



City of
St. Catharines



St Catharines Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan

Final Report
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Prepared for:
St. Catharines Downtown
Creative Cluster Master Plan
Steering Committee

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 Introduction and Background

The St. Catharines Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan was initiated to create a guiding framework for revitalization of the Downtown that utilizes the growth and intensification requirements of new Provincial policy and converging development investment interests and other initiatives for the Downtown.

The opportunities point to the potential for a redevelopment of St. Catharines that has a creative, cultural focus:

- Various joint Academic / Community Development Projects (Brock University, Niagara College);
- Increased cultural presence in the Downtown and artist residents; and,
- Establishment of St. Catharines as a hub along the Niagara Wine Country Route.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the Master Plan, as identified by staff and stakeholder groups are:

- to create a safe and attractive Downtown that both will attract investment and tourists;
- to redefine the Downtown as a desirable place to live, shop and do business; and,
- to encourage people to walk through the Downtown, day and night.

The Creative Cluster and St. Catharines' Potential

Richard Florida's theory of the Creative Class posits that a new creative economy has emerged, as a result of decline in the manufacturing sector and the increase in knowledge-based labour.

St. Catharines, as an Urban Growth Centre, and a city with a declining auto industry base, yet with growing post secondary institutions, media and agricultural research, has the potential to define itself as a creative economy.

The role of joint civic/academic/cultural institutions across Canada and worldwide are precedents for the individual success of the institutions and their spin-off effects.

The Creative Cluster includes, however, not only cultural institutions, but an interdependent set of new urban entrepreneurs; stable business investment; an attractive built and natural environment; and, a diverse population, among others. The Master Plan aims to establish a framework to accommodate this range of public and private investment and to allow flexible development over time that is not overly dependent on one or the other factors.

2.0 The Existing Context

St. Catharines Downtown was reviewed through visual analysis and review of background policy and studies to determine its strengths and issues that the Master Plan should address.

• *Regional Context*

As the only designated Urban Growth Centre under the Provincial Places to Grow Act, St. Catharines continues to be Niagara Region's trade and administration hub. It also offers a range of employment, cultural activity, tourism, natural and cultural heritage and Regional transit opportunities.

• *Street Network*

The Downtown street network is a general grid pattern served by an arterial ring road system as a by-pass route. The current one-way/two-way street system is being converted to a two-way system.

• *Urban Fabric*

There are several distinct areas or "precincts" that comprise the Downtown. These are: St. Paul Street, from Ontario to Geneva Streets, The Civic Core and James Street; Office and Business Area; Residential; Mixed Use; Parking; Arena Block; and, Transition Zones.

• *Pedestrian Networks*

Daytime pedestrian activity in the Downtown is relatively high as well as nighttime activities to the bar scene. Streetscape improvements have been undertaken in the Downtown core, but vary in quality. There is a need for pedestrians to access the Lower Level to reach surface parking, but connections are poor.



- **Recreational Trails**

A number of recreational trails with varying quality and connections that serve the Downtown and Brock University wind through Twelve Mile Creek. Interconnections of the trails and links to the Downtown are interrupted and need improvement.

- **Views and Landmarks**

The crescent like shape and setting of St. Paul Street located above Twelve Mile Creek provides series of prominent views. Heritage residential districts, buildings and historic properties beyond the Downtown as well as streetscapes with consistent facades create a diverse built environment, complemented by a small number of urban open spaces.

- **Transit**

Bus transit serves the Downtown from the wider Region and the city beyond the Downtown. Almost all routes terminate at the St. Catharines Transit Terminal on Carlisle Street. The Downtown is generally well-served but there is no bus link from the VIA Rail station to the Downtown; a GO Transit connection to Hamilton would be a significant improvement.

- **Parking Supply**

A Downtown Parking Study was completed in 2006 which noted that parking is almost at capacity and future development will increase demand on the Downtown parking supply. The Carlisle Street garage is deteriorating structurally and will need to be replaced, providing an opportunity to create a mixed-use/structured parking development. Current parking provided by the Carlisle Street garage will need to be replaced during that reconstruction.

- **Parking Policy**

There is no parking policy that requires a minimum parking provision for new development. However, a certain amount of parking will need to be provided to serve new developments for them to be marketable. The City is exploring a balanced parking strategy to meet this need but not discourage development.

- **Servicing**

The Downtown is well-serviced with water mains, sanitary sewers and storm drainage systems. Redevelopment of the Lower Level will require extension of the existing water main system and possibly sanitary storage and pumping facilities.

3.0 Themes for an Evolving Downtown

Planning Policy

Provincial planning policy supports intensification of the Downtown. Specifically, Downtown St. Catharines is identified in Places to Grow as an Urban Growth Centre with a density target of 150 residents and jobs combined per hectare. The Province recently released the Urban Growth Centre boundary for the Downtown which is larger than the City's Official Plan and boundary of this study. The impacts of this wider boundary on the Downtown core should be explored further.

The City is currently undertaking an Official Plan Review. The current Official Plan is generally development and intensification supportive. Changes to the Central Area Secondary Plan to encourage more flexible mixed-use development, focused areas for intensification and simplified policy geared towards the provincial growth targets should be explored.

Economic Growth

The Downtown has the physical and economic elements, as well as the challenges of many medium-sized cities in Southern Ontario:

- There is an office base in the Downtown, but new office investment faces competition from suburban sites with direct highway access and plentiful parking.
- Downtown retail is challenged by the lack of retail chains, numerous vacancies and dollar store-type operations, but there is a niche for specialty retailers, cafes and restaurants and long-established businesses.
- There is a bar scene nightlife, which brings activity to the Downtown after regular business hours, but, recently, has been associated with vandalism and violence. This is a significant deterrent to residents and business owners, yet these businesses are important for economic activity.
- to attract market activity, improvements to the Downtown will depend on public policy and investment initiatives to signal confidence in the Downtown.



Residential and Employment Estimates

The City's current Downtown population and employment density is 130 – 139 persons-jobs/ha. To achieve the new provincial growth targets, 1,000 new residential units, in the form of apartments and townhouses, will be required to be built by 2026. This results in approximately 10 hectares of land. The potential markets for this housing would be singles, childless couples and older residents who want to be within walking distance of shopping.

The projected job requirement for 2026 is 400 jobs, resulting in approximately 120,000 sq.ft of new space. This area can be easily accommodated in the Downtown. There are vacancies in existing space.

There is good existing supply of retail space. For the retail environment to improve, the quality and attractiveness of the stores needs to improve, not the amount of space.

Institutional, cultural and tourism sectors can also aid in Downtown rejuvenation, with the potential of bringing both employment and visitors, while, in turn, generating demand for services and daily retail spending.

Institutions are valuable, as they tend to provide greater stability than the private sector. The relocation of Brock University's School of Fine and Performing Arts and the Niagara Centre for the Arts is a prime example of a jointly funded civic/academic/cultural institution that can have spin-off/synergistic effects.

Cultural facilities are also effective catalysts for urban rejuvenation by encouraging increased pedestrian activity, spin off patronage for restaurants and retail and, first phase gentrification or neighbourhood improvement by artists.

Tourism investment that draws visitors to the Downtown would foster new jobs and additional spending.

Intensification Opportunities

The *Commercial Land Use Review and Market Analysis (Winter Associates Ltd., 2002)* recommended that more office employees and residents are needed to support the Downtown economy. However, lack of parking was cited as a primary drawback and the study recommended that the City remove parking charges for retail trips.

There are several broad areas with the potential for intensification throughout the Downtown. More services and shopping amenities will be needed to serve residents and employees and parking charges and supply will need to be addressed.

- Retail revitalization and mixed-use development could occur along St. Paul Street;
- Higher density residential intensification could occur towards the north-east, between St. Paul and Geneva Streets, as well as south of St. Paul Street, east of Bond Street;
- Office development could occur along Ontario Street, where some single storey or underutilized sites could be intensified; and,
- Smaller, informal gathering open spaces are lacking in the Downtown, and could be implemented as part of future developments.

The Downtown should capitalize on its current niche of small shops, cafes and restaurants, as opposed to competing with the suburban mall offerings. However, planning policy should also facilitate the entry of retail chains into the Downtown; floor plate limitations and regulation of signage could be considered to preserve the main street character along St. Paul and James Streets.



Cultural Assets

St. Catharines is the home of the largest concentration of arts and culture-related activity in the Niagara Region. Exposing the visibility of cultural activity and organizations in the Downtown, and strengthening the role of cultural policy in planning and economic development are key components to shaping revitalization with a creative and cultural dimension.

The City has already undertaken a number of culture-focused policies and programs; the Culture Committee has provided input to the Official Plan Review and the City is building stronger municipal cultural policy.

Parallel with yet separate from this Master Plan is a detailed feasibility study, which will determine the amount, types of space needed and the preferred location(s) for the relocation of the Brock University School of Fine and Performing Arts and the Niagara Centre for the Arts to the Downtown. This Master Plan identifies several areas that could support the outcome of this study, in the context of the overall Master Plan goals of Downtown revitalization and intensification.

Downtown St. Catharines' Wine Country Role

The 2007 Report, *Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities* (Peter J. Smith & Company Inc.) identifies Downtown St. Catharines as a "Signature Destination" and the proposed location for a Wine Embassy, or headquarters for the Wine Council and affiliated enterprises. In addition, the Wine Route has been proposed to be re-routed through Downtown St. Catharines.

To support these two proposals, the Downtown needs to "set the stage" to attract the sophisticated and educated wine enthusiast market, such as attractive routes into and entry points to the Downtown and quality Downtown streetscapes along with other unique retail and cultural offerings.

The Wine Route is under the jurisdiction of the Wine Council of Ontario; their criteria will need to be met. Similarly, the components of a Wine Embassy will require further consultation with key stakeholders of the wine industry.

The Master Plan identifies several possible locations for a Wine Embassy and envisions it as a flexible entity that may evolve in phases, as the Downtown changes, and as priorities and issues are further determined.

Natural and Recreational Links

In a recent survey, walking was ranked as the top physical activity for men and women, aged 20 and older. Cycling was also identified in stakeholder consultation as an important consideration for attracting activity to the Downtown. Provincial planning policies and strategies support healthy, active, outdoor lifestyles. The Master Plan proposes improvements to the Downtown's pedestrian network and linkages to parks, naturalized areas and trails in support of these policies.

Natural and Cultural Heritage Opportunities

The topography and curve of the Twelve Mile Creek valley is St. Catharines' principal defining natural and cultural heritage landscape. St. Paul Street, built on the upper bank of the Creek Valley has exposed rear frontages along the valley edge. This edge provides an opportunity for improvement and revitalization as a unique cityscape.

The remnants of the first and second Welland Canal in the valley have remnants of St. Catharines' industrial heritage and development. The Niagara Region Planning Department is currently proposing to Parks Canada to designate the Welland Canal System as a National Heritage Corridor. Canal revitalization has been taken on by cities worldwide, ranging from full tourist lock systems to segmented urban waterways. Lachine Canal in Montreal is an example.

The Master Plan recognizes the Region's initiative by proposing improved trail connections to the valley and by suggesting the possibility of a linear, "canal" formed water feature, related to future development of public space in the Lower Level and adaptive re-use of the Canada Hair Cloth building.

Coordinated development of gateways – entry points in and out of the Downtown – should be pursued as part of a streetscape and open space strategy. These are important points of orientation and identity for residents and visitors and should be attractive and themed.



Transportation and Transit

The conversion of the one-way/two-way street network system to a two-way system will have benefits for the Master Plan in terms of better way-finding for tourists and will encourage traffic calming which supports a better business environment for shops, pedestrians and cyclists.

Some loading and delivery restrictions will need to be enforced along St. Paul Street, but will be partially compensated for by designation of other streets and alleys as service corridors.

Bus transit routes may improve because of more flexibility of the two-way direction.

Parking

Despite interest of future employers in the amenities that the Downtown has to offer, lack of parking has been cited as a key issue / deterrent to investment in the Downtown. In addition to reconstruction of the Carlisle Garage, as noted previously, the City should consider construction or control of smaller parking lots or spaces distributed across the Downtown.

4.0 Key Components of the Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan

The following elements were identified at the beginning of and throughout the study as key initiatives that could contribute to Downtown revitalization as a Creative Cluster:

- Proposed relocation of Brock University's School of Fine and Performing Arts (SFPA) to the Downtown, in conjunction with a civic cultural facility, proposed as a new Niagara Centre for the Arts (NCFCA);
- Re-direction of the Niagara Wine Route through Downtown St. Catharines and establishing a Wine Embassy, or facility for Wine Council and industry administration, possible retail and public events;
- Recent creation of the Niagara Interactive Media Arts Cluster through a provincial grant of \$200,000;
- Possible expansion of the Garden City Arena to house a new 5,000-plus seat venue;
- Commitment by City Council to pursue retaining the Niagara Regional Police Headquarters in Downtown St. Catharines;
- Possible reconstruction of the Carlisle Garage and Lower Level Parking Lot as mixed-use/structured parking developments;
- New McMaster University Family Medicine Clinical Teaching Site as a walk-in, clinic, at the ground floor of the Ontario Parking Garage;
- Areas for mixed-use intensification and updates to the Community Improvement Plan;
- Potential for a new hotel use either as a redevelopment of the Leonard Hotel or as part of other possible redevelopment / intensification; and,
- Possible designation of the Welland Canal as a National Heritage Corridor Designation by Parks Canada based on a proposal by Niagara Region Planning Department.



