



ST. CATHARINES
CULTURE PLAN
2025-2030

Stay for the
Culture

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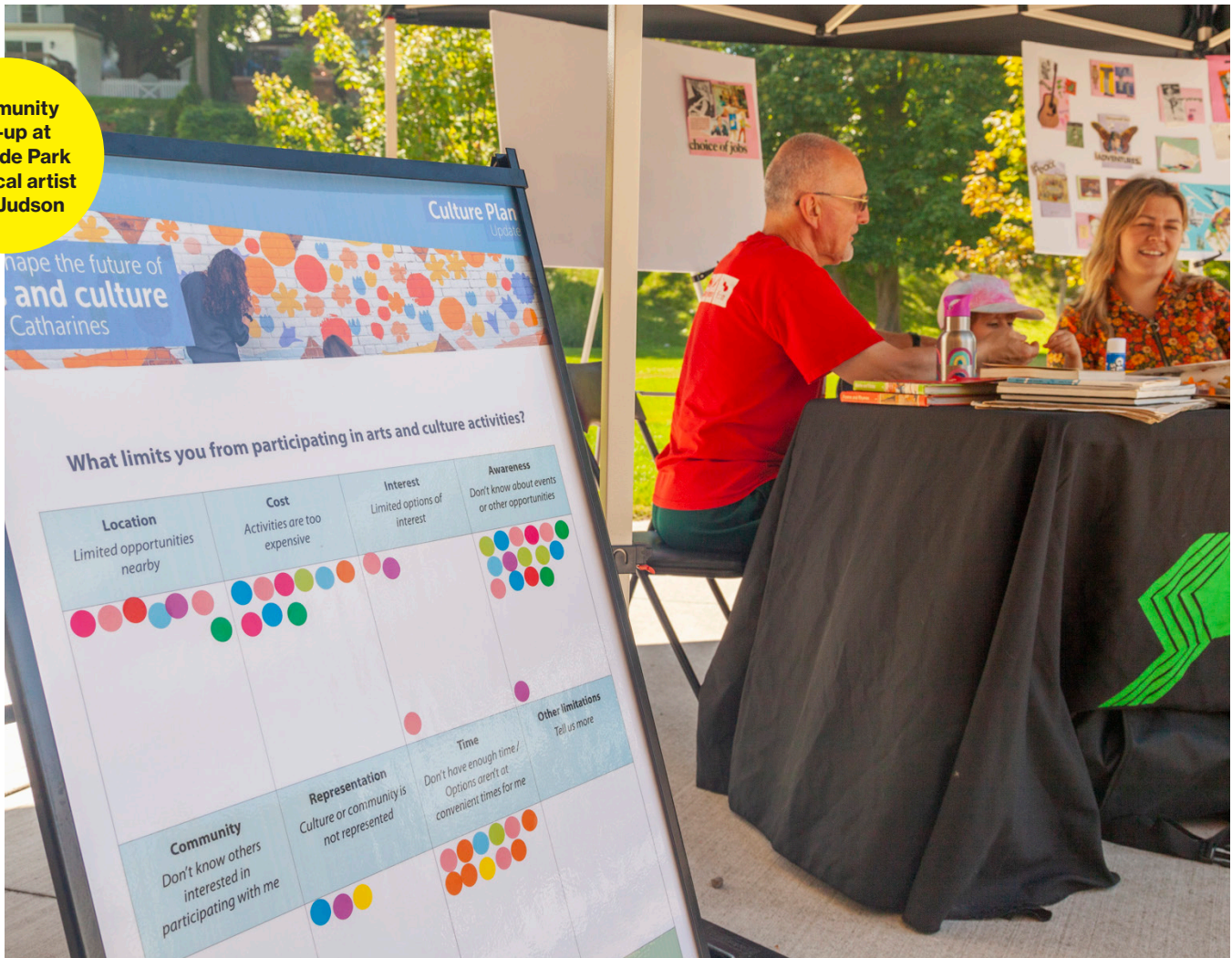
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St. Catharines is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. St. Catharines is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. Acknowledging this is a reminder that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.

Cover image: Holly Tredenick of Femmes du Feu Creations in the In the Soil Launch Party (Suitcase in Point, 2023). Photo by Dan Brown.

Community pop-up at Lakeside Park with local artist Jenn Judson



This Culture Plan was developed by Nordicity in collaboration with City of St. Catharines staff across departments. The Plan was informed by inputs from secondary research, document and policy review, and engagement with local artists, culture participants, residents, and tourists.

Stay for the Culture: St. Catharines Culture Plan 2025–2030 lays out a strategic roadmap to guide municipal support for arts and culture over the next five years. The Plan is designed to leverage the city’s cultural assets, recommend specific ways arts and culture can be deployed to improve livability and prosperity in St. Catharines, and outline tangible steps to maintain and open up new cultural spaces and places.





The Culture Plan is organized around **three strategic goals, 10 objectives, and 34 actions** designed to help the City achieve this vision for the future:

A Vision for Culture in St. Catharines

Humanity
art installation
commissioned by
Masai Ujiri and brought
to St. Catharines by
Niagara Artists Centre
and RAMM design.

St. Catharines is recognized as a cultural hotspot within the region and beyond, known for its rich cultural history, iconic venues and events, and community creativity.

Culture animates the downtown and neighbourhoods city-wide, enriching residents' lives and fostering local pride. The local arts and culture sector is vibrant, visible, inclusive, and sustainable.

The strategic goals, associated objectives, and a sampling of the plan's highest priority actions are listed below.

Art workshop during Culture Days at the St. Catharines Public Library



Goal 1

Recognize and Revitalize

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Celebrate St. Catharines' cultural diversity and history.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Improve awareness of local arts and culture assets, activities, and events.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Use culture to enhance St. Catharines' neighbourhoods and communities.

Key Actions

- ▶ Collaborate across City departments to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the First Welland Canal in 2029, leveraging the opportunity to highlight that the three historic Welland Canals are a component of St. Catharines' culture.
- ▶ Explore the potential to partner with the public library to create a performance pass program that gives card-holders access to a limited number of discounted passes for performances at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Upon successful implementation, explore additional pass program opportunities for St. Catharines' arts and culture activities.
- ▶ Plan for and invest in ongoing maintenance, conservation, and preservation of existing cultural, historical, and heritage corporate assets/facilities.

Serena
Ryder
performing at
the FirstOntario
Performing
Arts Centre



Goal 2

Connect and Cultivate

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Strengthen support systems for the arts and culture community.

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Strengthen sector collaboration and coordination.

OBJECTIVE 2.3

Support professional development and capacity building.



Key Actions

- ▶ Review the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program grant streams, policy, guidelines and criteria.
- ▶ Commit to increasing investment in, and sector use of, the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program.
- ▶ Promote the St. Catharines Enterprise Centre programming and resources to local artists, arts organizations, and cultural entrepreneurs to support skill-building and resource-sharing.

The Strong Water Singers performing



Goal 3

Make Space

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Embed diverse expressions of arts and culture in the public realm.

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Make meaningful use of existing spaces to meet arts and culture sector needs.

OBJECTIVE 3.3

Support solutions for spaces dedicated to the creation, performance, and exhibition of arts and culture.

OBJECTIVE 3.4

Integrate public art into public spaces and urban development.



Key Actions

- ▶ Work with Indigenous communities and the local arts sector to update planning policies to incorporate placekeeping principles and placemaking practices that enable cultural expressions.
- ▶ Enhance promotion of available City spaces that can be used for a variety of arts and culture purposes.
- ▶ Conduct a city-wide facility needs assessment to confirm space needs and identify new facilities needed to meet those needs, either through new purpose-built projects or adaptive reuse approaches.

Introduction

Alex Ring in the In the Soil Launch Party (Suitcase in Point, 2023)



Photo by Dan Brown

Culture in St. Catharines is varied, diverse, and vibrant – inclusive of grassroots, professional, Indigenous, and community arts, as well as representations and celebrations of diverse perspectives.

Locals celebrate longstanding arts organizations like the Niagara Artists Centre and Carousel Players, and they take pride in the city’s many major cultural venues and festivals, such as the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Meridian Centre, Niagara Folk Arts Festival, and Niagara Grape & Wine Festival.

The City of St. Catharines is committed to supporting local arts and culture. This Culture Plan lays out a strategic roadmap to guide that support over the next five years. It is designed to leverage the city’s remarkable cultural assets, making the most of a vibrant, diverse, and collaborative sector. It recommends specific ways to deploy arts and culture to improve livability and prosperity in St. Catharines. It defines critical next steps to maintain and open up new cultural spaces and places.

The Culture Plan is organized around strategic goals, objectives, and actions, designed to help the City of St. Catharines achieve this vision for the future:

Dancers performing at the Holi Festival in Downtown St. Catharines




A Vision for Culture in St. Catharines

St. Catharines is recognized as a cultural hotspot within the region and beyond, known for its rich cultural history, iconic venues and events, and community creativity. Culture animates the downtown and neighbourhoods city-wide, enriching residents’ lives and fostering local pride. The local arts and culture sector is vibrant, visible, inclusive, and sustainable.

The St. Catharines Culture Plan was developed through a highly collaborative five-phase approach, depicted below:



 **City of St. Catharines Strategic Documents**

The following City documents helped to inform this Culture Plan:

- [Official Plan](#)
- [Strategic Plan](#)
- [Economic Development Strategy](#)
- [Recreation Facility and Programming Master Plan](#)
- [Public Art Policy](#)
- [Cultural Investment Policy](#)
- [St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre Strategic Plan](#)
- [Climate Adaptation Plan](#)
- [St. Catharines Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan](#)

Nordicity first conducted background research on St. Catharines’ arts and culture sector to gain a better understanding of the context.

This included a review of the City’s culture policy, services, and programming, as well as other related policy and strategic documents (see above).

In addition, Nordicity conducted a jurisdictional scan to understand the cultural context in comparable municipalities and benchmark the City of St. Catharines among its peers. The jurisdictional scan explored trends and current practices in arts and culture policy, cultural governance and support, funding models, partnership and collaborative models, and innovative initiatives across fifteen peer municipalities.

Nordicity then worked with Cultural Services division staff to develop and execute a robust engagement strategy that included input from City staff, members of the local arts and culture sector, and a diverse cross-section of the broader community.

Engagement activities included:

Red Dress Day,
St. Catharines
City Hall



An **online community survey** hosted on EngageSTC.



A **poetry and movement workshop** facilitated by local artists Skye Rogers and Vik Mudge.

Four community pop-ups were held across the city to engage residents in their everyday activities. These were co-facilitated by Nordicity and local artist Jenn Judson, who led a collaging activity at each location:

- Pen Centre (Ward 1 – Merritton)
- Farmers Market (Ward 4 – St. Patrick’s)
- Happy Rolph’s Animal Farm (Ward 5 – Grantham)
- Lakeside Park (Ward 6 – Port Dalhousie)

The results from the research and engagement phases were analyzed to identify key themes, strengths, challenges, and opportunities for St. Catharines' arts and culture sector. These findings were distilled into overarching goals and objectives for the Culture Plan.

A cross-departmental City staff working group was then engaged to collaboratively refine this framework and generate ideas for strategic actions to deliver the plan. Over this period, the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee was recruited and will play an important role in shaping and supporting the implementation of the updated Culture Plan. The committee consists of 13 artists, arts organizations, and residents and has a mandate to advise on arts and cultural sector activities, policies, and programs undertaken by the City of St. Catharines.

