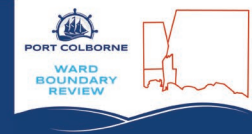
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Existing Ward Configuration 2021 Population by Ward

Ward	Area (SqKm)	2021		
		Population	Population Variance	Optimal Range
Ward 1	4.5	5,988	1.20	O+
Ward 2	5.3	3,894	0.78	O-
Ward 3	17.0	5,822	1.16	O+
Ward 4	96.8	4,329	0.86	O-
Total/Average	123.7	20,033	5,008	

O	±5% of the Optimal (Average) Population
O-	±5%-25% of the Optimal (Average) Population
O+	>±25% of the Optimal (Average) Population

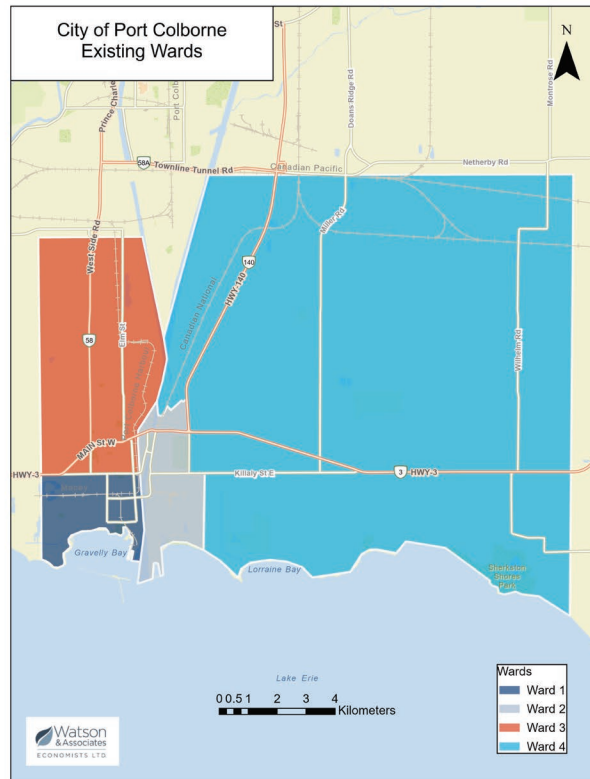
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Existing Ward Configuration Evaluation

Principle	Does the Current Ward Structure Meet the Respective Principle? ¹	Comment
Balancing the present and future population distribution among the wards	No	Preliminary analysis would suggest that most wards are in the optimal range (i.e., 25% variation) but no wards are optimal (i.e., 5% variation). The disparity between the most and least populated wards is significant and will likely worsen over time.
Respecting established neighbourhoods and communities	Largely Successful	Current ward boundaries largely contain identifiable communities of interest.
Respecting geographical features and the defining natural and infrastructure boundaries	Partially Successful	Boundary lines are inconsistent in usage at times.
Effective Representation	No	Accelerating population imbalances, inconsistent boundary lines and the sizable range of population disparity hinder effective representation.

¹ The degree to which each guiding principle is satisfied is ranked as "Yes" (fully satisfied), "Largely Successful," "Partially Successful," or "No" (not satisfied).

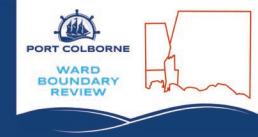
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Guiding Principles

The following principles will be used to evaluate the existing ward structure and subsequent alternative options:

-  **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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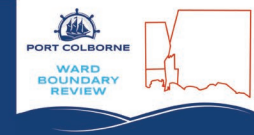
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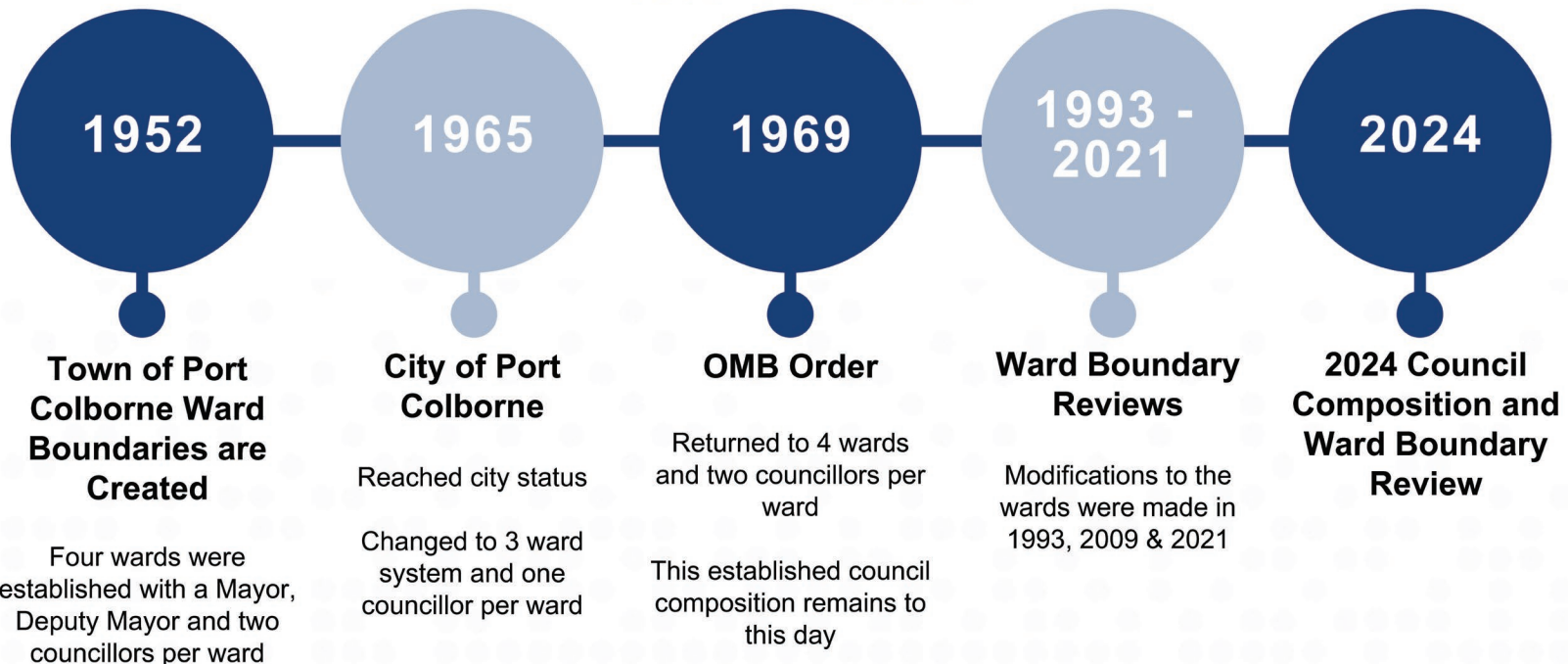


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Past and Present



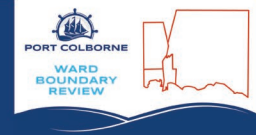
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Legislative Framework

Ontario's *Municipal Act*, 2001 authorizes a local municipality to:

- determine the size of the Council
- determine how Council (other than the Mayor) will be elected
- “divide or re-divide the municipality into wards or dissolve the existing wards”

No stipulated schedule, standardized process or established criteria exist for electoral reviews in Ontario

- Each municipality must set its own terms, parameters, guiding principles, etc.
- A review is typically framed by established procedures and principles applied in several Ontario municipalities (and by the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) and judicial rulings on representation)

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