5.0 Master Plan Framework Options

A series of land use framework scenarios were developed to test and explore the relationships of the individual elements within the various Downtown precincts. This resulted in defining several elements that had fixed locations and a few that had options for different locations in the Downtown. Those with fixed locations were termed “Common Elements” and those with different possible locations termed “Dynamic Elements”.

Three framework concepts were presented to the stakeholder group at a presentation / workshop and the merits of the different locations were critiqued. Further review with the Steering Committee and the Theatre Planning Consultant of the Arts Feasibility study was conducted.

This feedback formed the basis of the development of the Master Plan which presents broad opportunity locations for the Dynamic Elements, to allow both for the specific site selection outcome of the Arts Feasibility study and to provide a flexible planning framework for other future development.

6.0 The Master Plan and its Supporting Networks

The St. Catharines Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan presents:

- A broad scenario for redevelopment across the Downtown;
- Multiple opportunity locations for key elements;
- Focused development along and near St. Paul Street;
- New mixed-use areas for flexible intensification over time;
- Reinforcement of the Downtown’s existing land use patterns;
- Enhanced and interconnected streetscapes and open spaces;
- New vertical connections between St. Paul Street and the Lower Level.

The specific features of the Plan are:

- The areas south of St. Paul Street and to the west and east of Carlisle Street are identified for the SFPA / NCFCA development:
 - Two options are located west of Carlisle Street which incorporate the Canada Hair Cloth building.
 - One option is to the east of Carlisle Street, as a redeveloped block, extending from St. Paul Street south to Race Street.
- All locations have presence on St. Paul Street.
- The Interactive Media Arts Cluster Development could be developed in the St. Paul Crescent/ McGuire block; within the Office Precinct; as a prime tenant for a mixed-use Carlisle Garage development; or, as an office use / adaptive re-use of the Canada Hair Cloth building.
- The proposed Wine Route is directed along Ontario Street, along St. Paul Street to Niagara Street, towards Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- The Wine Country Embassy is envisioned in two phases: an LCBO/ VQA store on St. Paul Street with a later development in another location such as: in the St. Paul Crescent/McGuire block; as infill development at the parking lot at the western end of St. Paul Street at Ontario Street; or as part of general mixed-use redevelopment along St. Paul Street.
- A prominent glazed, vertical link connecting St. Paul Street and the Lower Level is proposed at 136 St. Paul Street; minor connections are proposed at St. Paul Street and Ontario Street and along St. Paul Street at the intersections of James Street and Academy Street.



- A series of new urban open spaces are proposed:
 - A new Civic Square as a redevelopment of the existing parking lot at 123 St. Paul Street;
 - A gateway at St. Paul and Geneva Streets;
 - New sidewalk and road pavements in the Civic Precinct;
 - A parkette at the base of the proposed 136 St. Paul Street glazed connection;
 - A terrace at the Canada Hair Cloth building façade, as part of its new use; and,
 - A continuous east-west green walkway across the Lower Level, from Carlisle to McGuire Streets.
- Broad areas for long term intensification and redevelopment are identified:
 - Main street mixed-use retail/residential along St. Paul Street;
 - The Mid-Town Plaza block;
 - Interior blocks bound by Welland Avenue, Geneva Street, Bond Street and Academy and Clark Streets;
 - “Triangular” island blocks at St. Paul Crescent and McGuire Street; and,
 - Interior blocks bound by St. Paul Street, Geneva Street, Race and Carlisle Streets.
- City owned parking lots are identified as future residential development opportunities.
- Structured parking lots are envisioned as opportunities for mixed-use development:
 - Reconstruction of the Carlisle Garage as a mixed-use complex; and,
 - A new structured parking / residential/commercial complex at the Lower Level, pending geotechnical and environmental constraints.
- The Garden City Arena Complex is shown as an expanded facility, encompassing the block to the north. The future of such an expansion is undetermined, but the continuation of a recreational/spectator use close to the Downtown would be a complementary use to the Downtown.
- An Open Space System is an integral component of the Master Plan. In addition to the vertical pedestrian connections to the Lower Level and the new urban open spaces, the Open Space Concept proposes:
 - An eastern gateway in the vicinity of the Garden City Arena Complex;
 - An on-street cycling route that links the Lake Ontario shoreline, Port Dalhousie and the Waterfront Trail;
 - A dedicated, multi-use trail connecting Brock University to the Downtown along Twelve Mile Creek;
 - Potential for an east-west cycle path at the Lower Level, through a new series of open spaces and pathways that could be incorporated into new development; and,
 - Enhanced streetscapes throughout the Downtown, with connections to Montebello Park.



7.0 Strategies and Policies to Guide Development

Boundary Definition

- The Urban Growth Centre boundary, as defined by the Province, is larger than the existing Downtown boundary. The Secondary Plan should be updated with the Master Plan and consider the impact of these land uses east of Geneva Street on the Downtown core area.

Downtown as a Focal Area for Investment

- Planning policy should require major office and institutional uses to locate in the Downtown and focus intensification to the areas identified in the Master Plan.
- Update policy to reflect the Master Plan by permitting major cultural and public facilities as “arts/culture/community mixed-uses” to locate in the areas identified in the Master Plan. This will, in particular, provide the planning framework for major investment such as the SFPA and NCFCA developments.
- Undertake streetscape improvements to create an attractive image that will be an incentive for businesses to locate Downtown.

Transit-Supportive Policy

- Planning policy should take advantage of the central location of the Bus Terminal. Higher employment and residential densities and major developments should be encouraged within 400m (5 minute) of the Bus Terminal.

Simplify the Secondary Plan

- Create a more investor-friendly planning context, by broadening the permitted uses, promoting a flexible mix of combined residential and commercial uses and reducing the number of land designations in the Secondary Plan.

Broaden the Community Improvement Plan

- Include community and art spaces as part of the public-private initiatives listed in the CIP as well as include conversion of upper floors to live/work spaces.
- Include building upgrades that improve the energy efficiency and/or “greening” of properties.
- Develop a user-friendly set of Urban Design and Façade Improvement Guidelines to allow property owners to make effective use of the CIP.

Improve Public Amenities for a Diverse Downtown

- Establish and publicize a Recreational Trails Master Plan to establish link between the Downtown and recreational and tourist activities.
- Prioritize the creation of high quality outdoor spaces, such as the Civic Square and Vertical Link to the Lower Level, informal and attractive seating areas and restaurant patio areas on sidewalks.
- Ensure that culture and recreation-oriented uses are permitted throughout the Downtown.
- Do not prohibit chain retailers from locating in the Downtown. Encourage a “main street” model, such as appropriate floor plate limits and built form and façade treatments that fit a street-related retail image.
- Promote rental and condominium housing and live/work arrangements, to allow young people, newcomers and existing residents to live and work affordably Downtown.

Transportation and Transit Strategies

- Coordinate the street conversion so that residents and visitors can easily understand the street network.
- Enforce restrictions on street loading areas to minimize traffic disruption; designate internal streets and lanes as service routes to relieve the demand for on-street loading.
- Ensure that transit stops are added adjacent to new development.
- Establish a bus route from the VIA Rail Station to the Downtown.
- Pursue a GO Transit Link to Downtown St. Catharines.



Pedestrian, Cycling and Streetscaping Recommendations

- Create a Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan to identify a hierarchy of routes, pedestrian connections and on-road cycle lanes with visible and safe connections to the existing recreational trail routes.
- Create a Streetscape Master Plan to review the Downtown’s existing streetscape features, identify improvements and establish phasing priorities for streetscape improvements.
- Pursue the development of gateways into the Downtown that is already underway, to further reinforce the improved wayfinding and orientation of the two-way street conversion and create a themed identity of the Downtown.

Parking Recommendations

The Official Plan does not require minimum parking requirements for residential or commercial developments; therefore, the municipality holds the responsibility for maintaining an adequate supply of parking for shoppers and visitors.

- The Official Plan’s no-minimum parking requirement should be retained as an incentive for development; the market will determine the parking needed for new developments to be attractive and marketable.
- For developers who provide parking, consider establishing incentives to be applied for shared spaces or for additional dedicated public spaces.
- Improve the attractiveness and functionality of transit, walking and cycling to reduce the dependency for driving and parking.
- Establish private-public partnering to permit public parking on existing private off-street parking lots.
- Consider reduced parking meter fees, such as “first-hour free” to compete with suburban locations that offer free parking.
- Establish a Municipal Parking Authority to manage parking spaces, lots and revenue.
- As recommended by the Downtown Parking Strategy and the Master Plan, replace the Carlisle Garage, plus provide more parking in the Lower Level, which could be part of a mixed-use development.

Architectural and Built Form Recommendations

- Ensure that the rehabilitation potential for the Canada Hair Cloth building becomes an asset to the image of St. Catharines; integration of it into a major public-private venture, such as the SFPA / NCFCA allows the City to participate in its redevelopment as a flagship symbol of the City’s commitment to Downtown revitalization.
- Urban Design and Heritage Guidelines have been commissioned. These should enable property owners to easily take advantage of the CIP; permit contemporary street related development; and, clearly identify heritage buildings and approved alteration strategies for them.
- Ensure that infill and new development are complementary to their streetscapes through compatible setbacks, heights and visually interesting façade development; but do not prohibit innovative and/or contemporary architectural alongside heritage structures.

8.0 Recommendations for Integrated Implementation

As a project co-developed by the St. Catharines Planning and Economic Development and Tourism Services departments, the Master Plan demonstrates a commitment to coordinating implementation to ensure effective realization of the Plan and policy changes.

Other departments, such as Recreation and Community Services, Transportation and Environmental Services should be involved in developing an integrated Implementation Strategy.

The document proposes many planning policy and economic development recommendations and illustrates how these recommendations can be viewed in tandem, so that efforts are mutually supportive.

Steps for Economic Development Implementation

The City must take the lead and enlist support from all departments, public and government agencies and the private sector. The City should continue its success in obtaining funding by utilizing a variety of provincial and federal funding programs.



The City's initial steps should include:

- Establish a permanent Downtown Advisory Committee;
- Dedicate staff to overseeing Master Plan issues; and,
- Prepare a business plan.

The City's engagement of the role of public and government agencies should include:

- Pursue government to locate their offices and facilities in the Downtown as a new source of employment;
- Aggressively pursue governmental support for public infrastructure; and,
- Set up a promotion platform to communicate the Master Plan and municipal initiatives to the public and governmental agencies.

The City's promotion of the Downtown to attract the private sector interest should include:

- Establish a Downtown Development Team with full-time staff, augmented by others on an as-needed basis;
- Review the City's incentive programs to ensure that they support the Master Plan and can deliver a straightforward and timely approval process.
- Promote development opportunities to the development industry through a portfolio of available properties, pro-forma scenarios and available incentive programs;
- Consider acquiring strategic properties in order to catalyze important goals of the Master Plan and potentially, to partner with private developers; and,
- Monitor the progress of the implementation.

Short and Long Term Goals

Short term goals can be achieved through current review and updates to planning policy. Long term goals are more complex and involve a combination of municipal cultural policy and economic development changes. Over time, other initiatives will come to the fore and this list should be reviewed in that context.

Short Term Policy, Economic Development and Project Opportunities:

- Utilize the Official Plan Review and Region of Niagara's Growth Management Study to determine appropriate densities and forecasts for the Downtown that can guide and focus intensification efforts;
- Revise the Secondary Plan to reflect the broad directions of this Master Plan and to simplify the land use designations;
- Continue to update other policies in light of the Master Plan;
- Develop a Downtown marketing and branding strategy;
- Establish a Downtown Development Team and Business Plan;
- Pursue and support the Brock University SFPA and the NCFR to locate to the Downtown;
- Undertake either the Carlisle Garage or Lower Level mixed-use/structured parking development;
- Build the new Vertical Link to connect St. Paul Street to the Lower Level;
- Continue efforts to retain the Niagara Regional Policy Headquarters in the Downtown; and,
- Establish a Streetscape Master Plan and undertake priority improvements.

Long Term Policy, Economic Development and Project Opportunities:

- Explore strategies to retain graduates of Brock University and Niagara College to stay, live and work in the Downtown;
- Continue to promote St. Catharines and the Niagara Region as a dynamic, innovative and attractive location for academic, industry and research;
- Continue to develop incentives for entrepreneurial activity as well as larger employers;
- Continue to promote St. Catharines as a distinct place for interactive media research and development, such as the Niagara Interactive Media Arts Cluster; Expand the Niagara Interactive Media Arts Cluster;
- Continue to review and update other policies in light of the outcomes of the Master Plan;
- Continue to promote and communicate Downtown development to attract other private investment;
- Undertake either the Carlisle Garage or Lower Level mixed-use/structured parking development; and,
- Continue to promote the Downtown and its improvements to the Ontario Wine Council.



Study Team and Acknowledgements

The Master Plan was completed by an inter-disciplinary team of consultants:

- Joseph Bogdan Associates Inc., Architects/Urban Design Consultants
Lead Consultant, Master Planning, Urban Design
- Sorenson Gravely Lowes Planning Associates Inc.
Planning, Policy Review and Implementation
- Hemson Consulting Limited
Economic Development, Growth Potential and Real Estate
- Dillon Consulting Limited
Transportation, Parking and Municipal Services Infrastructure
- ENVision-The Hough Group
Pedestrian and Open Space System
- George Friedman, Architect
Performing Arts and Academic Facilities Consultation

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- Economic Development and Tourism
- Planning
- Recreation and Community Services
- Transportation

And, individual members of the Steering Committee who represented the St. Catharines Downtown Association and Brock University.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Master Plan Action Strategy

The St. Catharines Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan capitalizes on the strengths of St. Catharines Downtown core and the current excitement about new public and private endeavours to fuel revitalization for St. Catharines as a new centre for creative and business enterprise. St. Catharines is well positioned “on the edge” of such a transformation, with a healthy combination of the following:

Current Major Assets

- A strong regional office employment base;
- Attractive and well-maintained historic buildings;
- Significant natural and cultural heritage resources;
- Convenient access to major highways;
- Strong relationships with Brock University and Niagara College; and,
- Council commitment to improved parking, transportation, streetscape and built form.