Grounded in this collaborative approach, the resulting Culture Plan responds directly to community needs and is positioned to be implemented collaboratively with involvement from various City departments and divisions, the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee, Committees of Council, Task Forces, as well as external partners.



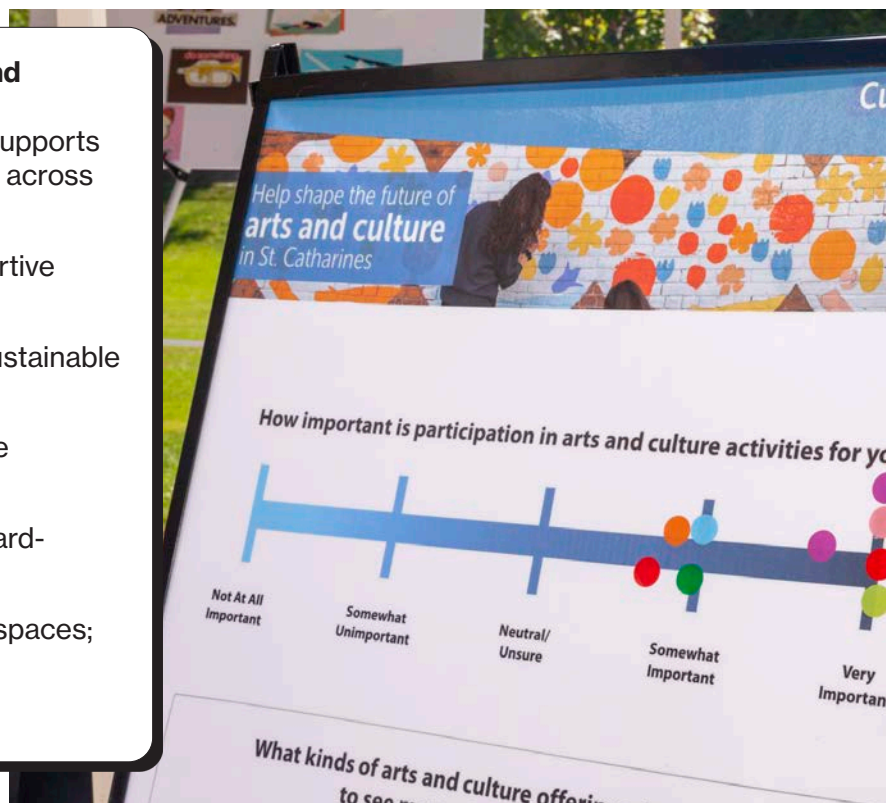
The Niagara Grape & Wine Festival held in Montebello Park

ALIGNMENT WITH CITY PRIORITIES

Supporting arts and culture is a clear municipal priority in St. Catharines, notably articulated within the City's Strategic Plan under the "Cultural Vibrancy" pillar. This strategic goal aims to communicate and celebrate the rich culture, heritage, and vibrancy of St. Catharines communities. A key step to realizing this goal is this update to the City's Culture Plan.

The Culture Plan aligns with and advances key City policies and strategic plans. Specifically, it supports the following priorities identified across City departments:

- Building inclusive and supportive communities;
- Nurturing environmentally sustainable landscapes;
- Creating a vibrant and diverse downtown;
- Creating an innovative, forward-looking city;
- Developing livable and safe spaces; and
- Celebrating local identity.

CULTURE PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The St. Catharines Culture Plan has been shaped by the following guiding principles.

The Culture Plan reflects the City's commitment to respecting **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)**, including through reconciliation with Indigenous communities. In addition to informing the research and engagement phases of this project, DEI considerations are embedded throughout the Culture Plan, rather than being housed in a specific goal or objective. This approach recognizes the importance of integrating DEI considerations into all aspects of the City's Culture Plan.

The Culture Plan identifies opportunities to incorporate cultural initiatives and considerations into City programs and services beyond Cultural Services. Arts and culture intersect with multiple areas of the community and can enrich and enhance other offerings. A **cross-departmental approach** to supporting and promoting the cultural sector will deliver the greatest benefit to St. Catharines residents and visitors.

Collaboration is an integral focus of the Culture Plan. Municipalities are increasingly leveraging supportive partnerships with multiple groups to achieve their policy and planning goals. This includes arts councils, local arts organizations, cultural enterprises, business improvement areas, and arts and culture professionals, working together to implement culture plans. Collaboration will be an essential vehicle to achieve this plan and move St. Catharines' culture sector forward.

Internal Partners

The Corporation of the City of St. Catharines is made up of multiple primary departments, each with different divisions and responsibilities. The following key shows City departments and relevant divisions that will be involved in implementing some of the actions in this plan.

- Chief Administrative Office
 - Corporate Communications
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Community, Recreation, and Culture Services
 - Cultural Services (also referred to as the Cultural Services division)
 - Manages the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program (SCCIP)
 - Historical Services
 - Manages the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre (Museum), Lakeside Park Carousel, and Morningstar Mill
 - Community and Events
 - Business Planning and Strategic Services
- Corporate Support Services
- Economic Development and Tourism Services
- Engineering, Facilities, and Environmental Services
- Financial Management Services
 - Realty and Insurance Services
- Fire Services
- Legal and Clerks Services
- Municipal Works
- Office of the Mayor and Council
- Planning and Building Services
 - Heritage Planning
- Committees of Council and Task Forces, including but not limited to,
 - Arts and Culture Advisory Committee
 - Heritage Advisory Committee
 - 2029 Historic Welland Canals Task Force

External Partners

The following key lists the community organizations and cultural entities – some of whom are referenced throughout this document, including in the Implementation Plan. These groups help shape what culture in St. Catharines means. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the city's cultural community, but it illustrates the breadth and diversity of the sector.

- Brock University
- Carousel Players
- Cicada Music & Arts Festival
- FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre (PAC)
- In The Soil Arts Festival
- Local arts and culture sector; community organizations and artists
- Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts (Brock University)
- Meridian Centre
- Niagara Artists Centre (NAC)
- NAC Studio
- Niagara Arts and Culture Regional Roundtable
- Niagara College
- Niagara Folk Arts Festival
- Niagara Grape & Wine Festival
- Niagara Region
- Niagara Regional Native Centre (NRNC)
- Neighbourhood associations
- Private property owners
- Rodman Art Institute of Niagara (RAIN)
- Silver Spire United Church
- St. Catharines Downtown Association
- St. Catharines Public Library (SCPL)
- Student leadership groups
- TD Niagara Jazz Festival
- Veteran's Associations
- Willow Arts Community

Culture Plan Partners

The success of this Culture Plan relies on the participation, collaboration, and creativity of many internal and external partners.

Arts and Culture Advisory Committee

The Arts and Culture Advisory Committee is a volunteer committee of citizens, artists, and representatives from Brock University, the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, the Niagara Artists Centre, the Folk Arts Multicultural Centre, and the Rodman Art Institute of Niagara (RAIN). It has been established to advise City Council and staff on policies, plans, and programs related to the arts and cultural sector of St. Catharines.

The Committee responds to all cultural policies and plans approved by City Council and will:

- Review applications to the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program (SCCIP) and make annual recommendations to Council for investment as per policy guidelines.
- Advise on the management of the Civic Art Collection within the parameters of the Public Art Policy.
- Participate in the creation or renewal of culture plans and policies.



Defining Culture in St. Catharines

Alicia Plummer as Clown A in Carousel Players' "What's So Funny?"



Live performance on St. Paul Street



St. Catharines residents associate culture with the city's rich historical and natural heritage and its cultural diversity alongside more traditional forms of art and culture such as visual art, public art, live performances, festivals, and events.

Locals also appreciate the growing presence of Indigenous arts and culture in the city. Looking to the future, residents hope to see an arts and culture sector committed to sustainable growth and a meaningful sense of belonging for all residents. When asked to envision arts and culture in St. Catharines 5–10 years from now, the recurring terms used were welcoming, inclusive, diverse, vibrant, collaborative, community-based, well-resourced, sustainable, and thriving.

In this context, the Culture Plan proposes the following definition of culture in St. Catharines:

Culture in St. Catharines encompasses diverse artistic forms and expressions, the celebration of varied perspectives and experiences, and the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge.

Culture lives in the city's public realm, downtown, and its distinct neighbourhoods, in its major venues and community spaces, in its history and its natural landscape.

Equal parts world-class and grassroots, it is uniquely St. Catharines.

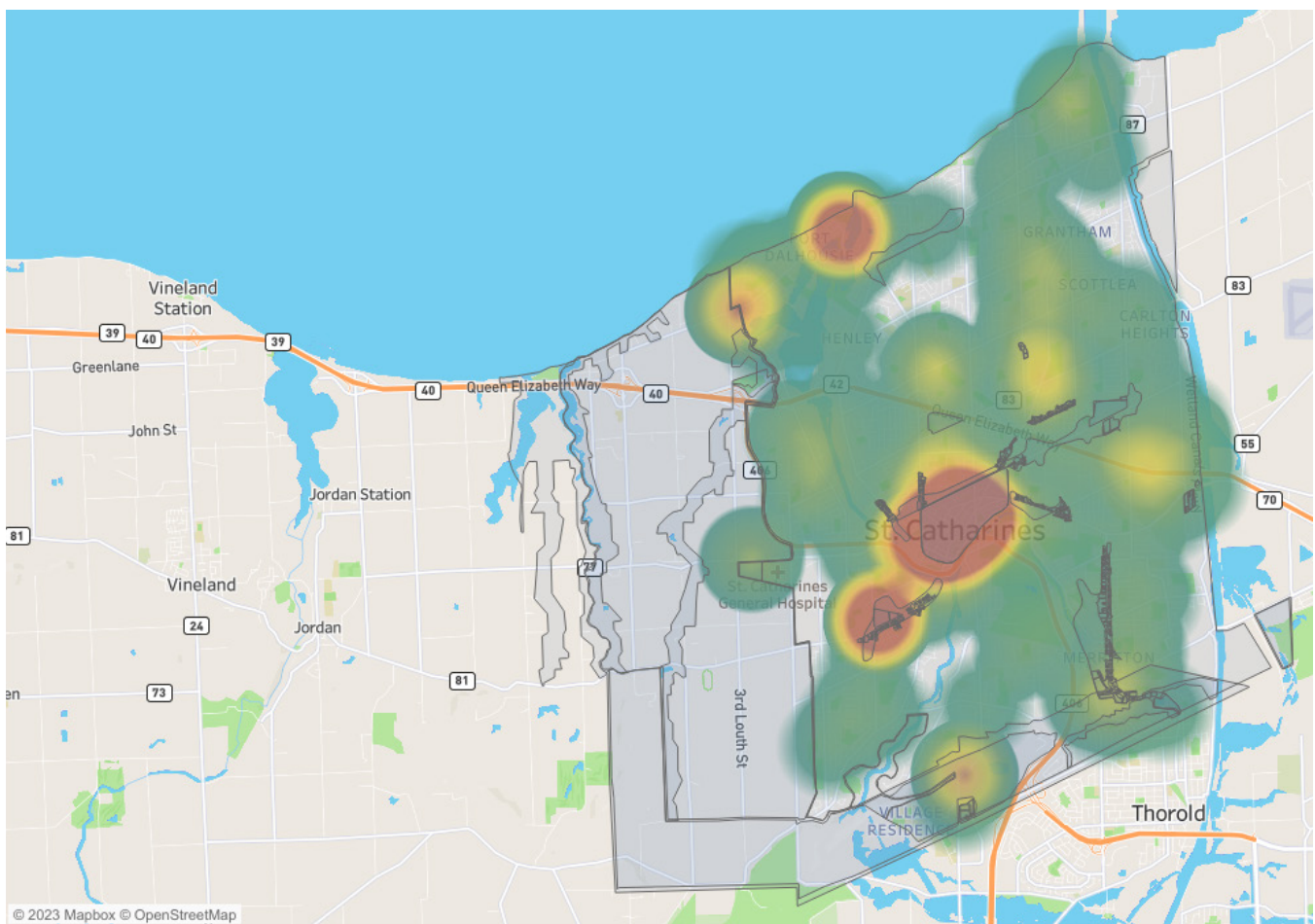
ST. CATHARINES CULTURAL ASSETS

A cultural asset mapping exercise identified over 1,300 cultural assets in St. Catharines, including 79 municipally owned assets and 1069 heritage buildings and properties. Intended to provide a snapshot of the city’s current assets, the asset inventory was visualized into two dynamic spatial maps: (i) an asset map that shows each asset name, type, category, and whether it is municipally owned, and (ii) a heat map that reveals where assets are clustered within the city. The maps can be accessed at this link: [City of St. Catharines Arts and Culture Asset Mapping](#).

