



VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

STUDY DESCRIPTION

The **Visual Impact Assessment (VIA)** is to provide an analysis on the impact the proposed development has on important public views and vistas in both the urban and natural landscapes that have been longstanding on the subject lands and surrounding area.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

VIA's allow County Planning staff to understand the following components more clearly:

- Context of the existing physical character and visual composition of the subject lands and surrounding area.
- Implications of proposed developments impact on important site lines, public views, and vistas on the subject lands and in the surrounding area.
- In-effect legislation, policies, and regulations at a provincial, county, and local level and their relationship to the proposed development.
- Mitigation and/or improvement strategies and approaches that can be implemented to address any impacts to existing public views and vistas.
- Suitability and appropriateness of the proposed development in the context of the existing visual site lines, public views, and vistas.



WHEN REQUIRED

Through an initial pre-consultation meeting with the County and, for certain applications, the Town/Township, staff will confirm if the applicant is required to submit a VIA.

The submission of a VIA will likely be required for the following Planning Act applications:

- Official Plan Amendment (including Secondary Plans and Block Plans)
- Zoning By-law Amendment (including Temporary Use By-laws)
- Draft Plan of Condominium
- Draft Plan of Subdivision
- Site Plan Application

At the discretion of County staff, a VIA may be requested for submission in support of other development applications, such as a Minor Variance, Consent, and/or Part Lot Control. VIA's may also be requested by the Niagara Escarpment Commission should views of the Niagara Escarpment be potentially impacted by the proposed development. Should this occur, the applicant must follow the *Niagara Escarpment Commission Visual Impact Assessment Technical Criteria (2020)*.

QUALIFIED PERSON(S)

The VIA can be prepared by any of the following: Registered Architect, Registered Professional Planner, Landscape Architect, or qualified consultant with experience in this field. All final documents and reports provided in the VIA must be stamped and/or signed by any of the aforementioned qualified professionals who are licensed in the Province of Ontario.

REQUIRED CONTENT

The VIA is required to include the following sections, subsections, and information.

1. Executive Summary

- Provide a high-level summary of proposed development, overarching legislation and regulations, key findings from viewshed and modelling analysis, and recommendations for mitigation and/or improvement.

2. Project Introduction and Site Description

- Description on the purpose, scope, and methodology of the VIA. Key elements that should be outlined include modelling utilized, study area, data obtained, and any equipment used during site visits for primary data acquisition.
- Provide information on the study area including reference to the subject lands (i.e., size, existing land use, location), surrounding neighbourhood, built form, and any existing scenic landmarks and/or landscapes.

3. Description of Proposed Development

- Discussion should include reference, but is not limited to, the following matters:
 - Major statistics of proposed development, such as height, density, number of units, amenity space, parking, landscape design, and gross floor area as may be applicable.
 - Proposed concept plan that is the basis for the proposed development.

REQUIRED CONTENT CONTINUED

4. Legislation, Policy, and Regulation Overview

- Review and analysis of regulatory and planning documents, as well as any applicable visual impact policies.
- Specific reference, if applicable, should be made to the following policies and regulations:
 - Provincial Policy Statement
 - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
 - Niagara Escarpment Plan
 - County of Dufferin Official Plan
 - Town/Township Official Plan
 - Any other applicable provincial, county, or municipal policy documents, studies, and/or guidelines/standards. These include:
 - Urban Design Guidelines
 - Green Development Standards

5. Viewshed and Modelling Analysis

- Analysis on any visual simulations and modelling that occurred prior to the completion of the VIA report.
- Analysis using different elevation and land cover data to determine specific areas of the development that are to be visible from a designated point or points.
- Review and discussion on the viewshed map should be incorporated in the overall analysis.
- Discussion on any visual impacts to existing sensitive surrounding uses (i.e., residential, cultural and natural heritage, open space features), where applicable.
- Determination of any problematic areas for site lines and existing public views and vistas, such as parks, pedestrian walkways, natural heritage features, cultural heritage features, and open space amenities.

6. Summary and Recommendations

- Summary on the proposed developments impact on the important public views and vistas in both the urban and natural landscapes
- Identify opportunities for infrastructure improvement and/or the implementation of mitigation strategies, whether that be on the subject lands and/or surrounding neighbourhood, to reduce any notable visual impacts arising as a result of the proposed development.

7. Appendices

- This section should contain all materials that are relevant for review but not suitable for the body of the report. Materials to be included in this section are:
 - Any maps, figures, and illustrations (i.e., tables and charts)
 - Viewshed Map must be provided as one of the illustrations.

- Proposed Development or Concept Plan
- Quantitative analysis results from viewshed modelling/simulation
- Literature Citations
- Other Data Sources Uses

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

To hire a professional consultant to complete the VIA, please refer to and utilize the one of the following directories:

- [Ontario Professional Planners Institute](#)
- [Ontario Association of Architects](#)
- [Ontario Association of Landscape Architects](#)

Should the Niagara Escarpment Commission request a VIA, details on the Niagara Escarpment Commission's Visual Impact Assessment Technical Criteria can be accessed [here](#).