Provincial Policy Supports a Downtown Creative Cluster

- Places to Grow and the Greenbelt Plan - the Province’s recent planning policies have designated St. Catharines as the Niagara Region’s only Urban Growth Centre. This policy bolsters St. Catharines’ potential for urban intensification, as illustrated by the Master Plan.

New Public/Private Investment is Committed to the Downtown

- Downtown St. Catharines has become a “place of interest” for the expansion of post-secondary programmes at both Brock University and Niagara College;
- Brock University announced the potential to relocate its School of Fine and Performing Arts to the Downtown, in concert with a new Niagara Centre for the Arts development;
- In January, 2008, the city was awarded funding for the Niagara Interactive Media Arts Cluster, a shared initiative among Brock University, Niagara College, the City and St. Catharines’ own Silicon Knights, to build a major media-arts hub in the Downtown.

Strong Regional Links

- The possibility for the Wine Route to be re-routed through St. Catharines’ Downtown is under consideration;
- A suggestion to designate Downtown St. Catharines as a “Signature Destination” with the development of a “Wine Embassy” or central location of wine-related events, administration and retailing;
- Location of the Niagara Regional Police headquarters in the Downtown, to support St. Catharines’ new Urban Growth Centre identity and role;
- Conversion of the one-way street system to two-way traffic to improve visitors’ experience of the Downtown; and,
- Recognition of the Welland Canal as a National Heritage Corridor, to position St. Catharines as a recreational and cultural heritage destination.

A description of the elements of the Master Plan, its background issues, opportunities and the process of its development, are described in detail in this report. Providing initial guidance on how to achieve the aims of the Plan, is important, if not more so, than the Plan itself. A significant component of the plan is identifying implementing policy.

Initial Steps

There are a series of steps needed to initiate implementation of the Master Plan. The Master Plan itself is the first step, as it sets the stage and demonstrates the City’s commitment to the Province, Brock University and Niagara College, the Niagara Regional Police, the Wine Council, and the development industry, that St. Catharines has the potential and the vision to accommodate each individual element.

The key steps to charting the path and beginning the process of revitalization include establishing mechanisms to promote and guide development and then, undertake some major projects in the immediate to near terms. Those steps involve early commitment to the process by the City, some key institutions and government agencies, and members of the private sector.



Expectations for the pace of progress must be realistic -- restoration of St. Catharines' Downtown as the focal position of the community and Region will require substantial investment of time and resources. The Master Plan puts forth an image of the City over the very long term; effective economic development, cultural vibrancy, quality of life and major new developments are not achieved overnight. However, the implementation process can start immediately with certain essential initiatives:

1. Organize for Implementation

- Update planning and zoning to fully leverage the Province's growth targets;
- Establish a dedicated Development Team and Manager;
- Prepare a Business Plan projecting for the next 10-25 years.

2. Promote the Downtown

- Re-brand the City;
- Illustrate possible new development with pro-formas;
- Review and enhance the City's incentive programs;
- Provide new support for brownfield and sustainable developments.

3. Embark on Major Projects and Public Realm Improvements

- Pursue the SFPA / NCFA Development;
- Retain the Niagara Police Headquarters in the Downtown;
- Assist in initiating construction of one of the new structured parking/mixed use developments.



St. Catharines Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan

- Undertake Initial Streetscape Improvements:
 - o Build the Civic Square along St. Paul Street;
 - o Build the major Vertical Link from St. Paul Street to the Lower Level – either as an integral part of new development or as a stand-alone project;
 - o Prepare a Streetscape Master Plan with phased improvements.



1.2 Background

The St. Catharines Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan was initiated by the City’s Economic Development and Tourism Services (EDTS) in October 2007 to capture an opportunity of converging planning policy, institutional, infrastructure, cultural and business initiatives as the basis for catalyzing redevelopment and revitalization of St. Catharines’ Downtown. At the same time, the City is in the process of its Official Plan review and the Downtown Master Plan will form a fundamental component to the amended Official Plan.

The 2006 Provincial Places to Grow Act – “The Growth Plan” identifies St. Catharines as an Urban Growth Centre. As an Urban Growth Centre, it is incumbent on the City to develop its Downtown to meet the Plan’s growth density target of 150 residents and jobs combined per hectare. Revitalization, intensification and economic development are required to stimulate and attract residents and employers. Because of the convergence of this Provincial policy with the timing of specific cultural, academic and business opportunities, this project differs from other strictly intensification efforts. It is envisioned as a “clustering” of creative initiatives that drive and yet, are dependent on growth for success.

1.3 Purpose of the Master Plan

Over the past 10 to 15 years, numerous planning, community assessment and physical needs feasibility studies have been undertaken by the City and private agencies, resulting in many recommendations and strategic plans for the Downtown. The purpose of this Master Plan is to build on that previous work with a practical planning framework and broad recommendations to guide Downtown development, through the Official Plan, over the next 5-10 years in the short term and 25 years in the long-term. Also, the Master Plan aims to reflect the current climate of renewed interest in what the Downtown can offer, and respond to the Places to Grow provincial policy as an implementation tool.



Private Watson Monument (1886) at corner of Church and James Street, in front of the City Hall



Canada Hair Cloth Building and the Downtown



Montebello Park and Historic Bandstand

1.4 Elements of the Creative Cluster Master Plan

The following major opportunities that point to a creative redevelopment of St. Catharines are:

- Various joint Academic / Community Development Projects (Brock University, Niagara College);
- Smart Growth Niagara, a leading organization of innovative design based on smart growth and mixed use principles;
- Increased cultural presence in the Downtown and artist residents;
- Establishment of St. Catharines as a hub along the Niagara Wine Country route; and,
- Creation of the Downtown Development and Revitalization Committee.

The specific elements that have been described by EDTS as having the potential to “*collectively...forever change the fabric of the city and downtown St. Catharines*” are:

- The relocation of the Brock University’s Centre for the Performing Arts to the Downtown with an expansion to include community users;
- The Niagara Wine Route Signature Destination Centre, or “Wine Embassy” with the re-routing of the Wine Route through Downtown St. Catharines;
- Location of the Niagara Interactive Media Arts Cluster (joint Brock University, Niagara College, Silicon Knights and the City education and incubator venture) in the Downtown;
- Expansion of the Niagara Regional Police St. Catharines headquarters location;
- A possible expansion of the Garden City Arena Complex to a 5,000-plus seat venue for the Niagara Ice Dogs hockey team;
- Recent approval to convert the City’s one-way street system to two-way traffic, based on the recommendations of the Downtown Street Conversion Strategy;

- The necessary reconstruction of the aging Carlisle Parking Garage to a combined parking/commercial redevelopment;
- The Community Improvement Plan, approved in 2006;
- Attracting residential intensification and redevelopment to the Downtown; and,
- Attracting new employment / office development to the Downtown.



Farmers' Market



Canada Hair Cloth building



Old Courthouse Theatre



St. Catharines and Area Arts Council



1.5 Objectives of the Master Plan

The initial phases of the Study included consultation with the Downtown Development and Revitalization Committee and members of the City’s Culture Committee, the City’s Performing Arts Centre Task Force and representatives from the Cultural Committee at large. This feedback revealed a clear set of objectives for a revitalized Downtown which looks beyond the physical needs of any one Creative Cluster element. The Stakeholders emphasized that, in fact, success will lie in the integration of all elements, as opposed to the value of one or the other ingredient. The objectives are:

- A vibrant and active downtown at all hours;
- Diversity and Dynamic Character -- A culturally active and diverse place to shop, live, work, play and be entertained for people both near and far;
- A sustainable Downtown – fostering efficient use of resources and amenities;
- A pedestrian friendly Downtown – convenient and walkable;
- A safe and secure environment - at all hours;
- A vibrant Downtown that offers a variety of artistic, retail, dining and entertainment options;
- Transit oriented and convenient for all modes of transit (local transit, regional transit, bicycle);
- Provision of amenities for residents and visitors alike;
- Convenient and economical parking amenities; and,
- Economically viable Downtown development.

Flowing from the discussion of the elements and the Downtown objectives, a set of necessary physical components that would create a broad infrastructure network was identified. These physical components underscored another fundamental objective:

- **Move people through the Downtown**

Connecting the Elements

Creating strong pedestrian and vehicular connections was seen as the critical means to achieving the synergy potential of the Creative Cluster elements and bringing pedestrian activity back to the Downtown. These “Connections to Support the Elements” include:

- Strategies for parking provision;
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Connections to the wider context;
- Strong pedestrian connections to support the elements;
- Wine tour connections and destinations;
- Transit connections to support the elements and connect the Downtown to the wider municipal context and region;
- Improved connections to Rodman Hall and Brock University; and,
- Linkages to Twelve Mile Creek and the Welland Canal Heritage Corridor.

The Role of Culture

The role of culture is a defining element of the Master Plan, primarily because of the significance that the proposed Brock University SFPA and NCFCA developments could have on the Downtown in combination with the variety of other cultural heritage and tourism-related initiatives. It is important to bear in mind that the mandate and scope of the Master Plan is a broad planning and development tool that must inter-relate many factors within the context of the Provincial growth management strategies. Focused municipal cultural policy reviews are beyond the reaches of this study. However, wherever possible and appropriate to this study’s overall scope, this document strives to incorporate recommendations for new and enhanced cultural policies as stand-alone policies or ones that can be woven into existing planning, economic development and tourism policies.

1.6 Study Area

The core of the Downtown is clearly focused around St. Paul Street East; however, this area cannot be looked at in isolation. The effect of adjacent areas, their mix of land uses, building form, connections and views impact the “core”. Therefore, the Master Plan established two working Study Area boundaries:

- The wider Downtown, as defined by the St. Catharines Central Area Secondary Plan, bound by Welland Avenue to the north, Yates Street to the west, Geneva Street to the east and Westchester Avenue to the south; as well as southwesterly connections to Rodman Hall, Brock University and Twelve Mile Creek; and,
- The Downtown core area, as defined by Church Street to the north, Ontario Street to the west, Court Street to the east, and McGuire Street to the south.

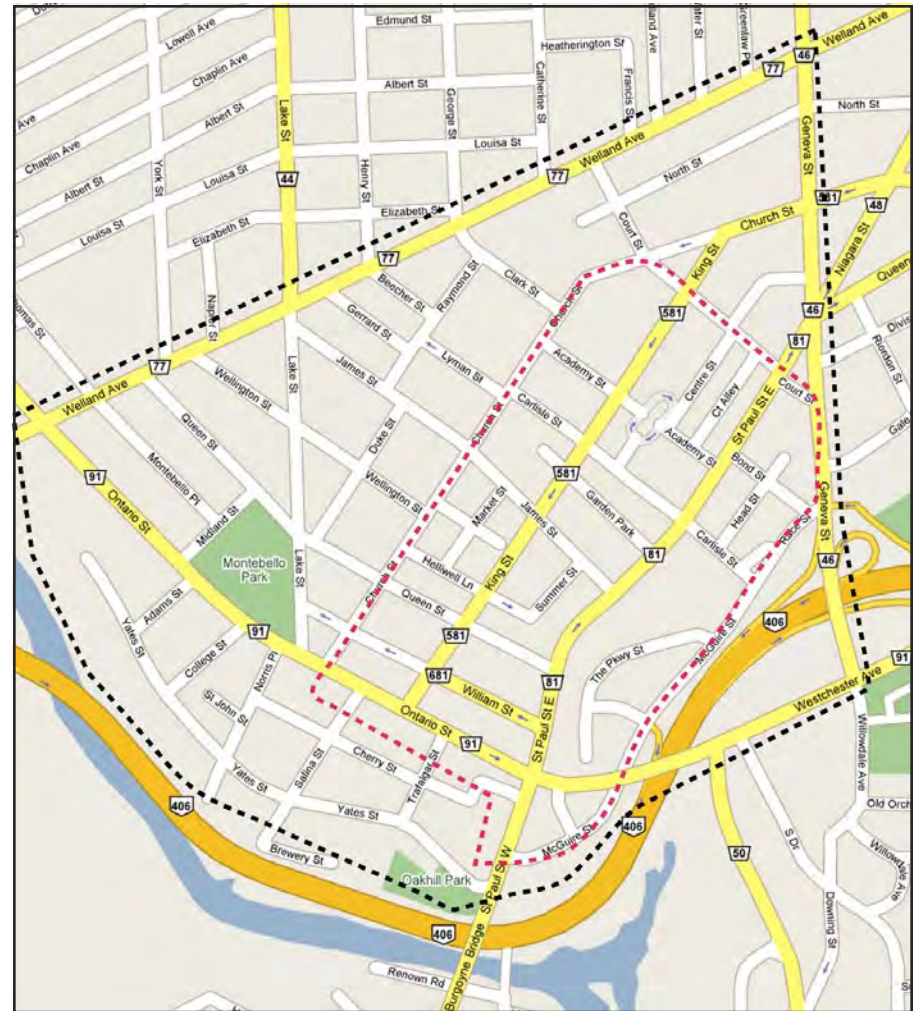


Fig 1: Proposed Downtown Study Area Boundaries



1.7 Study Structure and Approach

The Master Plan study was completed within a focused timeline with the following structure:

Phase 1: Background Review

- Review and interpretation of previous data and studies provided by the City and visual analysis to generate an understanding of St. Catharines current and recent contexts.
- Stakeholder consultation with the Downtown Development and Revitalization Task Force and Culture Committee to identify objectives and Downtown vision.
- Preparation of mapping and diagrams to illustrate results of the reviews and documentation of analysis and opportunities and issues that would impact the development of a concept plan.