As shown in the heat map below, the city’s cultural assets are clustered in two main areas. Downtown St. Catharines is home to many assets such as the Niagara Artists Centre and the NAC Studio, Silver Spire United Church (which houses Carousel Players and the Willow Arts Community), Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, Suitcase In Point’s Studio “The Green,” and the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, among others.

Port Dalhousie is the second most concentrated area. It hosts multiple heritage and cultural sites, including the Lakeside Park Carousel, as well as public art assets.

Heat Map of Cultural Assets in St. Catharines as of Summer 2023



Hand-carved
goat on the
Lakeside Park
Carousel



The following attributes contribute to St. Catharines' position as the cultural centre of the Niagara region and help establish the City as an arts and culture leader:

City Leadership and Investment


The City's commitment to culture is evident in its strategic plan and supporting plans and strategies. Its commitment is evident, too, in its investment in the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program and ongoing development of the downtown area into an active creative cluster.

Local Assets

Unique local assets like the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre's Film House, Lakeside Park Carousel, longstanding organizations like the Niagara Artists Centre and Carousel Players, year-round cultural festivals and celebrations, and a deep history associated with the Underground Railroad and the development of the Welland Canal, set St. Catharines apart from neighbouring municipalities.

Indigenous Engagement

The City of St. Catharines has a strong working relationship with the Niagara Regional Native Centre, formalized by a memorandum of understanding (MOU). This relationship supports the City's efforts to incorporate Indigenous perspectives across its plans, programs, and services. While this relationship is significant, the City acknowledges the diversity of Indigenous communities locally and continues to build relationships with the aim of incorporating various perspectives and voices into its initiatives.



Holi Festival of Colour in
Downtown
St. Catharines

Celebrating Diversity

The city's cultural tapestry reflects Indigenous heritage, European influences, vibrant Black communities, and a growing population of more recent newcomers. This diversity includes those whose contributions have significantly shaped the city's cultural fabric. The city's diversity is celebrated through cultural events and festivals such as Holi Festival of Colour, Emancipation Day celebrations, Indigenous Solidarity Day, Niagara Folk Arts Festival, and Facer Street European Festival.

Active Arts Community

St. Catharines boasts an active arts scene with a vibrant and talented community of artists, creators, and cultural workers and educators across its for-profit and non-profit grassroots and mid-to-large-scale arts, culture and entertainment organizations, venues, festivals, education institutions and events.

Collaborative Ecosystem

At the City and throughout the St. Catharines culture sector, there is a strong emphasis on cooperation and collaboration. Culture in St. Catharines is widely seen as inclusive and supportive.

Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities

Puppet
making
workshop with
Waterwood
Theatre during
Culture Days



As described in **Approach & Process (Section 1)**, various streams of research have fed into this plan. Analysis of the environmental scan, asset inventory, internal City engagements, sector roundtable discussions, artist workshops, community pop-ups, and community survey revealed several themes that contribute to the understanding of arts and culture in St. Catharines and the needs that this plan can help address.

This section presents the key insights that informed the development of the plan. The following summarizes the strengths and challenges related to St. Catharines' arts and culture ecosystem:

Strengths

- Broad local definition of arts and culture that encompasses traditional and community arts and celebrates diverse perspectives.
- Home to a vibrant mix of successful independent artists, grassroots non-profit and for-profit arts organizations, businesses, festivals, and events.
- Dedicated Cultural Services division operating within the City that provides funding and programming support; the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program is seen as a particular strength.
- The City is investing in revitalizing downtown.
- Local arts sector is known for being a close-knit, supportive, and welcoming community; St. Catharines is seen as an attractive place for artists for this reason.
- Relatively low cost of living (compared to other southern Ontario cities) helps make arts and culture work viable.
- The community values inclusive and accessible arts and culture activities, enriching residents' lives and fostering a sense of community.
- Prominent venues like the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, and Meridian Centre are strongly associated with the city's cultural identity.
- Home to many well-developed arts organizations, some of which take on leadership roles to address sector gaps (e.g., Niagara Artists Centre, Willow Arts Community).
- Many marquee events that bring people together to experience local arts and culture (e.g., Niagara Folk Arts Festival, Niagara Grape & Wine Festival).
- The use of heritage districts throughout the city has successfully retained the historical character of neighbourhoods.
- Cultural activity contributed approximately \$118 million to municipal GDP in 2020.



School of Fine and Performing Arts, St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre, and Meridian Centre are strongly associated with the city's cultural identity.

Food vendor at
Cicada Music and
Arts Festival



Photo by Mike Highfield

Challenges

- Lack of awareness of cultural events is the greatest barrier to participation; time and cost also hinder greater participation.
- Safety concerns in downtown St. Catharines can discourage attendance to arts and culture events.
- Perceived lack of transit access also poses challenges for attendance, both downtown and in other parts of the city.
- Cultural activity is clustered in high traffic/tourist areas in the downtown and Port Dalhousie.
- The St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program's individual artists funding stream has not yet been activated due to resource constraints at the City. Some established arts organizations expressed they find it challenging to maintain sustainable operating funding, and have a perception that project funding is more readily available than operating funds for mature organizations.
- Sector development, capacity-building, and advocacy are hindered by the lack of an umbrella arts council or arts service organization.
- The shortage of affordable small-to-mid-sized spaces for creation (e.g., rehearsal space, artists' studios and makerspaces for woodworking, printing, digital printing, recording, textile and ceramic arts) and presentation (e.g., small performance venues of 50–250 seats); FOPAC is not perceived as a viable option but there are no adequate and affordable alternatives.
- Some residents and sector participants perceive less support for diversity-driven events within the arts and culture sector.
- Limited cultural programming targeting families, youth, and older adults.

Based on these strengths and challenges, overarching opportunities to support arts and culture in St. Catharines were identified. These opportunities are listed below, along with related needs and other considerations the City is positioned to address – either directly through the Cultural Services division or in partnership with other municipal teams.



Downtown Block Party presented by the St. Catharines Downtown Association.

Key Opportunities

Make culture more visible in the community

- Increase inter-departmental collaboration with the Chief Administrative Office, Community, Recreation and Culture Services, Corporate Support Services, Economic Development and Tourism, Planning and Building Services, Fire Services, Legal and Clerk Services, Municipal Works, Office of the Mayor and Council, Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services, and Financial Management Services to bring arts and culture into the public realm, new developments, and the restoration of existing buildings and public assets.
- Work with the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee to advance arts and culture in the city.
- Support initiatives, organizations, and artists that bring arts and culture into parks and public spaces across the city.
- Public art and murals were specifically identified as features residents would like to see more of in the city.
- Continue investment in the development of downtown St. Catharines to solidify its function as a creative cluster.
- Regularly animate and support access to key cultural assets and venues such as the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre and Marilyn I. Walker School of Performing Arts.
- As public spaces are developed and enhanced, it will be essential to provide appropriate amenities, such as parking and transit accessibility, public washrooms, and food vendors.

Balance placemaking with placekeeping

Placemaking is a collaborative city development process used to create new public spaces that encourage better community connection, engagement, and pride.

Placekeeping is a process that embraces preservation and maintenance of the existing cultural, social, historical, and natural identity of public spaces. Both terms may be used in the context of integrating Indigenous perspectives, traditions, and values into public spaces.

- Ensure all public space development projects in St. Catharines embrace placemaking innovations while respecting the city's history and character.
- Work with Indigenous communities to enhance parks and public spaces and embed Indigenous placekeeping principles into public spaces.
- Support City initiatives to revitalize the downtown, with an emphasis on improving downtown infrastructure and providing support for unhoused residents.
- Support initiatives that enhance the downtown as a cultural district and preserve the historical character of its buildings and landmarks in modern ways.



Provide more options for families, youth, and older adults

- Families are particularly interested in free or low-cost activities.
- There may be opportunities to better engage the city's student population, particularly through on-campus offerings.
- Some older adults expressed that offerings tend to target younger people and do not feel inclusive for them.

Let It Glow –
A Celebration
of Light



Improve the inclusivity and accessibility of arts and culture

- There is a desire for more free community cultural events and arts activities.
- Residents want to see more diverse art and events in the community alongside longstanding traditions like Canada Day celebrations, as well as newer events such as Let It Glow – A Celebration of Light.
- Expand arts and culture offerings in neighbourhoods beyond downtown.
- Arts and culture assets are currently clustered in key locations, mostly downtown. There may be a need to consider how arts and culture delivery can be decentralized for all residents and visitors to enjoy in their local community. This could include investing in public art outside the downtown and investing in cultural infrastructure in other communities and neighbourhoods.

Create more opportunities for music and visual art

- Support spontaneous expressions of music and visual arts and culture in the public realm.
- Work with Economic Development and Tourism Services to integrate arts and culture into business programs.
- Work with Planning and Building Services and Municipal Works to review zoning, official plan, and urban design policies to identify and address any potential barriers to creation, performance, and exhibition in public spaces.
- Establish dedicated spaces for presenting music and visual arts.
- Some members of the sector see a public art gallery as a key priority for St. Catharines.

Drive awareness and advocacy of the local arts and culture sector, and the diverse talent, initiatives, and events within it

- St. Catharines residents appreciate the diversity of arts and culture offerings in the city and place a high importance on participation in arts and culture activities. However, many residents cited a lack of awareness of what's going on as their top barrier to greater participation, followed by time and cost concerns.
- Members of the sector identified marketing and audience development support as some of the most critical needs for the sector to thrive. They also indicate a desire for greater advocacy on behalf of the sector to promote the economic and social value of arts and culture, in order to justify funding increases.
- While the sector sees an opportunity for the City to take a more prominent advocacy role in these areas, there is also interest in exploring how a regional arts council could fulfill this role.
- Indigenous artists would appreciate opportunities to share their artwork and be visible across the city, which allows them to educate others on their culture, history, and practices. Indigenous arts preserve and transmit cultural knowledge and play an essential role in empowering Indigenous communities and educating non-Indigenous residents.

Support sector development and capacity building

- Artists and those who work in the sector identified small-to-mid-sized performance/exhibition and rehearsal/creation space as critical needs for the sector to thrive, and arts attendees who responded to the community survey believe the Culture Plan should prioritize enhancing indoor and outdoor arts and culture spaces.
- Artists as well as arts and culture workers see capacity-building and increased funding as top priorities. More specifically, there is a desire for greater organizational operating funding, greater support for individual artists, and greater awareness and accessibility of funding opportunities particularly for equity-deserving individuals.
- Additionally, there may be opportunities to better support community-led grassroots cultural groups and organizations. St. Catharines has fewer community organizations than comparable municipalities. Sector consultations suggested that some participants feel that the larger organizations in St. Catharines are well supported, but smaller and newer organizations find it more challenging to access City supports, which may exacerbate this issue.
- At the same time, promoting the activities at larger arts businesses and institutions can help draw in larger audiences that drive awareness of culture in St. Catharines, generating economic impacts for, and greater investment in, the sector.
- Sector workers and volunteers identified burnout as a significant risk for the city's arts and culture sector.
- The Niagara Artists Centre is leading efforts to establish a cultural hub, which would provide some additional creation spaces for the sector but will not provide enough space to meet the needs of the growing artist community in St. Catharines.

One of St. Catharines' key strengths lies in its community of vibrant, resilient, and ambitious arts organizations who take leadership in supporting the city's culture. The following organizations and initiatives highlight examples of City-supported, sector-led leadership.

Rodman Art Institute of Niagara

Toward a New Regional Art Gallery

The Rodman Art Institute of Niagara (RAIN) builds on the rich history of the Rodman Hall Art Centre, which closed in 2019. Continuing Rodman Hall's legacy, RAIN's core mission involves preserving and sharing a 1000-piece art collection; hosting exhibitions, events, and classes; and nurturing community support, capacity, and resources toward a new public art gallery to serve St. Catharines and the Niagara region.

RAIN opened a temporary gallery on St. Paul Street in early 2024.

The City of St. Catharines approved Early-Stage Funding for RAIN for 2022-2024 on the basis of its preliminary business plan, which defines short-term strategies for development and growth. During this period, RAIN hopes to secure annual operating funding to support its longer-term sustainability.

Niagara Artists Centre

A Creative Hub for St. Catharines

The Niagara Artists Centre (NAC) is a member-driven collective formed by, and dedicated to, the working artists and community of Niagara. NAC has owned its home at 354 St. Paul Street since 2006, and leases space at 433 St. Paul Street. Between these two spaces, NAC houses offices, a film editing technical suite, three gallery spaces, a rooftop terrace, open-concept artist studios, and an independently operated retail space.

In June 2023, NAC expanded its offerings by adding an open-access audio recording studio on the second floor of De La Terre Bakery (55 Geneva Street). Named the Sound Art Innovation Lab (SAIL), it was founded to provide musicians and artists with affordable recording facilities for music spanning various genres, as well as serving as a resource for scoring TV and film projects.

NAC is currently raising funds to develop a Creative Hub, informed by needs identified in a 2021 feasibility study. The Creative Hub will offer a variety of spaces, including a maker space, a multi-use presentation venue, and a recording studio. NAC is also exploring building between 3-6 work/live spaces for artists.

In 2024, NAC received support through the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program Sustaining Program, intended for professional non-profit arts organizations.

Willow Arts Community

Community Resilience Through Creative Connections

Willow Arts Community provides low-barrier peer-to-peer arts education and fosters safe spaces for creative exploration and connections for people with lived and living experience of mental illness/substance use disorder in Niagara.

The Willow provides creative opportunities across artistic disciplines; facilitates connections and integration with professional artists and culture workers; and strives to promote public understanding and reduce stigma through the creation, presentation, and discussion of art. As a grassroots movement founded by artists, educators, creatives, and community workers, the Willow highlights how multidisciplinary, creative collaborations can meet multiple needs, from artistic to social to vocational, and ultimately advance community cohesion.

In 2024, Willow Arts Community received support through the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program Sustaining Program. They also received funding through the Development Program for culture-related projects.

FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre

Impactful Venues

The FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre was a visionary idea outlined in the 2008 Creative Cluster Master Plan, a document which proposed new ways to revitalize and animate downtown St. Catharines. The document included key recommendations to move Brock University into the downtown core alongside a new arts centre and civic square. It also suggested more pedestrian-friendly designs to draw density and economic interest into the area. Some 16 years later, these key recommendations have all been actioned and downtown St. Catharines is building its reputation as a cultural destination in the Niagara region.

Since its opening in 2015, the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre has brought audiences, students, and art together in downtown St. Catharines through community and professional programming that includes musical and theatrical performances, film screenings, art markets, festivals, community and corporate events, and educational classes. The FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre supports St. Catharines arts and culture in a few unique ways:

- Collecting a Cultural Capital Investment Fee on ticket sales, one-third of which gets re-invested into the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program.
- Offering affordable and accessible film programming through their Film House – the only independent film house located within a performing arts centre in Canada that screens films across genres a full 52-weeks a year.
- Delivering youth arts education through their ImPACt Education Series.
- Supporting the development of emerging talent by hosting lectures and student performances from Brock University's Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts.

Culture Plan

Opening reception for the City of St. Catharines' 14th Annual Juried Exhibition featuring an artwork by Donna Szoke



This Culture Plan includes several components: a vision for the future of culture in St. Catharines, 3 strategic goals, 10 objectives, and 34 actions. The accompanying implementation plan includes considerations for resourcing, partnerships, timeline, and key performance indicators to measure progress against the plan.

Vision: St. Catharines is recognized as a cultural hotspot within the region and beyond, known for its rich cultural history, iconic facilities and events, and community creativity. Culture animates the downtown and neighbourhoods city-wide, enriching residents' lives and fostering local pride. The local arts and culture sector is vibrant, visible, inclusive, and sustainable.

The strategic goals and associated objectives are outlined below. Recommended actions to achieve these objectives are described in the sections that follow.

Goal 1

Recognize and Revitalize

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Celebrate St. Catharines' cultural diversity and history.

OBJECTIVE 1.2: Improve awareness of local arts and culture assets, activities, and events.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Use culture to enhance St. Catharines' neighbourhoods and communities.

Goal 2

Connect and Cultivate

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Strengthen support systems for the arts and culture community.

OBJECTIVE 2.2: Strengthen sector collaboration and coordination.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: Support professional development and capacity building.

Goal 3

Make Space

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Embed diverse expressions of arts and culture in the public realm.

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Make meaningful use of existing City spaces to meet arts and culture sector needs.

OBJECTIVE 3.3: Support solutions for spaces dedicated to the creation, performance, and exhibition of arts and culture.

OBJECTIVE 3.4: Integrate public art into public spaces and urban development.

The Niagara
Grape & Wine
Festival Grande
Parade



Recognize and Revitalize

This goal is all about celebrating the history and longevity of arts and culture in the City of St. Catharines and celebrating its evolution to the present day. It emphasizes that arts and culture are integral to life in the city and identifies opportunities to harness their benefits to revitalize, reposition, and uplift St. Catharines communities.

The social and economic benefits of arts and culture in St. Catharines are evident. Events like the TD Niagara Jazz Festival, In the Soil Arts Festival, and Niagara Grape & Wine Festival bring people together and promote community wellbeing. Institutions like the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts (Brock University) contribute to the development of local talent. Venues like the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre help to create visibility and generate economic impact, while the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre helps to tell local histories.

This goal aligns with the “Social Wellbeing” pillar in the St. Catharines Strategic Plan, which focuses on strengthening neighbourhoods and communities through quality-of-life opportunities that are accessible to all.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Celebrate St. Catharines' cultural diversity and history.

Action 1.1.1: Collaborate across City departments to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the First Welland Canal in 2029, leveraging the opportunity to highlight that the three historic Welland Canals are a component of St. Catharines' culture.

Action 1.1.2: Define neighbourhood profiles that include current demographics, history, commercial activity, and other characteristics to inform relevant local public art, event, and celebration planning.

Action 1.1.3: Align the St. Catharines Museum's community engagement initiatives with the goals outlined in the Museum's Strategic Plan by actively encouraging the inclusion of a wide variety of perspectives, voices, and experiences in the stories being told.

Action 1.1.4: Build on learnings from the City's relationship with the Niagara Regional Native Centre to deepen existing and cultivate new relationships with under-engaged communities (e.g., Indigenous, Black, disabled, newcomer, 2SLGBTQI+, and other marginalized communities).

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Improve awareness of local arts and culture assets, activities, and events.

Action 1.2.1: Explore the potential to partner with St. Catharines Public Library to create a performance pass program that gives card-holders access to a limited number of discounted passes for performances at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Upon successful implementation, explore additional pass program opportunities for St. Catharines' arts and culture activities.

Action 1.2.2: Promote built heritage and existing cultural assets within the city, highlighting the rich history and culture that is already around St. Catharines.

Action 1.2.3: Collaborate across City departments to promote arts, culture, and heritage buildings/facilities for Doors Open and Culture Days events, exploring opportunities for synergy, shared resources, and the mutual enhancement of both initiatives.

Action 1.2.4: Launch a two-year public marketing campaign promoting arts and culture in St. Catharines to residents, students, and tourists. Emphasize its economic and social impact, key clusters of activity, and defining events.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Use culture to enhance St. Catharines' neighbourhoods and communities.

Action 1.3.1: Plan for and invest in ongoing maintenance, conservation, and preservation of existing cultural, historical, and heritage corporate assets.

Action 1.3.2: Support the delivery of arts and culture programming across all six wards.

Action 1.3.3: Promote existing distinct neighbourhood identities, including celebrations of diverse local histories, to encourage local pride.

Action 1.3.4: Encourage post-secondary students to participate in arts and culture activities to better engage the city's student population.



City Art Collection | [Thunder Bay](#)

In addition to open calls for artists for various events or the acquisition of works for the City Art Collection, the City of Thunder Bay also partners with local artists and organizations to produce and/or purchase public art projects. The model is based on municipal partnerships with artists who form the backbone of arts and culture in the local community. The partnership affords the artists an opportunity to showcase their work and be recognized. Finished works by the artists are purchased as part of the City's Policy for Art in Public Spaces and collection mandate.

Indigenous Artists in Residence | [Regina](#)

This program is a partnership between the City of Regina and Indigenous artists. This program creates a part-time residency for an Indigenous artist to explore their practice, facilitate free and accessible community engagement, and create work(s) of art to be included within the City's Civic Art Collection.

Commemorative & Promotional Programs | [Windsor](#)

The program offers residents a chance to make their mark through donations in exchange for a commemorative piece in Windsor. Examples of pieces include the Windsor Waterfront Commemorative Brick Program (a dedicated brick installation at the waterfront), Commemorative Bench Program (by adding a bench in a City-owned park for a reasonable fee), and Commemorative Tree program (which supports the greening of the city). The programs can be accessed as a memorial for loved ones, to celebrate special events such as marriage or birth, to honor retirees or as a gift for special occasions. The program is an exciting and active way of engaging the community.