Phase 2: Concept Options

- Development of three planning scenarios to graphically represent the outcomes of the Phase 1 review.
- Stakeholder consultation of the framework scenarios and subsequent refinement.
- Documentation of study process in an Interim Report

Phase 3 : Preferred Master Plan

- Development of the Master Plan concept arising from the directions from the frameworks.
- Formulation of policy recommendations arising from the background review and analysis within the structure of the Master Plan concept.
- Preparation of a Draft Master Plan report; circulated and reviewed for comments.

Phase 4 : Final Master Plan

- Review and integration of feedback into Report with final presentation to Council.
- Incorporation of final feedback.

The study approach was to develop a broad understanding of the range of current and recent issues of the Downtown that could create an initial, physical representation of a revitalized Downtown. The scope of the study and level of public consultation permitted an overview of issues and visions for the consultant team to establish a general picture of the Downtown. The direction of Planning and Economic Development and Tourism Services staff assisted with establishing an agreed upon level of detail to both the concept and policy recommendations that would be sufficient to direct and focus further planning and funding efforts.

1.8 Creative Cluster Requirements and St. Catharines' Potential

The Creative Cluster

Decline in the manufacturing sector places pressure to shift Southern Ontario's economic focus away from a manufacturing economy towards knowledge-intensive labour. This new economic use has been termed a "creative economy". As an Urban Growth Centre, if St. Catharines is to be a focal point of employment and population growth within the Region of Niagara, efforts are needed to gain regional competitive advantage in attracting creative talent and entrepreneurship as essential elements for economic growth.

Traditionally, employers sought locations that were cheap, highly accessible and visible along highways. People would move to live near their places of employment. However in the creative economy, employers strategically locate in places where employees want to live based on the location's amenities and quality of life. Richard Florida, author of the theory of the Creative Class, found that increasingly, there is a role-reversal in creative industries--companies are following the people.

This begs the question then, what are the elements that attract the talent pool, and what can a city do to attract talent? Florida cited studies in his book, *Cities and The Creative Class (2005)* that concluded that the ability to attract talent is even more important than the ability to retain it.¹ Richard Florida contends that the Creative Class are not moving for traditional reasons. The physical attractions such as sports stadiums, freeways, urban malls, and tourism and entertainment districts are less relevant to the Creative Class than they were traditionally. The Creative Class looks for communities that are abundant in high-quality experiences, hold an openness to diversity of all kinds, and above all else, the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people. In other words, elements that attract the talent pool are opportunities for good health and easily accessible activities to enjoy outside of work, including entertainment options suitable to their lifestyle, and an environment in which they, as newcomers would feel comfortable and welcomed – a population and local culture which is heterogeneous, not singular or homogenous.

Florida noted that regional competitiveness lies in a place's ability to attract high-skilled people, or "human capital", and that many economists admit that a number of non-market forces affect the movement of this human capital. The quality of life that a place can offer is a very important factor for young creative workers who are making location decisions.

In terms of amenities to attract the Creative Class, Florida found that while big ticket arts and cultural amenities such as professional sports, the fine arts (e.g. opera, and the theater), and cultural destinations (e.g. museums and art exhibits) are helpful in attracting creative workers, they alone are not enough, as other amenities come to play.² Ironically, he found that it is the smaller, less prestigious venues that rank high on the "cool factor" of more effective attractors to the young creative work force. Venues that are "cool" may simply be those venues that offer less mainstream tastes, and support a wide range of "lower" profile interests that cater to alternative or less well known cultures versus mainstream and pop culture. Examples of such venues could be small concert venues, ethnic restaurants, special interest bookstores, specialty boutiques, art galleries that support up-and-coming artists, and "off-Broadway" theatres. His focus group studies found that one of the most important amenities desired by young creative workers is a diverse cultural and demographic population.

For example, even before the high-tech boom, major high-tech centres such as Seattle (IBM) and Austin (Dell Computers) were recognized as highly desirable places to live and play, "...they possessed thriving music scenes, a wealth of high-quality, casual restaurants, a commitment to preserving natural beauty, smart growth, and a solid focus on outdoor recreational amenities."³

St. Catharines' Potential

St. Catharines has many of the essential elements needed to be a Creative Cluster. Already, St. Catharines has a highly educated and skilled pool of people from Brock University and Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology. As education institutions, the University and College



naturally foster and attract intellectual and cultural diversity, including underground and alternative culture and lifestyles. For St. Catharines, the challenge is to retain the graduates, and tap into this resource of fresh creativity and energy. Another advantage is that St. Catharines already hosts major employers of the Creative Class in addition to Brock University and Niagara College. The Downtown has a concentration of financial and insurance institutions and interactive media companies. One of these is an established video game development studio, which hires graduates and therefore, is already establishing an employment base for these graduates.

Since the inception of the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program there has been growth in the alternative arts scene of downtown: the establishment of a small performance space in the Old Courthouse has invigorated a burgeoning small theatre community, with six distinct companies producing contemporary and original theatre performances; the Niagara Artists' Centre has established a new home on St. Paul Street and is an important incubator of young and emerging visual and media artists; a new 80-seat performance space – Stray Theatre – has opened on Bond Street; and the Arts Council and CRAM have each established a presence on James Street.

In terms of sense of place, the Downtown offers many of the essential building blocks thanks to the rich heritage building stock, a relatively large downtown, civic culture, and healthy mix of uses. The Downtown has great potential to become a vibrant area to work, live, and play. Proximity to natural amenities are positives too, such as Twelve Mile Creek, urban parks (Montebello, Oakhill, and Merritt parks), and the surrounding Wine Region. Also, St. Catharines offers easy access to major urban centres of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, to the United States, and to airports. Downtown St. Catharines has all the essential elements to create a powerful package by combining commitment to diversity, progressive civic culture, commitment to the environmental and natural amenities, and a supportive entrepreneurial environment. A fundamental element to this Master Plan process is identifying policy changes to reflect and support a Creative Cluster.

For an additional summary of the Creative Cluster and its implications on planning policy, please refer to the appendix.

¹ Florida, R. (2005). *Cities and The Creative Class*. Routledge, New York.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. p.77-78.



View of St. Paul Street intersection with Queen Street.



View of Montebello Park.



Farmers' Market.



1.8.1 Canadian Examples of “Creative” Partnerships toward Downtown Revitalization

Several Canadian cities have targeted the university sector as a partner for downtown revitalization. Universities and colleges in Vancouver, Waterloo, Winnipeg and Calgary have advanced partnership with municipalities and local organizations to create important social connection between students, faculty, and the communities that surround them.

Vancouver - Simon Fraser University

In 2000, SFU opened the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue – a facility for lectures, seminars and communication studies program – across the street from SFU’s downtown campus. After that in 2003, in collaboration with the City of Vancouver, the university established an arts program in the old Woodward’s department store, a landmark that is now being converted into social housing for the residents of the Downtown Eastside. Following this process, Simon Fraser University opened the doors of the Segal Graduate School of Business near the heart of Vancouver business district in fall 2005. In addition, the municipality and a private land donor partnered with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, The Emily Carr Institute of Art and the B.C. Institute of Technology to develop a research campus, called the Great Northern Way Campus in Vancouver’s downtown.



Vancouver Simon Fraser University

Calgary- University of Calgary

In 2004, the University of Calgary’s development officials were intending to build a downtown campus based in Calgary’s declining East Village area – not far from the business core – to achieve a so-called “urban campus initiative”. The city of Calgary has had neglected this poor but historic part of the city for several years. The current plan emphasizes a pedestrian-oriented precinct that enhances the connections between the East Village and upmarket Stephan Avenue. Resulting from this project, nursing and social work students now spend an entire semester working on-site at the Salvation Army shelter behind City Hall.



Calgary East Village



Cambridge and Waterloo's University Presence

Waterloo shows another remarkable collaboration between university sector and the city aimed at downtown revitalization. The University of Waterloo's School of Architecture moved its operations from the suburban Waterloo campus to an elegantly renovated mill building in downtown Cambridge, a move that has helped bolster the historic core of this southwestern Ontario town. Following this event, Wilfrid Laurier University's Lyle S. Hallman Faculty of social work took up residence in a downtown Kitchener location. The development of the new downtown schools of social work and pharmacy resulted in approximately 300 new units of student housing that were built in conformity with the urban form of the area's warehouse district and the nearby downtown core.

Winnipeg's Willian Norrie Centre

The University of Manitoba launched an inner city social work program twenty five years ago. The only problem was, that the facility wasn't actually located in the inner city, which prevented students from close contact with the disadvantaged city residents. In summer 2005, the university opened its new Willian Norrie Centre in Winnipeg's deteriorating north end, the centre was built on a semi-vacant lot on a commercial strip. In spite of early skepticism about this move, it has proved to have positive results for both students and residents.

The Art Gallery of Hamilton

In 2004 the 1970's era Art Gallery building in Hamilton underwent a renewal process to provide more income generating space, resolve building envelope concerns and improve the presence of the building in the city. This project also tried to revitalize King Street with a new pedestrian scale canopy, display windows, a new entrance and interior stair that face the street. These changes greatly improve the pedestrian quality of the street and the presence of the gallery in the city. A new second level glass gallery on the south side enhances the building's presence on Main Street and creates a relationship with City Hall and the Civic Square. New landscaping on Commonwealth Square creates an exterior room that brings the interior of the gallery pavilion outdoors. In May 2005 the new Art Gallery of Hamilton opened to the public.



Views of Waterloo's School of Architecture



Waterloo School at night



View of the renovated Art Gallery of Hamilton



General Motors Centre, Oshawa

The new Ontario Government’s Greenbelt Legislation to protect green space to the north of the city and limit any further expansion of the urban boundary, has spawned the redevelopment of Oshawa’s many ‘brownfield’ sites, and may result in increased density of the city centre over time. An example of one of these brownfield revitalization projects is the new General Motors Centre. Situated in the downtown Oshawa on Athol Street, the Centre features two ice pads which seat about 5400 people for hockey and about 6400 for other events.



General Motors Centre, Oshawa

Nova Scotia School of Art and Design University (NSCAD), Halifax

Founded in 1887, NSCAD University is regarded as a principal centre for education and research in visual culture in North America. The University is located in the heart of downtown Halifax’s waterfront district, occupying several main streets and Victorian buildings. Since 2002, when the university purchased this block of heritage buildings and then acquired the Alliance Atlantis Academy Building (ca. 1878), NSCAD has experienced an unprecedented period of growth and expansion. NSCAD University’s students’ presence throughout the Downtown core will encourage the growth of a more extensive and dynamic arts and culture district and continues to fuel a lively gallery, restaurant and entertainment district.



NSCAD, Halifax

The University’s downtown location is also conveniently connected to Halifax’s natural recreational maritime heritage. NSCAD’s president, Prof. David B. Smith, initiated a strategic plan that fosters innovation, collaboration with the community and investment in creativity as the key driver for economic development. *“As the university embraces the new century, it is building on the strengths of its history, maintaining and intensifying traditional arts and crafts while capitalizing on the many new technologies shaping the world and human interaction.”* (source: NSCAD University website)

2.0 THE EXISTING CONTEXT

2.1 St. Catharines' Regional History Context

Since the late 1700's, St. Catharines has been a focal point for agricultural and industrial trade in the Niagara Region. With the construction of the First Welland Canal from 1824 to 1829, St. Catharines became the most important industrial centre in the Niagara frontier. Incorporated as a town in 1845, St. Catharines became further connected to the Region through rail and evolved as the county's political and administrative seat. In the early 1900's, manufacturing became increasingly important with development of hydro-electric power and the City's prime location along important land and water routes.

The post-war years and the auto industry factories brought suburban development to the urban form of St. Catharines. In 1961, The Town of Merritton, Village of Port Dalhousie and Grantham Township were all incorporated as part of St. Catharines and in 1970, the Province of Ontario implemented a regional approach to address planning, pollution, transportation and services issues. With its current population of almost 132,000 St. Catharines is the largest municipality and remains the administrative centre of the Niagara Region.¹

St. Catharines' fundamental role in the Region continues, coupled with great challenges. The recent Places to Grow provincial policy has designated it as the Region's only Urban Growth Centre, yet, the municipality has experienced a drastic decline in manufacturing / automobile industry-related and office sector jobs. While grappling with this reality, the City has identified new areas of employment opportunities and ventures, related to viticulture, interactive media, the arts and culture. It is positioning itself as an ideal urban setting for investment, post secondary education, employment and affordable living, with excellent connections to the unique natural and cultural heritage of the Niagara Escarpment, Lake Ontario, Twelve Mile Creek, the Welland Canal and Niagara Wine County. This trend reflects a vision for St. Catharines as the contemporary urban centre for Niagara with a distinctive culture borne out of its industrial and agricultural past.