Digital Lights Projection Shows | [Cambridge](#)

In 2018, the City of Cambridge installed a digital projection system to display light shows on the facade of the Old Post Office building located at 12 Water Street South. These shows have quickly become a community attraction and run nightly Thursday to Sunday, with content (appropriate for all ages) scheduled to change seasonally. This public art installation is a unique community attraction initiative.

Historical Figure Streets | [Vancouver](#)

The City of Vancouver named eight laneways in the City's west end after local historical figures to remember impactful locals who have contributed greatly to the City over the years. The physical signage for these laneways was designed in a style that takes inspiration from historical plaques. Underneath the name of the laneway is a short descriptor statement of the namesake. This signage and street naming program is an easy and engaging way to share local community histories.

Printmaking workshop during Culture Days at the St. Catharines Public Library



Connect and Cultivate

This goal is all about strengthening St. Catharines' arts and culture sector. It reflects the need to expand support for professional development and encourage collaborative sector networks and governance models to improve capacity.

St. Catharines is home to a vibrant community of arts festivals, venues, organizations, and artists who drive the arts and culture sector forward in the community. To support their activities and increase capacity, there is a need to address issues related to burnout, insufficient resources, and skills gaps. There is also an opportunity to build on the work of local arts sector leaders to support emerging artists in developing skills and establishing their careers as well as to increase the inclusiveness of the sector. This goal focuses on ways the City can support capacity-building efforts and develop mechanisms to enable sector sustainability, including by encouraging collaborations that maximize limited resources.

OBJECTIVE 2.1

Strengthen support systems for the arts and culture community.

Action 2.1.1: Review the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program grant streams, policy, guidelines and criteria.

Action 2.1.2: Commit to increasing investment in, and sector use of, the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program.

Action 2.1.3: Lead a needs assessment and feasibility study on different regional sector governance structures and resource-sharing models (e.g., arts council, arts-service organization, expanding the role of the Niagara Artists Centre/FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre).

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Strengthen sector collaboration and coordination.

Action 2.2.1: Leverage existing cultural events and forums to facilitate networking, knowledge sharing, coordination, and collaboration within the sector until the completed needs assessment and feasibility study on governance structures and resource-sharing models recommends longer term solutions.

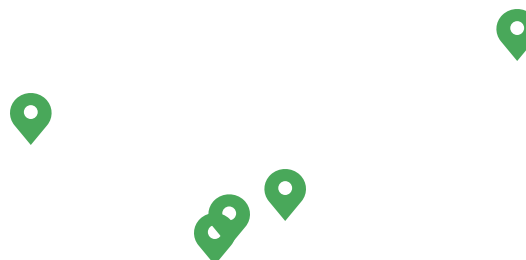
OBJECTIVE 2.3

Support professional development and capacity building.

Action 2.3.1: Promote the St. Catharines Enterprise Centre programming and resources to local artists, arts organizations, and cultural entrepreneurs to support skill-building and resource-sharing.



Tending the Bee-tiful Garden City, project led by Katherine Sunita and Melissa Parkins



CreativePEI Cultural Sector Directory | [Prince Edward Island](#)

[Pei.art](#) provides an online platform/directory that centralizes information about individual artists, performers, technicians, educators, businesses, and organizations who are part of the cultural sector on Prince Edward Island (PEI). The website provides a space for creatives to promote their work to local and global audiences who are actively seeking information on the province's cultural sector. This initiative further connects creators with each other, and markets their efforts to the public, leading to greater collaboration and work opportunities.

The Trunk Cultural Portal | [Thunder Bay](#)

[The Trunk](#) is an online directory for arts, culture, and heritage that provides information on artists and arts organizations, events, and resources such as grants, rentals, and opportunities in the creative sector. The portal has a dedicated website but is also connected to the City of Thunder Bay's webpage. The four main pages of the Trunk include: artist/organization profiles, events schedule, resources, and opportunities.

Cultural Governance Structures | [Brampton, Kingston, Waterloo](#)

Municipalities employ diverse governance structures for arts and cultural services, from direct responsibility for almost all development and delivery of culture, to completely hands-off approaches, where key partners and community bodies (e.g., arts councils, foundations, or incubators) lead the development of culture. Some examples of arts service organizations nurtured by municipalities include:

Brampton Arts Organization (BAO): BAO is incubated within the City of Brampton, and is focused on growing, celebrating, advocating for, and connecting the creative sector by offering a range of programs, services, and resources. The organization is a key partner in delivering the City's strategic vision and Culture Master Plan. The **BAO ambassador program** provides an opportunity for diverse groups of successful artists to promote the organization's work, mentor up-and-coming talent, and support BAO's advocacy efforts.

Kingston Arts Council (KAC): KAC provides strategic leadership and services for the arts in Kingston and the surrounding area. KAC serves as a funder (through administration of the **City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF)** and the Nan Yeomans Grant for Artistic Development), leader, advocate, resource, and facilitator of opportunities for the cultural sector.

Region of Waterloo Arts Fund: Established by the Region as an arm's-length organization, **the Arts Fund** contributes to the vibrancy of the arts and cultural sector in Waterloo Region by promoting, encouraging, and providing financial support to arts organizations and individual artists in Waterloo Region.



Make Space

This goal is all about creating space for arts and culture in St. Catharines in multi-faceted ways. It reflects the need to bring arts and culture into the public realm, find creative space solutions, create safe and welcoming spaces for arts participation, and increase venues for live performances and exhibition.

The stock of arts and culture spaces available in St. Catharines has shrunk over the course of the pandemic. The sector is facing challenges finding financially and physically accessible spaces in the city to both create and share their works with audiences. Additionally, there is community demand for more expressions of arts and culture, particularly across the public realm and in outdoor spaces that encourage people to connect and gather.

This goal considers how the City of St. Catharines can support greater access to cultural spaces in a range of ways and for a range of uses. It reflects the City's commitment to: enabling access to cultural spaces, facilities, and places; addressing sector gaps; supporting community engagement with arts and culture; and brightening up the public realm. It also recognizes opportunities to work with the public and local Indigenous communities to integrate the arts with a balance of placemaking and placekeeping initiatives to support environmental sustainability.

OBJECTIVE 3.1**Embed diverse expressions of arts and culture into the public realm**

Action 3.1.1: Work with Indigenous communities and the local arts sector to update planning policies to incorporate placekeeping principles and placemaking practices that enable cultural expressions.

Action 3.1.2: Update programs that encourage public gathering and economic opportunities (e.g., STC Patios program) to enable live music and/or performance art.

Action 3.1.3: Review the efficacy of heritage property incentives, including the heritage building grant program, explore the implementation of a tax rebate program, and promote them effectively.

Action 3.1.4: Conduct a regular community survey to assess residents' satisfaction and get feedback on the types of arts and culture they would like to see in the public realm.

OBJECTIVE 3.2**Make meaningful use of existing City spaces to meet arts and culture sector needs**

Action 3.2.1: Enhance promotion of available cultural spaces in St. Catharines that can be used for a variety of arts and culture purposes.

Action 3.2.2: Run a pilot program to match underutilized City spaces with arts organizations for in-kind contributions/subsidized rates.

OBJECTIVE 3.3**Support solutions for spaces dedicated to the creation, performance, and exhibition of arts and culture**

Action 3.3.1: Building on the work done by the Niagara Artists Centre and Rodman Art Institute of Niagara, conduct a city-wide facility needs assessment to confirm space needs and identify new facilities needed to meet those needs, either through new purpose-built projects or adaptive reuse approaches.

Action 3.3.2: Clarify the City's support for Rodman Art Institute of Niagara beyond 2024, including determining an appropriate relationship and level of investment with consideration for longer term sustainability.

Action 3.3.3: Collaborate with Niagara Artists Centre to explore opportunities to secure additional funding for the development of the Creative Hub.

Action 3.3.4: Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant buildings for cultural purposes, providing financial incentives and support for arts organizations to renovate and occupy these spaces.

Action 3.3.5: Explore solutions to address the affordability of City- and privately owned culture spaces (e.g., rent subsidy grant programs, partnerships).

OBJECTIVE 3.4**Integrate public art into public spaces and urban development.**

Action 3.4.1: Expand public art across - communities and neighbourhoods, prioritizing activations in novel spaces and increased display of the indoor Public Art collection.

Action 3.4.2: Introduce a mechanism to allocate a percentage of new municipal development to a public art reserve fund (Percent for Public Art).

Action 3.4.3: Develop a Public Art Strategy to identify opportunities to integrate art into public spaces and direct strategic areas of investment to support increased vibrancy and revitalization across St. Catharines.

Action 3.4.4: Leverage pop-up art events and temporary installations to revitalize vacant storefronts and highlight the connection between history and art at St. Catharines' monuments, memorials, and underused public spaces.



Indigenous Placemaking | Kitchener

The City of Kitchener has an Indigenous Placemaking Fund (\$350,000 was approved in 2022). The fund supports Indigenous placemaking initiatives, including recent plans for the permanent ceremonial fire space in Victoria Park (specifically in an area that previously hosted the Land Back occupation camp). The fire space will serve as a gathering space for Indigenous groups and communities. The City also wants to transform its biggest natural space, Huron Natural Area, into a space that better represents past and present Indigenous communities, art, and culture. The goal of the project is to create outdoor spaces that feel welcoming to Indigenous groups and Indigenous community members looking to host ceremonies, events and gathering. The project is centered on relationship building and would be done in consultation with Indigenous leaders and community members. The City identified the need for such a space through engagement and discussions with Indigenous communities. The space would therefore be a safe and welcoming space where community, especially Indigenous communities, can gather for ceremonies and to celebrate cultural traditions.

Indigenous Placekeeping | Toronto

The City of Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan (2022-2032) developed in consultation with Indigenous communities supports Indigenous Placekeeping. The Plan outlines the City's actions towards developing implementation strategies that address the needs and barriers of Indigenous communities related to placekeeping and placemaking. Various City departments are involved in creating and maintaining Indigenous spaces as part of placekeeping initiatives (i.e., the Corporate Real Estate Management division, Parks, Forestry & Recreation division, Economic Development & Culture division, Transportation Services division, City Planning division and the Indigenous Affairs Office).

The Reconciliation Action Plan's placekeeping principles have been incorporated into Toronto's entertainment district. For example, a competition for the design and construction of a new park as part of the downtown entertainment district is under way at the time of writing. To be eligible for the design competition, teams must include an Indigenous design partner with experience or expertise in Indigenous placekeeping: "This person can also fulfill other roles on the team, such as the artist, architect or landscape architect, but should have specific expertise in Indigenous placekeeping." Work is also underway on the Indian Residential School Survivors (IRSS) Restoration of Identity Project at Nathan Phillips Square, outside City Hall, which is led by the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre in partnership with the City of Toronto. The project features a Spirit Garden – a teaching, learning, sharing, and healing space – whose design will represent First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures and teachings.

Community Partnerships | Kitchener

44 Gaukel is a space designed and operated as a shared creative workplace in the core of downtown Kitchener. The City of Kitchener operates this creative community through a partnership with anchor tenants ArtsBuild Ontario and the Accelerator Centre (a technology incubator). 44 Gaukel is an example of an innovative, community driven space that offers affordable, below market rental costs with basic office amenities. 44 Gaukel features 10,000 sq. ft. of space shared between ArtsBuild Ontario, local arts and culture organizations, and the tech makerspaces of the Accelerator Centre, all of which operate in the Waterloo region.