1875 Illustration of St. Catharines (Source: National Heritage Corridor for the Welland Canals, Niagara Region, 2008)



Both MTO Building and the Canada Hair Cloth building have significant Downtown presence



Twelve Mile Creek, a cultural and natural heritage resource

The following issues and themes position St. Catharines within its wider, regional perspective as the future urban focus of the Niagara Region, but also illustrate that improvements are needed to strengthen its role:

Population, Employment and Land Use:

- Despite the downturn of the automobile sector and manufacturing, St. Catharines enjoys a strong employment base of governmental and headquarter offices;
- A healthy mix of uses already exists across the municipality; however, major retail centres have drawn shopping away from the Downtown;
- Compared with suburban development, there is limited new residential development in and near the Downtown; however, market interest appears to be improving.

Tourism and Cultural Activity:

- St. Catharines’ tourism strength lies in its diverse agricultural, industrial and cultural history; its relationship with the Wine Industry and its location between Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment;
- The majority of the Region’s cultural facilities, festivals, organizations and culture-related businesses are clustered in St. Catharines;
- St. Catharines benefits from the cultural, academic and technology influences of Brock University and Niagara College and affiliations with McMaster University;
- One third of all working artists in Niagara live in or near St. Catharines Downtown.

Environmental Features and Cultural Heritage:

- St. Catharines is bound by three major environmental and culturally significant features: Lake Ontario waterfront, the Welland Canal and Twelve Mile Creek;
- The City has a system of open space trails surrounding it, with a great potential for the Downtown to connect to them;
- Current proposals by Niagara Region to have the Welland Canal designated by Parks Canada as a National Heritage Corridor, leading to regeneration and re-watering of the former canal would appeal as a recreational destination.

Transit

- St. Catharines has generally good train and bus transit connections gaps in direct transit service from other municipalities to the Downtown need improvement;
- Lack of a GO Transit connection to/from Hamilton is an obstacle.



Fig 2: Core Natural Heritage Map, (Source: Core Natural Heritage Map, A Framework for Options, Niagara Region, October 19, 2006)



Fig 3: Signature Destinations (Source: Energizing Niagara’s Wine Country Communities, Peter J. Smith & Company Inc., 2007)

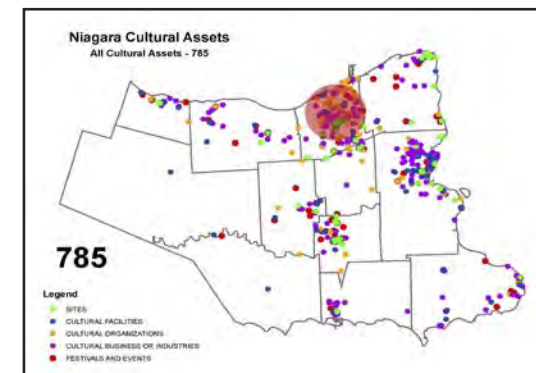


Fig 4: Niagara Cultural Assets (Source: Creative Niagara, Niagara Region Culture Committee, Presentation to Regional Council, Nov 29, 2007)

2.2 The Street Network

2.2.1 Existing Downtown Street Network

The Downtown is comprised of an existing network of one-way and two-way streets under the jurisdiction of the City of St. Catharines and the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

Approval for the conversion of the one-way system to a two-way system has been made and the first phase of the conversion is underway. Details of the two-way system are described in Section 3.7.

The main arterial roadways surrounding the Downtown core comprise a “ring road” system formed by Welland Avenue, Geneva Street, Ontario Street and Westchester Avenue. Currently King Street and St. Paul Street are one-way streets that pass through the Downtown and provide the main access into the Central Business District. The remaining one-way streets within the study area include:

- Ontario Street (King Street to St. Paul Street)
- William Street (St. Paul Street to Lake Street)
- St. Paul Street (Ontario Street to Geneva Street)
- King Street (Church Street to Ontario Street)
- Church Street (Queenston Street to King Street)
- Lyman Street (Church Street to Raymond Street).

The primary streets within the downtown area include the following:

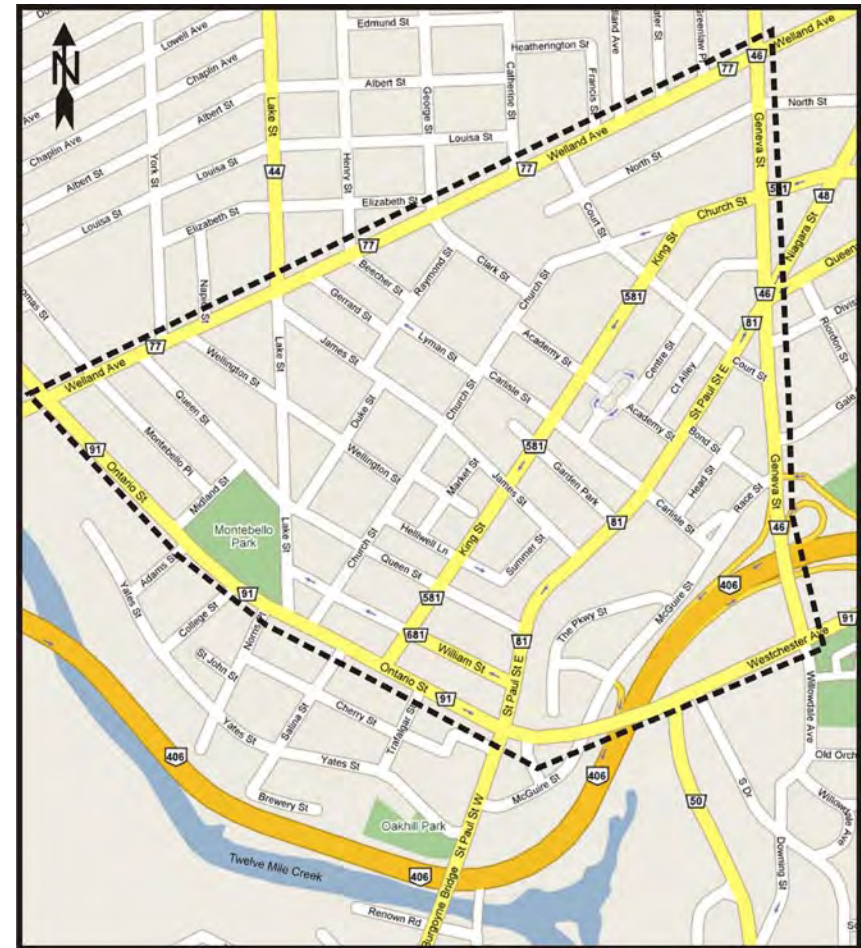


Fig 5: Existing Transportation Street Network and St. Catharines Official Downtown Area.

Niagara Region Jurisdiction

Welland Avenue (Regional Road 77)

- Welland Avenue makes up the north section of the downtown arterial ring road network.
- an east-west two-way route across the northern border of the downtown area;
- to the west: becomes 4th Avenue, providing access to Highway 406 and commercial areas located west of Twelve Mile Creek;
- to the east: traverses the City, providing access to the Queen Elizabeth Way.

Ontario Street (Regional Road 42)

- a continuous north-south route connecting into Westchester Avenue to the south;
- forms the western border of the arterial ring road system around the downtown area;
- to the north: connects with Lakeshore Road, providing access to the Queen Elizabeth Way via a full movement interchange;
- accommodates two-way traffic with the exception of current southeast one-way traffic from King Street to St. Paul Street.

William Street (Regional Road 42)

- provides northwest one-way traffic flow from St. Paul Street to King Street;
- forms a paired adjacent one-way street system with Ontario Street.

Westchester Avenue (Regional Road 91)

- a two-way route that connects with Ontario Street to the west;
- travels northeast to Queenston Street, where it continues as Eastchester Avenue and terminates at Bunting Road;
- forms the southern section of the downtown arterial ring road network and is a significant route into and out of the Downtown.

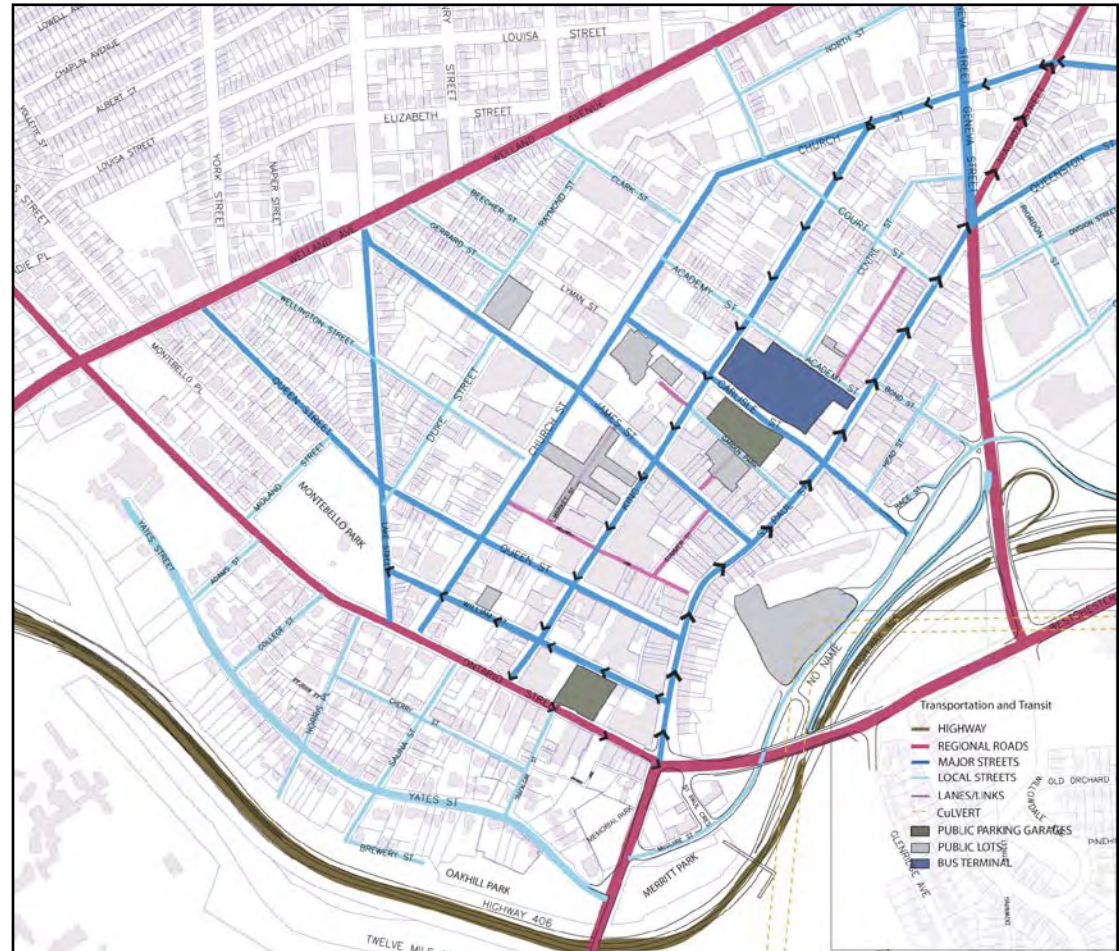


Fig 6: Existing Transportation and Transit Network

Geneva Street (Regional Road 46)

- travels north-south as a two-way roadway;
- connects the downtown area with Westchester Avenue to the south and Lakeshore Road to the north;
- forms the eastern section of the Downtown Arterial Ring Road network and provides access to Highway 406 through an interchange connection just south of the Downtown.



Niagara Street (Regional Road 48)

- a two-way roadway linking the Downtown area to the northeast section of the City;
- has one-way traffic operations from St. Paul Street to Church Street in the northeast direction;
- Two-way traffic operations resume north of Church Street.

City of St. Catharines Jurisdiction

St. Paul Street East

- provides one-way traffic operations in the northeast direction from Ontario Street to Geneva Street;
- forms a one-way pair with King Street;
- becomes St. Paul Street West to the south and Niagara Street to the north.

King Street

- provides one-way traffic operations in the southwest direction from Church Street to Ontario Street;
- forms a one-way pair with St. Paul Street East;
- terminates at Ontario Street in the south but is continuous with Church Street in the north.

Church Street

- provides westbound one-way traffic operations between Queenston Street to Court Street and two-way traffic operations between Court Street and Ontario Street;
- traverses the downtown area in a north-east/south-west direction
- becomes Queenston Street in the east;
- terminates at Ontario Street in the south.

Queenston Street

- provides eastbound one-way traffic operations from St. Paul Street to Church Street;
- two-way traffic is provided east of Church Street.

Additional main roadways of notable significance within the downtown street network include Carlisle Street (Race Street to Church Street), Queen Street (St. Paul Street to Lake Street), James Street (St. Paul Street to Lake Street), Court Street (St. Paul Street to Welland Avenue) and Lake Street (Welland Avenue to Ontario Street). Each of these streets provides convenient access throughout the downtown area.

Roadway Capacity and Level of Service

Under the present one-way/two-way traffic system, roadway capacity and level of service are operating at acceptable levels under afternoon peak hour traffic conditions. Higher levels of traffic congestion currently materialize at the east and west sides of the downtown area. The future two-way street system will provide reasonable levels of traffic capacity and level of service within the Downtown, generally equivalent to current conditions.

Due to the nature of the built out area of the Downtown, there will be little opportunity to increase roadway capacity and levels of service in the future without the removal of building stock.