Outdoor Mural & Street Art Program | Toronto

The City of Toronto provides a one-time funding (up to \$7,500) support to local groups and business associations in commercial and employment districts, towards the development of outdoor mural projects. The mural projects are developed based on local themes and contribute to enhancing the attractiveness of local communities while promoting neighbourhood identities. Eligible expenses include artists fees, materials, installation, and equipment rental. Murals in the community become a draw for visitors and locals, and in turn attract customers for local businesses. The program offers an opportunity to engage local businesses, residents, and local groups, while also improving the aesthetics and identity of neighbourhoods in Toronto.



Ohné:ka,
mural by
Cheyenne Ricard,
Port Weller
Community
Centre

Implementation Plan

The following implementation plan provides a structured framework for carrying out the recommended actions to achieve the Culture Plan's strategic goals and objectives. The following details are provided for each action:

Timeframe

When the action is planned to begin (recognizing that in some cases, preliminary work or steps that help lay a foundation for the action may begin earlier or be ongoing).

Responsibility

Identifies the lead department or organizations responsible for delivery as well as key internal (i.e., City) and external (sector and community) partners.

Resources

Identifies cost and funding considerations (*costs may be adjusted for inflation).

Cost Classification Legend

\$ (Less than \$5,000 and/or Staff Time)

Low-cost – Tasks that can be managed within existing staff time or with minimal additional expenses.

\$\$ (\$5,000 - \$20,000)

Moderate – More substantial investments while remaining within a manageable budget.

\$\$\$ (\$20,000 - \$50,000)

Mid-range – Mid-range initiatives that require dedicated funding and resources.

\$\$\$\$ (\$50,000 - \$100,000)

Substantial – Substantial projects or multiple interconnected initiatives that necessitate a considerable financial commitment.

\$\$\$\$\$ (More than \$100,000)

Major – Major, high-impact projects or extensive, long-term initiatives that demand substantial resources.

Next Steps

Outlines steps to advance the action.

Dependencies & Intersections

Identifies where and how the action connects to other components of this plan as well as other City plans and policies.

Initial Key Performance Indicators

Metrics to evaluate progress and success.

Goal 1: Recognize and Revitalize

Objective 1.1: Celebrate St. Catharines' cultural diversity and history

Action 1.1.1: Collaborate across City departments to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the First Welland Canal in 2029, leveraging the opportunity to highlight that the three historic Welland Canals are a component of St. Catharines' culture.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>▶▶ Long term (5+ years)</p> <p>↪ Ongoing</p> <p><i>Note: While anniversary events are long term, planning for this major milestone has already begun</i></p>	<p>Lead: Historical Services</p> <p>Partners: Cultural Services; Community, Recreation and Culture Services; Economic Development and Tourism Services; Municipal Works; 2029 Historic Welland Canals Task Force</p> <p>External: Niagara Region; Welland Canal communities; Brock University</p>	<p>Recurring internal expenses; seek external funding (provincial/federal grants) for specific projects, such as trails and interpretation, as well as individual events. Financial resources included in cost estimates for 2029 Historic Welland Canals Interpretive Plan implementation. TBD.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a plan for celebratory programs and events. Identify potential community partners to support delivery. 2. Identify potential external funding sources. 3. Develop a communications and marketing plan to promote anniversary celebrations. 	<p>There are opportunities for this action to tie in with various actions related to highlighting local culture in the public realm, such as Action 3.4.5 (activating public memorials with contemporary art) and Action 1.2.2 (promoting built heritage around the city).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of anniversary events, activities, programs • Attendance and satisfaction metrics (residents and visitors) • Increased awareness of St. Catharines' cultural offerings
Action 1.1.2: Define neighbourhood profiles that include demographics, history, commercial activity, and other characteristics to inform relevant local public art, event, and celebration planning.					
<p>▶ Short term (1–2 years)</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Economic Development and Tourism Services; Planning and Building Services; Fire Services</p> <p>Partners (External): Neighbourhood associations; Niagara Region; FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre</p>	<p>Existing operating budget. No increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify neighbourhoods to profile and collate existing data (e.g., Environics data, community profiles, census data). 2. Engage with neighbourhood associations for additional input and feedback. 3. Consider engaging external experts to provide further data insights at the neighbourhood level. 4. Develop profiles and guidelines for their use/implementation. 	<p>This action will help inform City activities at the neighbourhood level, including efforts to increase offerings beyond the downtown. Specifically, it should be completed before advancing Action 3.4.1 (expanding public art across city communities and neighbourhoods) and Action 1.3.3 (promoting distinct neighbourhood identities to build local pride).</p> <p>On an ongoing basis, this action should be informed by inputs from Action 3.1.4 (conducting community survey on preferred types of public art, programs, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood profiles defined • Increase in initiatives planned based on neighbourhood profiles

Action 1.1.3: Align the St. Catharines Museum's community engagement initiatives with the goals outlined in the Museum's Strategic Plan by actively encouraging the inclusion of a wide variety of perspectives, voices, and experiences in the stories being told.

Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>► Short term (1–2 years)</p> <p>↪ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Historical Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Cultural Services; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Heritage Planning</p> <p>Partners (External): Work with local Indigenous, Black, racialized, and marginalized community members and groups to share their stories</p>	<p>Operating budget; \$\$ – \$5,000: Moderate increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify stories and potential installation sites in all wards. 2. Engage with local BIPOC communities to involve them in telling their histories. 	<p>Prioritizing underrepresented perspectives as part of this action is supported by Action 1.1.4 (strengthening relationships with under-engaged communities).</p> <p>More broadly, this action helps advance Objective 1.3 (using culture to enhance neighbourhoods and communities) and Objective 3.1 (embedding diverse expressions of arts and culture into the public realm).</p> <p>This action also intersects with the engagement goal of the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre Strategic Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of programs offered, the number of partnerships developed, and the proportion featuring underrepresented perspectives and narratives • Digital engagement metrics for digital content (e.g., visits, visitors)

Action 1.1.4: Build on learnings from the City's relationship with the Niagara Regional Native Centre to deepen existing and cultivate new relationships with under-engaged communities (e.g., Indigenous, Black, disabled, newcomer, 2SLGBTQ+, and marginalized communities).

<p>► Short term (1–2 years)</p> <p>↪ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Cultural Services, Community, Recreation and Culture Services; Committees of Council</p> <p>Partners (External): Niagara Region</p>	<p>Operating budget; \$\$ – \$6,000: Moderate increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify leaders/groups from under-engaged communities. Consider opportunities to build on existing relationships as well as open community calls in cases where relationships do not yet exist. 2. Collaborate with community leaders/groups to explore appropriate models to formalize the relationships (e.g., MOU, advisory group). 	<p>Informed by the guiding principle to embed DEI considerations throughout the Culture Plan, this action will support the inclusion of diverse perspectives throughout Cultural Services and wider City initiatives.</p> <p>This action will directly support Action 1.3.3 (celebrating diverse local histories), and 3.1.1 (working with Indigenous communities to incorporate placekeeping into public design).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of relationship building processes • Number of City initiatives planned with input from diverse under-engaged communities
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Goal 1: Recognize and Revitalize

Objective 1.2: Improve awareness of local arts and culture assets, activities, and events

Action 1.2.1: Explore the potential to partner with the public library to create a performance pass program that gives card-holders access to a limited number of discounted passes for performances at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. Upon successful implementation, explore additional pass program opportunities for St. Catharines' arts and culture activities.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>► Short term (1–2 years)</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Arts and Culture Advisory Committee</p> <p>Partners (External): St. Catharines Public Library; FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre; local arts and culture sector</p>	<p>Operating budget; Sponsorship/ donation</p> <p>\$ - \$5,000: Moderate increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Determine cost and strategy to implement pass program, with consideration for PAC ticketing and any technical/operational requirements for the library. Secure program funding. Launch and promote program. Assess the need for, and viability of, future pass program opportunities. Find opportunities to partner with other event organizers, venues, etc. for donations to provide passes at the library. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of performance passes available and claimed Number of performance pass users who attended PAC performances Economic impact of the program
Action 1.2.2: Promote built heritage and existing cultural assets within the city, highlighting the rich history and culture that is already all around in St. Catharines.					
<p>►► Medium term (3–4 years)</p> <p>↻ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Heritage Planning; Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Community, Recreation and Culture Services; Planning and Building Services; Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services; Heritage Advisory Committee</p> <p>Partners (External): Heritage and cultural asset owners/operators; local schools; St. Catharines Downtown Association</p>	<p>Existing operating budget. No increase.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with internal partners to prioritize assets for promotion. Develop a promotional plan to increase awareness of and engagement with selected assets. Engage local schools and BIAs to share information. Expand promotional efforts throughout the city. 	<p>This action should begin once Action 1.3.1 (improved maintenance, conservation, and preservation of existing assets – including heritage buildings) is underway.</p> <p>There may be opportunities for this action to tie into Action 1.1.1 (celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Welland Canals).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of heritage and cultural assets promoted Increased engagement with promoted assets Increased awareness of St. Catharines' cultural offerings

Action 1.2.3: Collaborate across City departments to promote arts, culture, and heritage buildings/facilities for Doors Open and Culture Days events, exploring opportunities for synergy, shared resources, and the mutual enhancement of both initiatives.

Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>► Short term (1–2 years)</p> <p>↪ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Historical Services; Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Community & Events; Planning and Building Services; Corporate Communications; Committees of Council</p> <p>Partners (External): St. Catharines Public Library; FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre; Meridian Centre; Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts (Brock University)</p>	<p>Operating budget;</p> <p>External funding (if available)</p> <p>\$\$ -\$10,000: Moderate increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crowd source buildings and facilities of interest (e.g., through open call for submissions). 2. Identify buildings and facilities to highlight through these programs. 3. Explore external funding opportunities 4. Partner with local arts and culture organizations and community groups to develop programming or other activations that promote the cultural significance of the venues. 5. Explore opportunities to collaborate with artists and Culture Days activity presenters to further animate these spaces. 	<p>Prioritizing underrepresented perspectives as part of this action is supported by Action 1.1.4 (strengthening relationships with under-engaged communities).</p> <p>More broadly, this action helps advance Objective 1.3 (using culture to enhance neighbourhoods and communities) and Objective 3.1 (embedding diverse expressions of arts and culture into the public realm).</p> <p>This action also intersects with the engagement goal of the St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre Strategic Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of events and participating venues • Attendance and satisfaction metrics (residents and visitors)

Action 1.2.4: Launch a two-year public marketing campaign promoting arts and culture in St. Catharines to residents, students, and tourists. Emphasize its economic and social impact, key clusters of activity, and defining events.