2.3 Diversity of Urban Precincts

St. Catharines' Downtown urban fabric consists of a series of "precincts" with very diverse yet interdependent characters. The purpose of mapping and understanding the city's existing character in terms of built form heritage, culture and employment activity was conducted to provide a background framework for a vision of Downtown revitalization that builds on its existing strengths.

The accompanying diagram illustrates this pattern of land use and built form character and reveals a fabric composed of cores, pockets, zones and corridors. The major urban character precincts are:

- St. Paul Street – West and East
- Civic Precinct and James Street
- Offices and Business Services
- Residential
- Mixed-Use
- Parking
- Sports Arena Block
- Transition zones

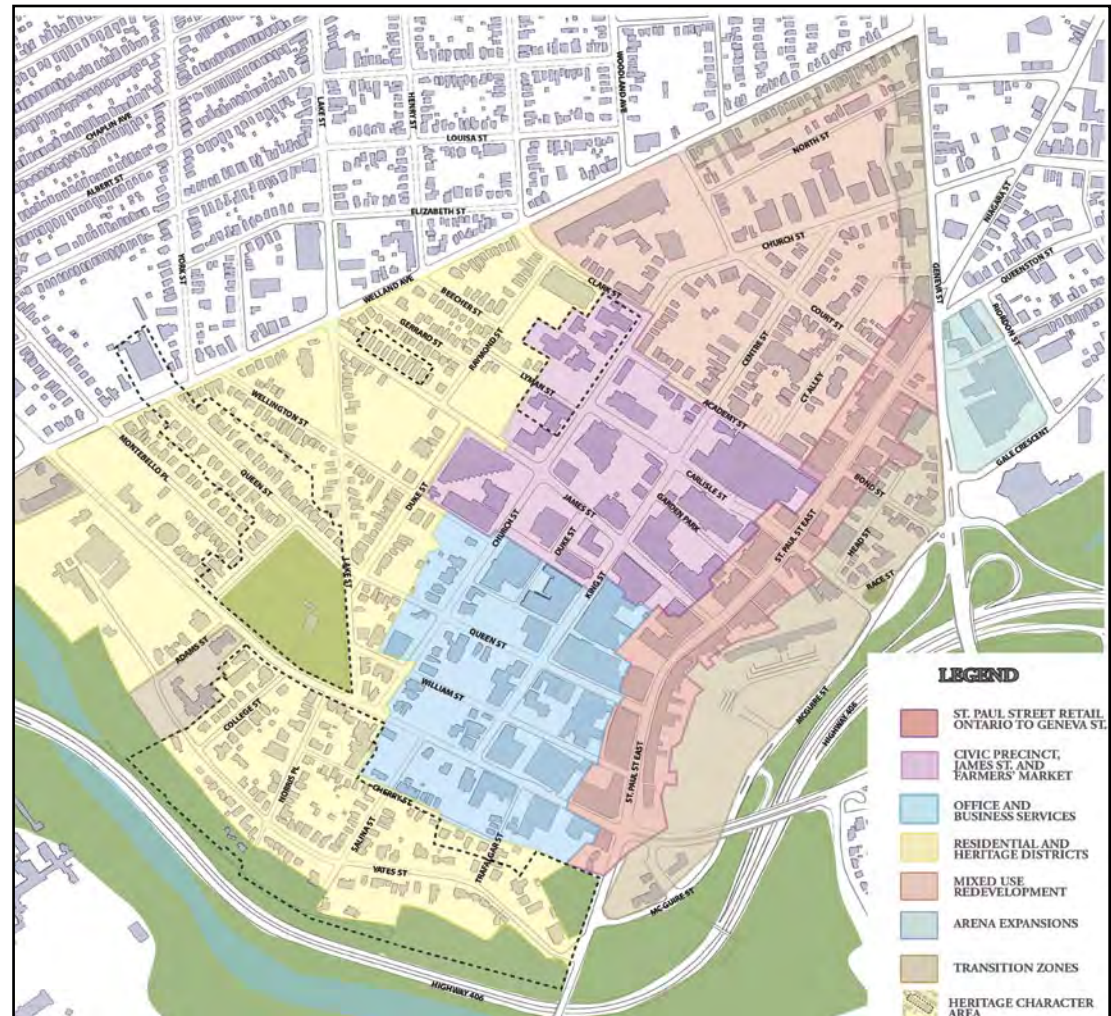


Fig 7: Existing Urban Precincts of the Downtown



St. Paul Street East (St. Paul St.) - from Ontario to Geneva Streets:

- The length of St. Paul Street creates two precincts that reflect a change in the built form, character and tenant mix along its length.
 - Western end, between Ontario and Carlisle Streets: primary retail, restaurants, specialty shops more vibrant Main Street character and 2-3 storey buildings.
 - Eastern end, between Carlisle and Geneva: secondary retail, convenience and discount stores and 1-2 storey buildings.
- The street’s overall length translates into a 15 – 20 minute walking distance and has a gentle curve or crescent shape mid-way that “breaks” the views down the street. The characters of the two precincts may result from the difference between a comfortable 5 – 10 minute walking distance to Carlisle Street and a 20 minute distance to Geneva Street. The western end of St. Paul Street may be more vibrant because it is easily accessible within a few minutes’ walk, and appears “shorter” because the view is interrupted by the curve.

Civic Core and James Street:

- This is an institutional precinct in the city’s core with an attractive combination of landmark buildings and formal open spaces.
- The Farmers’ Market plays an important combined civic, retail and open space function and is centrally located between St. Paul Street and the Civic Core.
- Along James Street, specialty / boutique shops provide a healthy retail environment, fostering strong pedestrian connections to focal institutions and offices.



St. Paul Street, western end looking west



St. Paul Street, western end north side, looking east



St. Paul Street, eastern portion, looking towards Geneva Street



St. Paul Street, looking towards western end, towards intersection with Ontario Street



City Hall.



James Street.



Offices and Business Services:

- This zone is a large area of office and commercial uses stretch from Ontario Street eastward to the Civic Core.
- Pockets with 8 - 15 storey office buildings and businesses occupying restored heritage city villas are located along Church Street and Ontario Street.
- There are several large surface parking lots that create large gaps in the streetscapes.



*View of old Courthouse
at King and James Streets*



Farmers' Market, King Street



Cor-bloc Mall and office buildings, King street



Queen Street, looking south to St. Paul Street



*Niagara Regional Police Headquarters,
Carlisle and Church Streets*



Residential:

- The Office/Business Precinct and Civic Core are surrounded by low density, traditional single family residential homes, along tree-lined streets. Montebello Park forms the “heart” of this area. These residential streets connect Welland Avenue to Montebello Park and the Civic Core and Office/Business precinct. Some of these single family homes have been converted into businesses and restaurants.
- There are two Designated Heritage Districts:
 - The Yates Street Heritage District forms the western edge of the Downtown with stately homes and gardens backing onto the valley of Twelve Mile Creek. Paired with Memorial Gardens at the north eastern end of the Burgoyne Bridge, it is a unique heritage residential pocket;
 - The Queen Street Heritage District includes and abuts Montebello Park. The attractive homes and mature street tree planting create a strong architectural and streetscape edge to the park.



Residences converted to businesses, James Street



Residential along Academy Street



Residence in Yates Street Heritage District



Montebello Park



Mixed-Use:

- Located between the Civic Core, Welland Avenue and Geneva Streets, is an area with a mix of low density residential, commercial and institutional buildings with a few high density apartment buildings, ranging from 6 to 12 storeys. There are pockets of underutilized areas of open land and surface parking.

Parking:

- In addition to on-street parking and privately-owned lots, there are three City-owned parking lots, two of which are above-grade parking garages. The Carlisle Street Parking Garage is partially closed due to structural concerns and the entire garage is deteriorating. Replacement of these parking spaces through reconstruction of the garage on this site or elsewhere will be necessary;
- There are a number of surface parking areas throughout the Downtown that are used privately or are metered for public use;
- The Lower Level Parking Lot provides a significant number of spaces for Downtown residents and employees. These spaces are for use by permit holders and require walking up and down the grade behind St. Paul Street to access it.



Mid and High-rise apartment buildings



View of Carlisle Street Garage.

*City-owned parking garage,
William Street frontage*



*View of Lower Level
Parking Lot*





Sports Arena Block

- To the east of the Downtown on Geneva Street, the Jack Gatecliff and Rex Stimers Arenas share a block with a single storey commercial centre. The Arena is the home of the Niagara Ice Dogs hockey team and draws a large fan-base. There is potential for these arenas to be redeveloped as a 5,000-plus seat complex;
- Although located on the Downtown's periphery, the arena complex is an important component to bringing activity and a diverse group of tourists and residents into the Downtown.

Transition zones:

- *Lower Level:* the Canada Hair Cloth building and environs present a realistic redevelopment opportunity;
- *Ontario Street:* a combination of landmark, heritage structures, opens lots and non-descript, low-rise buildings create a business area with potential for intensification;
- Welland / Geneva Street intersection and corridor: low-rise residential mixed with highway commercial-type development presents a less urban edge to the Downtown with potential for redevelopment;
- Redevelopment of the Hotel Dieu Hospital site at the Welland Ave./ Ontario Street intersection is underway and in planning approvals.

View of Arena from St. Paul Street



New residential development site at Welland Ave and Ontario Street. Phase 1 of Hotel Dieu redevelopment



View of the Lower Level Parking Lot and rear facades of St Paul Street.

2.4 The Pedestrian Realm

2.4.1 Existing Pedestrian Realm

Pedestrian amenities are provided through existing sidewalk facilities and via alleyways within the downtown area. There is a high level of pedestrian activity within the Downtown, during the week with the highest pedestrian volumes occurring during the afternoon hours and on weekends primarily on King Street and St. Paul Street.¹

Other periods of high pedestrian activity noted by stakeholders is along St. Paul Street in the late evening hours, between 10pm and 1am.

Though considered not active by some, the Downtown is highly occupied at peak times, which supports economic activity.

A ‘patchwork’ of shorter, discontinuous streets, laneways and smaller parking lots running to the north and south of King Street create interior situations and ambiguous realms of varying quality where the separations between pedestrian and vehicular rights-of-ways are indistinct. Parking, landscape and streetscape improvements that improve cohesion and provide more distinct zones for both cars and pedestrians would greatly enhance the public realm in these areas.

Pedestrian linkages to St. Paul Street from the Lower Level need improvement and will figure prominently in any redevelopment scenario at this location. Improving access in this location will create more opportunities to integrate healthy lifestyle choices such as cycling and walking into daily routines.

1. City of St. Catharines Downtown Street System Conversion Study Class Environmental Assessment, December 2005, Paradigm Transporta-

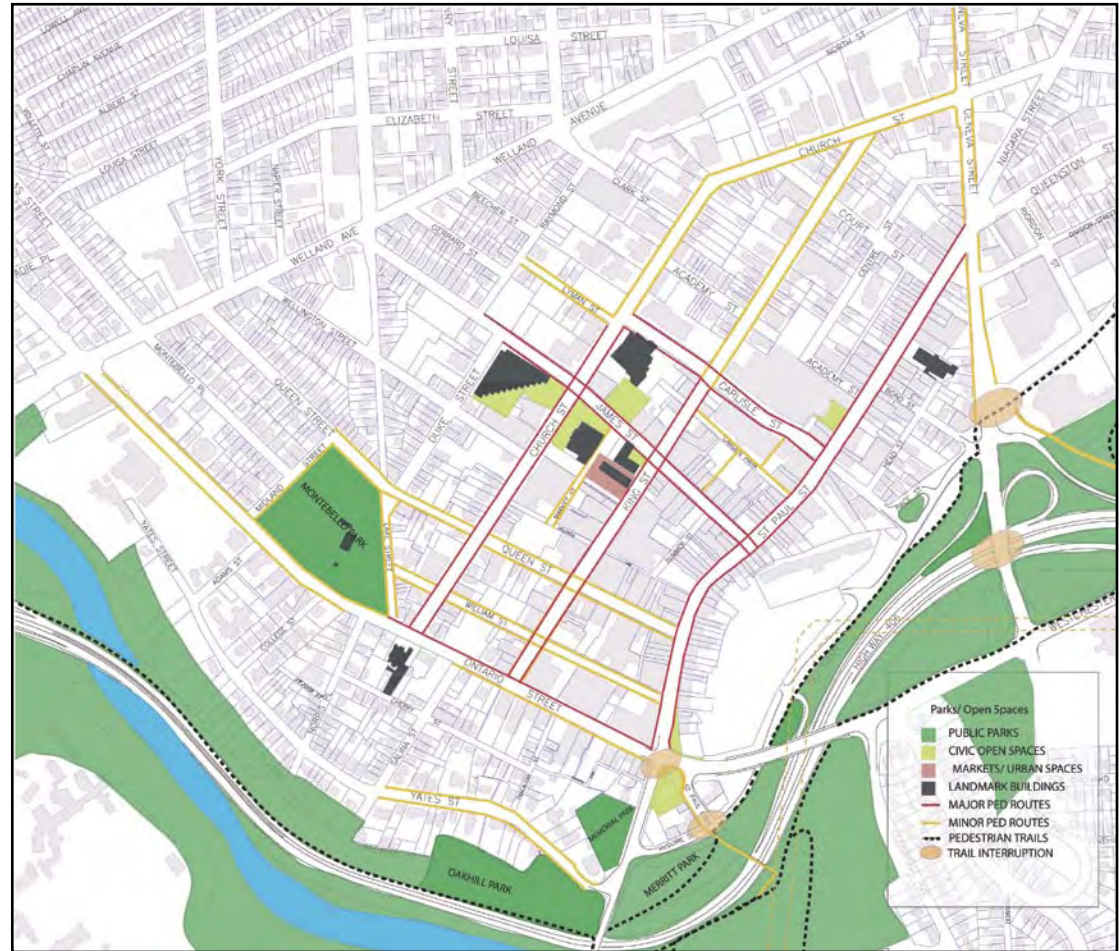


Fig 8: Existing Parks, Open-Spaces and Pedestrian Linkages



View of Memorial Park



View of City Hall

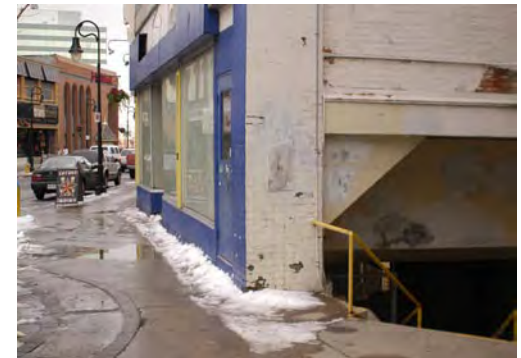


While most of the consideration in improving access to the Lower Level has been focused near the intersection of Helliwell Lane and St. Paul Street, another existing connection, where James and St. Paul Streets meet, where the historic façade of the Canada Hair Cloth Company peeks through to face James Street, flanked by the historic bank façade at 194 St. Paul, is another opportunity. James Street is the main north-south pedestrian street that connects most of civic and cultural destinations in the civic precinct as well as Market Square, a popular weekend, four-season and tourist destination.

With any development consideration at the Lower Level, safe, secure, well-lit pedestrian access to St. Paul is required and should be enhanced where less formal access already occurs. As well, accesses at Westchester Avenue/St. Paul to the west and the Parkway and the McGuire/Carlisle node to the east will provide a variety of opportunities to reconnect the Lower Level with St. Paul Street. Carlisle Street is an important conduit to the City Bus Terminal located at 70 Carlisle Street.



Footbridge at St. Paul Crescent



Existing pedestrian entrance to stairway down to the Lower Level from St. Paul Street



View of the Canada Hair Cloth building, from St. Paul Street



Views of the 'Raceway' along the rear facade of the Canada Hair Cloth building



2.4.2 Existing Trails Network

The City is served by a number of recreational trails that vary in quality, safety, use and surface treatments at both the primary regional level and the secondary neighbourhood level.

The Merritt Trail is an historic 11.0 km route trek linking the Lake Ontario Waterfront trail, and the Participark Trail (described below) before following old sections of the once active second Welland Canal to the southeast of Downtown, to the East side of Highway 406 as it moves south. Some sections are intermittent and unmarked, requiring a map and the surface is generally stone-dust.

Participark Trail is a 2km multi-use “Primary Trail” in the City’s classification system and runs along the west bank of Twelve Mile Creek from St. Paul Crescent, across Highway 406, south past Rodman Hall to Glendale Avenue. The land is leased to the City from Ontario Power Generation.

Other trails along Twelve Mile Creek are “Club Trails” such as the Bruce Trail and Twelve Trail. The latter informally connects to Participark Trail at its north end bridge connection to St. Paul Crescent, running across Highway 406, creating an informal trailhead that also connects with the Merritt Trail. The Merritt Trail continues northwesterly along Twelve Mile Creek to the lakefront and Port Dalhousie and northeasterly along the Lower Level and connecting to Centennial Gardens.

Running along the east side of Twelve Mile Creek south to Brock University and connecting with the Bruce Trail, Twelve Trail’s surface is uneven and inconsistent, made up of large 2” stone sections and “dirt” sections.

Club Trails are neither owned nor maintained by the municipality.



Fig 9: Downtown Trail System (Source: City of St. Catharines website)

2.5 Edges, Views and Landmarks

From a landscape perspective, crescent-shaped St. Paul Street divides the cultural heritage landscape of the civic and commercial precincts “above” and the natural heritage of the Twelve Mile Creek valley and early Welland Canal corridor remnants “below”. Natural and cultural heritage features that give Downtown St. Catharines its unique sense of place are generally arranged around its east, west and southern boundaries in this crescent shaped pattern defined by the landscape features of Twelve Mile Creek Valley and Canal Valley.

Significant landmarks and built heritage features are also contained in this zone, such as Rodman Hall, the Walker Botanical Garden, the Canada Hair Cloth building, old sections of the Second Welland Canal and spillway and Shickluna’s Shipyards.

Scenic vistas open up across the valley south and east of St. Paul Street at Ontario Street at its west end and Carlisle Street at its east reinforcing the sense of gateway and arrival at these locations. Moving towards the intersection of St. Paul and Ontario Streets via Westchester Avenue provides another arrival sequence and topographical progression that reveals other aspects of the Downtown’s unique relationship to the landscape.

A series of formal hard and soft open spaces around the City Hall and Library create view corridors through the ‘Civic’ blocks, creating a sense of centrality to the area.

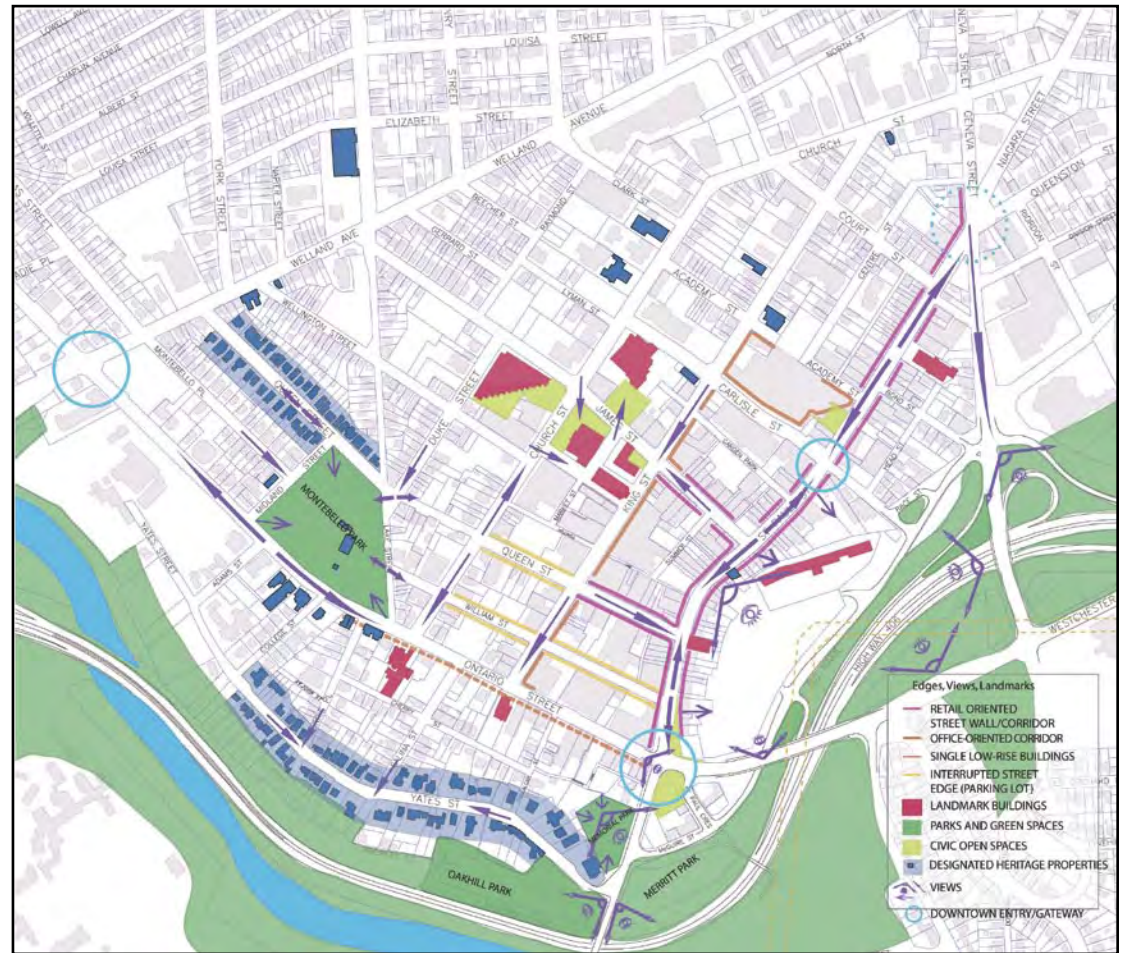


Fig 10: Edges, Views, and Landmarks



View of a heritage residence, Yates Street



View of the Library

2.6 Transit

The primary form of transit service within the Downtown is provided by the St. Catharines Transit Commission. Both conventional and specialized public transit is provided throughout the City's urban area and beyond, including the City of Thorold and Niagara College's Glendale and Niagara-on-the-Lake campuses. St. Catharines public transit connections are also provided to the public transit services in Niagara Falls and Welland, via the Brock University terminal.

The central focus of the St. Catharines Transit services is the off-street "central hub" located on the east side of Carlisle Street between St. Paul Street and King Street. This central hub provides a downtown route terminus for the various bus routes, with an off-street stop for each route and sheltered passenger waiting area. Almost all public transit services connect to the downtown transit terminal. Buses typically operate every 30 minutes on weekdays, and with service every 30 minutes during the day on Saturdays and every 60 minutes during evening and Sunday periods.

The Downtown is the best serviced area in the City for the bus network. Almost all buses depart or arrive from the Carlisle Street terminal with the exception of routes 14, 20, 21 & 22, which service loops outside the downtown area.

At present, there is no direct bus route to/from the train station. The nearest transit service to the train station is provided via Route 3 and 15. There are two VIA trains per day between Toronto and Niagara Falls and two Amtrak trains per day between Toronto and New York City. Train passengers also arrive by personal car (and park at the train station) or by taxi.



Fig 11: City of St. Catharines Transit Map (Source: City of St. Catharines website)

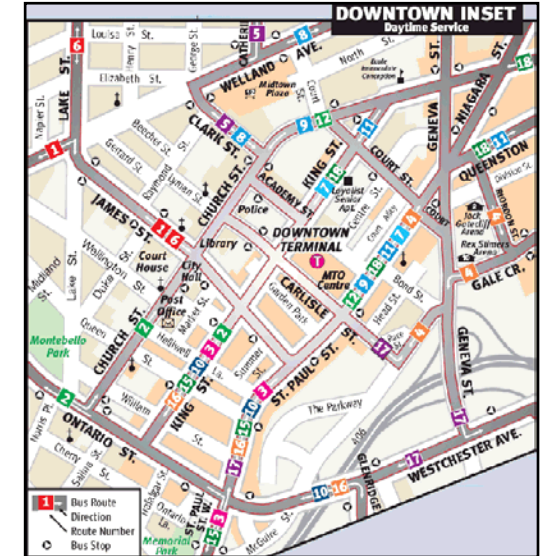


Fig 12: Downtown Transit Map (Source: City of St. Catharines website)



St. Catharines Carlisle Street Transit Terminal

There is Greyhound Bus service from the Carlisle Street terminal with up to 10 buses per day to Toronto and up to five buses per day to Buffalo. Coach Canada provides service from the Carlisle Street terminal with up to 16 buses per day to Toronto and up to six buses per day to Buffalo. Currently, there is no GO Transit service (bus or train) to/from the Downtown. The closest station is located in the City of Hamilton.

2.7 Parking

Parking facilities within the Downtown is a key service that supports business, employment and residential uses. The City of St. Catharines controls 30 percent of the total commercial parking supply within the Downtown. The private sector controls the remaining 70 percent of available parking spaces. Only 50 percent of the total 9,200 parking spaces are available for use by the general public. 4,600 parking spaces are controlled by the private sector and are for “restricted use only” and are available to customers and/or employees of the businesses providing these spaces.

There are 600 on-street parking spaces and 2,100 off-street parking spaces located in the City’s ten surface parking lots and two parking garages (primarily metered), which translates into revenue source for the City of St. Catharines. Of the 6,500 commercial parking spaces operated and maintained by the private sector, approximately 1,900 parking spaces are available to the general public on a daily or monthly basis.

Capacity

In general, based on the recently completed St. Catharines Downtown Parking Study, under existing peak operating conditions (11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.), the parking system operates at about 70 percent capacity. In terms of available surplus parking, only 500 spaces remain for use by the general public, representing approximately 11 percent of the total commercial parking supply available for the general public. The addition of future demand generators in the form of increased development growth within the Downtown will continue to place additional pressure the available parking supply.