<p>►► Medium term (3–4 years)</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services and Corporate Communications</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Economic Development and Tourism; Arts and Culture Advisory Committee</p> <p>Partners (External): St. Catharines Downtown Association; Brock University; Niagara College; St. Catharines Public Library; FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre; local arts and culture sector</p>	<p>Operating budget (2-year commitment);</p> <p>\$\$\$ -\$25,000: Mid-range increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine if the campaign can be designed and executed internally or if a marketing/PR firm will be engaged. 2. Define key messaging for the campaign to target residents and visitors. 3. Launch 2-year campaign. 4. Once complete, evaluate the impact of the campaign to determine next steps to either extend or complete the campaign. 	<p>This action could benefit from the information provided by Action 1.1.2 (define neighbourhood profiles).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of campaign impressions • Increase in arts and culture event attendance and audience engagement during the campaign • Increased awareness of St. Catharines' cultural offerings and their community benefits
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Goal 1: Recognize and Revitalize

Objective 1.3: Use culture to enhance St. Catharines' neighbourhoods and communities

Action 1.3.1: Plan for and invest in ongoing maintenance, conservation, and preservation of existing cultural, historical, and heritage corporate assets/facilities.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>▶▶ Long term (5+ years)</p> <p>↳ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services; Heritage Planning</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Historical Services; Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services; Municipal Works</p>	<p>Operating budget; \$\$\$\$\$ -\$100,000 +: Major increase TBD</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a maintenance plan, reviewing public infrastructure considerations as detailed in the City's Asset Management Plan, heritage building preservation policies and processes more broadly, and identifying resources required for appropriate upkeep, conservation, and preservation. 2. Develop a system to prioritize assets in need of repair and maintenance. 3. Develop a system to incentivize private facility owners to maintain their heritage properties. 4. Promote completed repair and maintenance projects. 	<p>This action should be underway before advancing Action 1.2.2 (promoting built heritage and other cultural assets).</p> <p>There may be opportunities to leverage funding tied to Action 1.1.1 (celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Welland canals) to improve/repair related assets.</p> <p>This action will also support and intersect with Action 3.4.3 (developing a Public Art Strategy).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of maintenance plan • Number of capital repair and maintenance projects completed • Improved condition, usability, and public perception of cultural and heritage assets
Action 1.3.2: Support the delivery of arts and culture programming across all six wards.					
<p>▶▶ Medium term (3–4 years)</p> <p>↳ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (External): Community organizations and artists</p>	<p>Operating budget; Seek external funding through provincial/federal grants where applicable.</p> <p>\$\$\$\$ - \$25,000: Mid-range increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on neighbourhood profiles to identify interests and potential gaps in each ward. 2. Share findings with the local sector to encourage targeted programming. 3. Identify select opportunities for the City to lead or co-produce programming, prioritizing City presence in areas beyond downtown. 	<p>This action should be completed after Action 1.1.2 (define neighbourhood profiles) is complete. The neighbourhood profiles will identify community interests, which can be addressed by the programming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of arts and culture programs in each ward • Number of organizations delivering programming • Participation in arts and culture programs by community members in the catchment area (Ward-level)

Action 1.3.3: Promote existing distinct neighbourhood identities, including celebrations of diverse local histories, to encourage local pride.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>►► Medium term (3–4 years)</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services; Historical Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Economic Development and Tourism; Planning and Building Services; Corporate Communications</p> <p>Partners (External): Neighbourhood associations</p>	<p>Operating budget; \$\$ -\$10,000; Moderate increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on neighbourhood profiles and engage neighbourhood associations to define distinct identities 2. Identify authentic, relevant ways to promote those identities. 3. Identify opportunities to incorporate promotion of neighbourhood identities into other City initiatives. 	<p>This action should be completed after Action 1.1.2 (defining neighbourhood profiles).</p> <p>The City should also consider how this action ties into Action 1.3.5 (developing a coordinated signage strategy).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of initiatives to promote neighbourhood identities • Increased engagement in neighbourhood associations • Increase in local pride and sense of belonging • Improved awareness of local histories
Action 1.3.4: Encourage post-secondary students to participate in arts and culture activities to better engage the city's student population.					
<p>►► Medium term (3–4 years)</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Corporate Communications; Economic Development and Tourism</p> <p>Partners (External): Niagara College; Brock University; Student leadership groups; St. Catharines Public Library; local arts and culture sector</p>	<p>Existing budget. No increase.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect with student affairs departments and student groups at Brock University, Niagara College, and other local/regional post-secondary institutions. 2. Develop programs to support student participation in arts and culture on and off campus. 3. Implement programs. 4. Review and update collaborative programs annually. 	<p>The relationship building element of this action can begin immediately, but it makes sense to leverage Action 1.2.1 (create a performance pass program) as an incentive that can be offered to the institutions' students.</p> <p>This action will also support and intersect with Action 1.2.4 (launch a marketing campaign promoting arts and culture).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of arts and culture activations on local college/university campuses • Number of student tickets sold at events

Goal 2: Connect and Cultivate

Objective 2.1: Strengthen support systems for the arts and culture community

Action 2.1.1: Review the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program grant streams, policy, guidelines and criteria.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
► Short term (1–2 years)	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Committees of Council</p> <p>Partners (External): Local arts and culture sector</p>	Existing operating budget. No increase.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess SCCIP for opportunities to improve DEI and accessibility. Consider best practices around DEI self-identification and data storage. 2. Define guidelines and criteria for individual artist funding. 3. Explore ways to support (and incentivize support within the sector for) developing the arts and culture talent pipeline, such as professional development and mentorship opportunities. 4. Explore ways to support greater number and diversity of smaller arts and culture events across the city. 5. Update guidelines and criteria; promote changes within the sector. 	This action can be completed in parallel to assessing additional investment required for the program (Action 2.1.2).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of review • Greater representation of equity-deserving applicants and recipients
Action 2.1.2: Commit to increasing investment in, and sector use of, the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program.					
► Short term (1–2 years)	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Financial Management Services; Committees of Council</p>	<p>Operating budget</p> <p>\$\$\$\$ – Substantial increase.TBD</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess level of additional investment required and determine plan to implement increase. 2. Offer resources to support navigating and applying to funding, including targeted to small organizations and equity-deserving communities. 3. Establish a regular review cycle to assess level of investment in SCCIP. 	<p>This action directly responds to the City’s Strategic Plan, which identifies investment in sustainable support and funding as a priority within the Cultural Renaissance pillar.</p> <p>The regular review of SCCIP investment may align with regular Culture Plan updates, allowing the City to implement key learnings about community and sector needs that emerge from the planning process.</p> <p>Assessing the level of investment required can be completed alongside the review of program guidelines and criteria (Action 2.1.1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased investment in SCCIP • Number of applicants and recipients • Economic impact of SCCIP program

Action 2.1.3: Lead a needs assessment and feasibility study on different regional sector governance structures and resource-sharing models (e.g., arts council, arts-service organization, expanding the role of the Niagara Artists Centre/FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre).					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>► Medium term (3–4 years)</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services Partners (External): Niagara Region; Niagara Arts and Culture Regional Roundtable; Niagara Artists Centre; local arts and culture sector</p>	<p>Operating budget; one-time expense, with potential to pool resources with other participating Niagara municipalities</p> <p>\$\$\$ – \$50,000: Mid-range increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop scope of work and identify sector and regional partners. 2. Determine if study can be conducted internally or if external expert will be hired. 3. Complete study exploring approaches that enable shared resources (including space) and program delivery. Consider feasibility of a regional arts and culture sector directory and/or listings portal. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participating partners • Completion of study

Goal 2: Connect and Cultivate

Objective 2.2: Strengthen sector collaboration and coordination.

Action 2.2.1: Leverage existing cultural events and forums to facilitate networking, knowledge sharing, coordination, and collaboration within the sector until the completed needs assessment and feasibility study on governance structures and resource-sharing models recommends longer term solutions.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>► Medium term (3–4 years)</p> <p>↻ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Programs and Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Arts and Culture Advisory Committee</p> <p>Partners (External): Local arts and culture sector</p>	<p>Operating budget.</p> <p>\$ – \$3,000: Low-cost increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine role of Arts and Culture Advisory Committee in identifying and planning networking opportunities. 2. Identify existing City-run and -supported events and other forums where culture sector tends to gather (e.g., major festivals, Arts Awards). Ensure DEI lens is applied to select events that include diverse cross-section of the sector. 3. Develop approaches to facilitate sector connections (e.g., arts and culture lounge, passive engagement poster boards). 	<p>There may be opportunities to expand this initiative based on the results of Action 2.1.3 (needs assessment and feasibility study on different regional sector governance structures and resource-sharing models).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of networking opportunities organized • Participation and engagement in networking opportunities • Number of collaborations/new initiatives arising from these connections

Goal 2: Connect and Cultivate

Objective 2.3: Support professional development and capacity building.

Action 2.3.1: Promote the St. Catharines Enterprise Centre programming and resources to local artists, arts organizations, and cultural entrepreneurs to support skill-building and resource-sharing.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>▶▶ Medium term (3–4 years)</p> <p>↻ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Economic Development and Tourism, Community & Events</p>	<p>Operating budget.</p> <p>\$\$ – \$3,000: Low-cost increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support promotion of enterprise centre programming within arts and culture sector. 2. Collaborate with Economic Development and Tourism staff to develop dedicated programming for arts and culture, while leveraging existing resources and initiatives. 	<p>This action helps advance the St. Catharines Economic Development Strategy, which includes a focus on building capacity of arts, culture, and heritage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of arts and culture sector participants • Number of specific arts and culture sessions • Participant feedback and outcomes related to specific session topics

Goal 3: Make Space

Objective 3.1: Embed diverse expressions of arts and culture in the public realm.

Action 3.1.1: Work with Indigenous communities and the local arts sector to update planning policies to incorporate placekeeping principles and placemaking practices that enable cultural expressions.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
▶ Medium term (3–4 years)	Lead: Planning and Building Services Partners (Internal): Community, Recreation and Culture Services; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Partners (External): Niagara Region; Niagara Regional Native Centre, Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, Niagara Region Métis Council, and Urban Indigenous community organizations; local arts and culture sector	Operating budget. \$ – \$5,000: Low-cost increase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Indigenous communities to define placekeeping priorities, including key sites and approaches to consider. Engage local arts sector to identify ways to support better ways of presenting and encouraging culture activities through urban design. Collaborate with internal partners to update relevant documents. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of engagement Inclusion of placekeeping principles in relevant guidelines Adherence to placekeeping principles in future initiatives
Action 3.1.2: Update programs that encourage public gathering and economic opportunities (e.g., STC Patios program) to enable live music and/or performance art.					
▶ Short term (1–2 years)	Lead: Cultural Services Partners (Internal): Economic Development and Tourism Services; Planning and Building Services; Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services; Municipal Works Partners (External): St. Catharines Downtown Association; FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre; Niagara Artists Centre; Neighbourhood associations	Existing operating budget. No increase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with internal partners to review and recommend updates to policies. Identify opportunities for increased integration with existing events through partnerships. Investigate funding opportunities through the Public Realm Investment Program (PRIP). Promote updates within relevant sectors. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates to programs completed Increased live performances in public gathering spaces

Action 3.1.3: Review the efficacy of heritage property incentives, including the heritage building grant program, explore the implementation of a tax rebate program, and promote them effectively.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>► Short term (1–2 years)</p>	<p>Lead: Heritage Planning</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Cultural Services; Corporate Communications; Committees of Council</p>	Existing operating budget. No increase.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with internal partners to review and recommend updates to the program. 2. Promote updates. 	This action may feed into and inform Action 3.3.4 (exploring opportunities for adaptive reuse of vacant buildings).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed updates to the program • Increased awareness of and use of grant program
Action 3.1.4: Conduct a regular community survey to assess residents' satisfaction and get feedback on the types of arts and culture they would like to see in the public realm.					
<p>► Short term (1–2 years)</p> <p>↻ Ongoing</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Corporate Communications; Chief Administration Office</p> <p>Partners (External): St. Catharines Public Library; St. Catharines Downtown Association; FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre; local arts and culture sector; neighbourhood associations</p>	Existing operating budget. No increase.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define metrics for consistent evaluation. 2. Run regular survey. Promote it digitally and in person (e.g., at cultural venues, public art sites). 3. Analyze and assess the feedback obtained through the survey to inform future planning and decision-making. 	This action feeds into and helps inform Action 1.1.1 (developing neighbourhood profiles) and Action 3.4.3 (developing a Public Art Strategy).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of residents engaged through surveys • Resident satisfaction with arts and culture offerings

Goal 3: Make Space

Objective 3.2: Make meaningful use of City spaces to meet arts and culture sector needs

Action 3.2.1: Enhance promotion of existing spaces that can be used for a variety of arts and culture purposes.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
▶ Short term (1–2 years)	Lead: Community, Recreation and Culture Services Partners (Internal): Corporate Communications	Existing operating budget. No increase.	1. Work with internal partners to identify available municipal, private and non-profit owned spaces. Include a review of non-traditional municipally owned spaces (e.g., parking lots, rooftops) that may create new revenue generation opportunities. 2. Develop promotion plan. 3. Launch promotion.	This action is supported by Action 3.2.2 (pilot program to match underutilized spaces with arts organizations).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of City spaces promoted • Usage of City spaces for arts and culture • Revenue increases attributed to newly identified facility rentals
Action 3.2.2: Run a pilot program to match underutilized City spaces with arts organizations for in-kind contributions/subsidized rates.					
▶▶ Medium term (3–4 years)	Lead: Cultural Services Partners (Internal): Realty and Insurance Services; Economic Development and Tourism Services Partners (External): Private property owners	Operating budget; one-time investment; explore external funding (grant, sponsorship). \$\$\$\$ – Substantial increase. TBD	1. Identify underutilized spaces and potential uses (e.g., programming, exhibition, office space). 2. Develop business plan to guide how subsidized rates/contributions are structured. 3. Develop program guidelines. 4. Launch and promote program.	This action should begin after completion of Action 3.3.1 (conducting a facility needs assessment).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of spaces and organizations included in the pilot program

Goal 3: Make Space

Objective 3.3: Support solutions for spaces dedicated to the creation, performance, and exhibition of arts and culture

Action 3.3.1: Building on the work done by the Niagara Artists Centre and Rodman Art Institute of Niagara, conduct a city wide facility needs assessment to confirm space needs and identify new facilities needed to meet those needs, either through new purpose-built projects or adaptive reuse approaches.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
► Short term (1–2 years)	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Planning and Building Services, Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services; Municipal Works; Financial Management Services</p> <p>Partners (External): Local arts and cultural sector</p>	<p>Operating budget; one-time expense; explore external funding through provincial/federal grants.</p> <p>\$\$\$ – \$50,000: Mid-range increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define scope of work. Consider whether there are any planned new developments (outside of arts and recreation) whose space programming may be informed by this study. 2. Determine if work will be conducted internally or if external expert will be engaged. 3. Inform sector about the study. 4. Conduct study. Include exploration of how underutilized spaces can jointly support culture sector and meet other municipal space needs. 	<p>This action builds on work done by Niagara Artists Centre and Rodman Art Institute of Niagara in their respective pursuits of space to consider sector-wide needs and solutions.</p> <p>This action should be completed before advancing Action 3.2.2 (running a pilot program to match underutilized spaces with arts organizations) and Action 3.3.4 (encouraging adaptive reuse of vacant buildings).</p> <p>It may help inform Action 3.3.2 (clarifying the City's support for Rodman Art Institute of Niagara) and can also help inform Action 3.4.4 (leveraging pop-up/temporary art activations in underused spaces).</p> <p>There may be an opportunity to integrate Action 3.3.5 (exploring solutions to address culture space affordability) into this study.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of needs assessment and audit • Number of underutilized assets identified
Action 3.3.2: Clarify the City's support for Rodman Art Institute of Niagara beyond 2024, including determining an appropriate relationship and level of investment with consideration for longer term sustainability.					
► Short term (1–2 years)	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Economic Development and Tourism Services</p>	<p>\$\$\$ - Substantial</p> <p>Increase</p> <p>TBD</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with Rodman Art Institute of Niagara to discuss their longer-term plans and proposed approach to regional art gallery. Confirm nature of relationship between the organization and City, particularly in terms of proposed gallery. 2. Identify type of support the City can provide (e.g., financial, in-kind) and feasible level of investment. 	<p>Rodman Art Institute of Niagara's pursuit of space may be informed by Action 3.3.1 (conducting a facility needs assessment).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined relationship between City and organization • Agreement or terms of support

Goal 3: Make Space | Objective 3.3: Support solutions for spaces dedicated to the creation, performance, and exhibition of arts and culture

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Action 3.3.3: Collaborate with Niagara Artists Centre to explore opportunities to secure additional funding for the development of the Creative Hub.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
▶ Short term (1–2 years)	Lead: Cultural Services	Existing operating budget. No increase.	1. Meet with Niagara Artists Centre to discuss how City can support pursuit of funding beyond municipal sources.	This action helps advance Action 3.3.5 (explore solutions to address affordability of culture spaces) by supporting the expansion of available culture space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of opportunities pursued with City support • Resources secured with City support
Action 3.3.4: Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant buildings for cultural purposes, providing financial incentives and support for arts organizations to renovate and occupy these spaces.					
▶▶ Medium term (3–4 years)	Lead: Cultural Services Partners (Internal): Planning and Building Services; Realty and Insurance Services; Economic Development and Tourism Services	Capital budget; operating budget for ongoing incentives and support. \$\$\$\$ – Substantial increase. TBD.	1. Determine financial incentives and/or support mechanisms. 2. Determine eligibility criteria to access incentives/support. 3. Promote incentives/support within arts and culture sector.	This action should begin after completing Action 3.3.1 (conducting a facility needs assessment). It may also be informed by Action 3.1.3 (reviewing/updating the heritage grant program) and can potentially be aligned with Action 3.2.2 (pilot program to match underutilized spaces with arts organizations). There may be opportunity to integrate this action into the Community Improvement Program (due for review in 2025), which supports adaptive reuse for cultural purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of vacant buildings repurposed for culture • Number and value of financial incentives and support provided • Number of organizations using repurposed spaces who would not otherwise have adequate space in the city
Action 3.3.5: Explore solutions to address the affordability of City – and privately owned culture spaces (e.g., rent subsidy grant programs, partnerships).					
▶▶ Medium term (3–4 years)	Lead: Cultural Services Partners (Internal): Financial Management Services Partners (External): Local arts and culture sector	Existing operating budget. No increase.	1. Determine if this action can be completed as part of the facility needs assessment and audit. 2. Research potential solutions (may include benchmarking and best practices research) and assess feasibility/suitability in the St. Catharines context. Consider appropriate options for City-owned spaces vs. privately owned spaces (including the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre). 3. Implement selected solution(s).	There may be an opportunity to integrate this action into the work for Action 3.3.1 (conducting a facility needs assessment). This action may be supported by Action 3.3.3 (collaborating with Niagara Artists Centre to help secure funding for the Creative Hub).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of solutions • Development of plan to implement solutions • Increased access and use of culture spaces • Increased community use of the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre.

Goal 3: Make Space

Objective 3.4: Integrate public art into public spaces and urban development

Action 3.4.1: Expand public art across St. Catharines communities and neighbourhoods, prioritizing activations in novel spaces and increased display of the indoor Public Art collection.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
<p>►► Long term (5+ years)</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Planning and Building Services; Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services; Arts and Culture Advisory Committee,</p> <p>Partners (External): Neighbourhood associations; Brock University; Niagara College</p>	<p>Capital budget</p> <p>\$\$\$\$\$ – Major. TBD.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify potential sites for public art. 2. Develop a timeline/target for installation, prioritizing (i) sites outside of existing cultural asset clusters and (ii) display opportunities in indoor public spaces. 	<p>This action should be pursued after completion of Action 1.1.2 (developing neighbourhood profiles) and Action 3.4.3 (developing a Public Art Strategy).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of public art installations • Density of public art in areas beyond downtown and Port Dalhousie • Public engagement with, and feedback on, public art
Action 3.4.2: Introduce a mechanism to allocate a percentage of new municipal development to a public art reserve fund (Percent for Public Art).					
<p>► Short term (1–2 years)</p>	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Planning and Building Services; Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services; Financial Management Services; Arts and Culture Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Existing operating budget. No increase.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research funding mechanism models. 2. Select and implement funding mechanism as part of the Public Art Strategy. 	<p>This action may be integrated with/completed as part of Action 3.4.3 (developing a Public Art Strategy). It will help fund Action 3.4.5 (activating memorials with public art), Action 3.4.1 (expanding public art across the city), and Action 3.4.4 (leveraging art installations to revitalize underused spaces).</p> <p>This action may require updates to the Official Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of percent for public art funding mechanism

Action 3.4.3: Develop a Public Art Strategy to identify opportunities to integrate art into public spaces and direct strategic areas of investment to support increased vibrancy and revitalization across St. Catharines.					
Timeframe	Responsibility	Resources	Next Steps	Dependencies & Intersections	Initial Key Performance Indicators
► Short term (1–2 years)	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Planning and Building Services; Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services; Municipal Works; Financial Management Services; Economic Development and Tourism Services; Arts and Culture Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Operating budget. One-time expense.</p> <p>\$\$\$ – \$30,000: Mid-range increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a scope of work. 2. Determine which parts of the strategy can be developed internally and which should be contracted to an external expert. 3. Develop and implement the strategy. 	<p>Action 3.4.2 (introducing a Percent for Public Art) may be integrated with this action.</p> <p>This action will guide the remaining actions under Objective 3.4 (integrating public art into public spaces and urban development) and should be completed first.</p> <p>This action may require updates to the Official Plan to ensure it conforms with the Public Art Strategy and related actions (e.g., Action 3.4.2 to introduce a Percent for Public Art funding mechanism).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of Public Art Strategy • Number of potential or priority public art sites identified • Number of public art installations completed because of this work
Action 3.4.4: Leverage pop-up art events and temporary installations to revitalize vacant storefronts and highlight the connection between history and art at St. Catharines' monuments, memorials, and underused public spaces.					
►► Medium term (3–4 years)	<p>Lead: Cultural Services</p> <p>Partners (Internal): Planning and Building Services; Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services; Realty and Insurance Services; Historical Services; Committees of Council</p> <p>Partners (External): Neighbourhood associations; Veteran's Associations</p>	<p>Operating budget.</p> <p>\$\$ – \$15,000: Moderate increase</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and prioritize potential sites for activations. 2. Launch a call for submissions. 3. Establish a process for engaging artists or cultural organizations to create and implement the memorial activations. This process would involve soliciting proposals, selecting artists, and outlining the project scope. 4. Promote activations. Consider “unveiling” programs to encourage initial attendance and engagement. 	<p>This action should begin after completion of Action 3.3.1 (conducting a facility needs assessment) and Action 3.4.3 (developing a Public Art Strategy).</p> <p>There are opportunities for this action to tie into Action 1.1.1 (celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Welland Canals).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of pop-up events and temporary installations • Number of memorials activated • Increased foot traffic in underused areas • Public engagement and feedback on events and installations • Number of longer-term initiatives launched through participation in the program • Audience engagement (attendance, satisfaction) • Increased awareness of local histories • Increased appreciation for public art