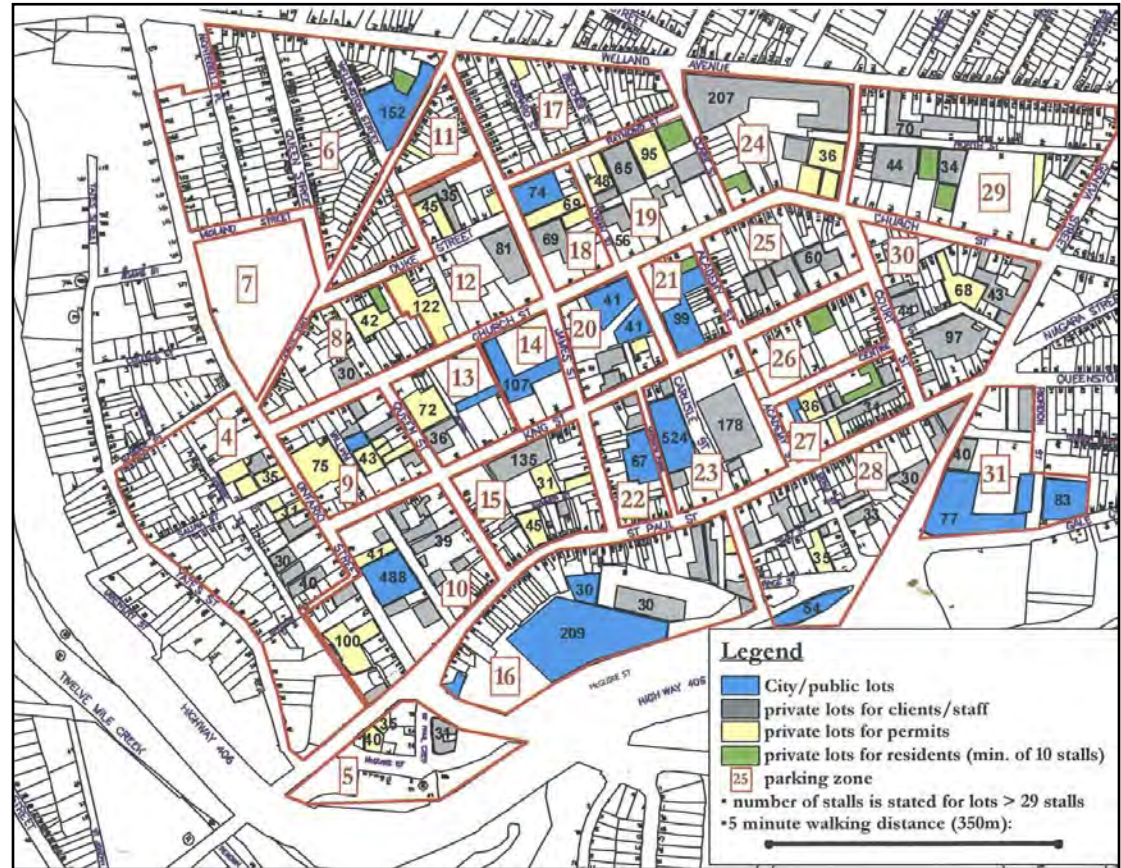


Fig 13: Off-street Parking facilities in Downtown St. Catharines (Source: Downtown and Port Dalhousie Parking Study, Dec 2005, Paradigm Transportation Solutions)



View of Ontario Street Parking Garage



View of Carlisle Street Parking Garage

Parking By-Law

Amendments to the current parking zoning by-law(s) requirements may help alleviate parking demand to some degree. A motion put forward in November 2007 related to the expansion of parking enforcement in the Downtown encouraged the extension of paid parking enforcement in the downtown core from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. from Monday through Sunday morning. The motion included an increased police presence during the evening hours along with 24 hour restricted parking zones and changes in the use of “Taxi Stand” location and hours of operation. This motion, if adopted, would increase available funding for the City’s Parking Meter Reserve Fund and perhaps contribute to the costs for future parking facilities. In general, an increase in parking rates over time may help offset future investment costs; however, increased parking charges is seen by many Downtown residents and business owners as a deterrent to attracting shoppers, visitors and investment to the Downtown.

On-Street Parking

There are areas within the Downtown where the parking system is currently operating at or near capacity and the majority of the City’s 600 on-street parking meter spaces are typically always occupied. The “core demand” area of the City, encompassed by Queen Street, Church Street, Academy Street, and St. Paul Street is typically operating above 85 percent parking capacity which makes it extremely difficult for users to find convenient parking in a timely manner.



Fig 14: On-street Parking Map (Source: City of St. Catharines Downtown Street, Dec 2005, Paradigm Transportation Solutions)



Internal private surface parking lot



On-street parking, James Street

The Carlisle Street Parking Garage

The Carlisle Street Parking Garage is currently in poor condition and continues to deteriorate. The structure currently accommodates 525 parking spaces; however, 125 of these spaces have been “closed off” due to structural concerns. The potential cost to replace the existing parking garage could range from \$15 to \$20 million which would either replace the existing available parking supply or increase the parking supply by approximately 175 spaces.

Anything less than a complete rehabilitation (\$10 million) of the current parking garage facility, would result in a loss of parking supply depending on the replacement parking facility chosen (i.e. single deck structure, surface parking lot, or no parking.)

However, the redevelopment of the Carlisle Street Parking Garage is a major catalyst for change in the Downtown. Its location within the core economic centre of the City makes it an ideal site for a “flag ship” project. The opportunity of transforming this project from a simple parking garage replacement into a significant redevelopment and revitalization initiative could translate into an economic boost for the City.

Lower Level Parking Lot

Any future redevelopment of the Lower Level Parking Lot (LLPL) would decrease the number of potentially available parking spaces depending on the size and scope of the future development. The maximum number of parking spaces available in the LLPL is 400. There would be an increase of 150 parking spaces if the parcel of land adjacent to the LLPL is developed into a parking facility. If the main lot is developed and the vacant lot is not redeveloped then a loss of 200 parking spaces will occur, further reducing the overall available parking capacity within the Downtown. Increasing the amount of parking under City control beyond the rehabilitation of the Carlisle Street Parking Garage and the development of the LLPL will require land purchases, demolition of existing building stock and the construction of multiple surface lots to accommodate future parking demand. Therefore, redevelopment of the Lower Lot that includes significant parking would be a positive contribution to the future anticipated parking limitations.

Parking Policy

Currently, there is no policy that requires a minimum parking provision for new development; developers/ owners have discretion to build/provide only the number of spaces they deem necessary for their enterprise. Although the supply of parking facilities by the private sector must be financially viable to remain sustainable in the future, this policy prevents the City from maintaining and controlling an adequate number of public spaces.

Depending on the private sector to fulfill future parking demands through the demolition and replacement of current buildings with parking facilities does not conform with City Council’s support for residential intensification, in-fill developments, and Regional/Provincial Smart Growth initiatives.

Overall, the Downtown parking system will not be able to accommodate future parking demand unless the existing supply is maintained or preferably increased. A reduction in parking supply will put a tremendous strain on the economic viability of the Downtown.



View of surface parking lots, between William and Queen Streets

2.8 Servicing and Utilities

The downtown core of the City is well serviced with watermains, sanitary sewers and storm drainage systems. Utilities, such as gas mains, phone lines and communications cables, electrical supply network and street-lighting are also located within the municipal right-of-ways or easements.

The Lower Level Parking Lot (LLPL) is also serviced with watermains, sanitary sewers and storm drainage systems, but any new developments must consider the grade differential between St. Paul Street and McGuire Street. There is an existing triple-cell storm culvert running through the LLPL. This culvert was installed in the abandoned Welland Canal (First and Second canal system) before backfilling operations all but eliminated any evidence of the canal. The fill areas of the LLPL also introduce complexities for building foundations. A current Class A Environmental Risk Assessment is underway, which will determine the environmental and geotechnical implications for future development of LLPL.

There is also a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) facility proposed for the south limit of the LLPL, just north of Westchester Crescent. An existing sanitary sewer link will also need to be upgraded prior to any redevelopment to provide capacity between the downtown collection system and the Regional Sewage Pumping Station on Renown Road.

The only building within the LLPL area is the existing Canada Hair Cloth building. It is currently fully serviced, but any redevelopment of this site will require the extension of the existing watermain to loop the system and eliminate the dead-end. Sanitary storage and pumping facilities may also be required.

There is an existing servicing corridor that connects the Lower Level with 136 St. Paul Street. This corridor will require extensive reconstruction in order to maintain the existing services and the main streetlight feed to St. Paul Street.

Any redevelopment within the downtown core would follow the site plan application process. Details of existing and proposed municipal services would be required at that time.

Coordination with the City will be required in order to avoid duplication of construction work, such as replacing old cast iron watermains to accommodate the new development.

Infrastructure Anticipated Construction Schedule

The City is implementing Phase 1 of the one-way to two-way street conversion project and is currently reconstructing Queenston Street from St. Paul Street to Church Street, Church Street from Queenston Street to Niagara Street and Niagara Street from Queenston Street to Church Street. This work is scheduled to be completed in 2008.

The City's Transportation and Engineering Services department is anticipating additional construction work as part of the subsequent phases to the conversion study. Prior to the surface works being completed (i.e. one-way street to two-way street conversions), the City is reconstructing the underground servicing. Future reconstruction work includes the following:

- King Street (Church Street to Ontario Street) – underground work in 2008/roadwork in 2009;
- Church Street (King Street to Ontario Street) – underground work in 2008/roadwork in 2009;
- Ontario Street (King Street to St. Paul Street) – underground work in 2008/roadwork in 2009;
- William Street (St. Paul Street to Lake Street) – underground work in 2008/roadwork in 2009; and
- Carlisle Street (McGuire Street to Church Street) – underground work in 2009/roadwork in 2010.

The proposed Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) has been designed to accommodate the combined sewer flows from the Downtown area. Several overflow sewers will then be decommissioned while a critical section of sanitary sewer north of Westchester Crescent will be reconstructed with a larger diameter pipe.

3.0 THEMES FOR AN EVOLVING DOWNTOWN

3.1 Planning Policy

3.1.1 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. It sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. The mandate of the PPS is to provide for appropriate development with the cornerstones of protecting resources of provincial interest, public health and safety, and the quality of the natural environment. In accordance with Section 3 of the Planning Act, any decision of the council of a municipality “shall be consistent” with the PPS. The Official Plan is the main vehicle to implement the PPS.

Building Strong Communities and Providing a Range of Housing Types

The PPS encourages building strong communities in part by:

- Accommodating an appropriate range and mix of residential and employment uses (including industrial, commercial and institutional uses);
- Promoting efficient development and land use patterns through consideration of intensification and redevelopment opportunities;
- Minimizing land consumption and servicing costs through efficient use of infrastructure;
- Ensuring that necessary infrastructure and public service facilities are, or will be available to meet current and projected needs.

The PPS also requires municipalities to provide for a range of housing types and densities.

The Downtown is one of the key areas in the City to be a focus of intensification in recognition of the high level of transit, transportation and municipal infrastructure. It is also a key area to provide for the broader range of housing that is not provided in the low rise neighbourhoods. There are some nearby high density apartments which provide a good context for further intensification and the Master Plan identifies focal areas for residential and employment intensification in these areas.

However, the challenge is not only identifying opportunities for intensification, but, enticing private sector investment as new development to the Downtown, the only Growth Centre in the Niagara Region.

Promoting Economic Development and Competitiveness

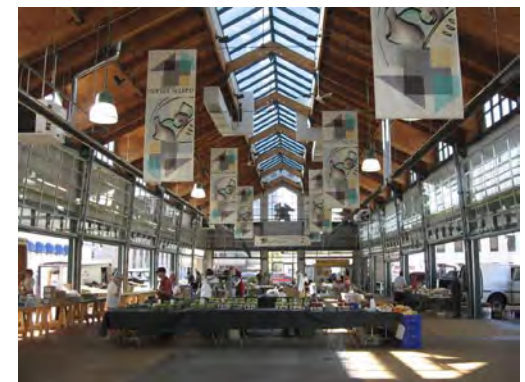
The PPS promotes economic development competitiveness by requiring municipalities to provide for an appropriate mix and range of employment to meet long-term needs; and also to provide opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses.

Office, government, retail and service employment are key elements of a vibrant downtown. The Master Plan supports the PPS by seeking to maintain and, where possible, expand existing office employment, expanding employment in cultural and entertainment facilities with a resulting spin off in retail and service commercial jobs.

Enhancing the Vitality and Viability of Downtowns

The PPS requires that municipalities support long-term economic prosperity by maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the vitality and viability of downtowns.

The Master Plan proposes means to enhance the vitality and viability of Downtown St. Catharines. As the Master Plan demonstrates, this objective requires a myriad of different actions. No one action will ensure the continued vitality of the Downtown.



Interior of the Farmers' Market Hall

3.1.2 Places to Grow Provincial Policy (The Growth Plan)

Downtown St. Catharines is identified as an Urban Growth Centre in Places to Grow (Figure 15). As an Urban Growth Centre, the growth density target of Downtown St. Catharines is 150 residents and jobs combined per hectare and the city is the only Urban Growth Centre in the Niagara Region.

The Growth Plan indicates that population and employment growth are to be focused and directed to intensification areas (2.2.2.1.b) and Urban Growth Centres. Urban Growth Centres are recognized as a key focus for development to accommodate intensification (2.2.3.6). Urban growth centres are to be planned as:

- Focal points for investment in institutional and region-wide public services, as well as commercial, recreational, cultural and entertainment uses (2.2.4.4.a);
- High density major employment centres (i.e. office areas) (2.2.4.4.c); and,
- Places to accommodate a significant share of population and employment growth (2.2.4.4.d).

The Growth Plan also encourages major office development to be located in Urban Growth Centres or other areas with existing or planned frequent transit service.

Further, growth is to be accommodated by creating compact, transit-supportive communities, and reducing automobile dependence through the development of mixed-use, transit-supportive, and pedestrian-friendly environments (2.2.2.1.d).

Moreover, the Growth Plan encourages the conservation of cultural heritage and archaeological resources, where feasible, as built-up areas become intensified (4.2.4.e).

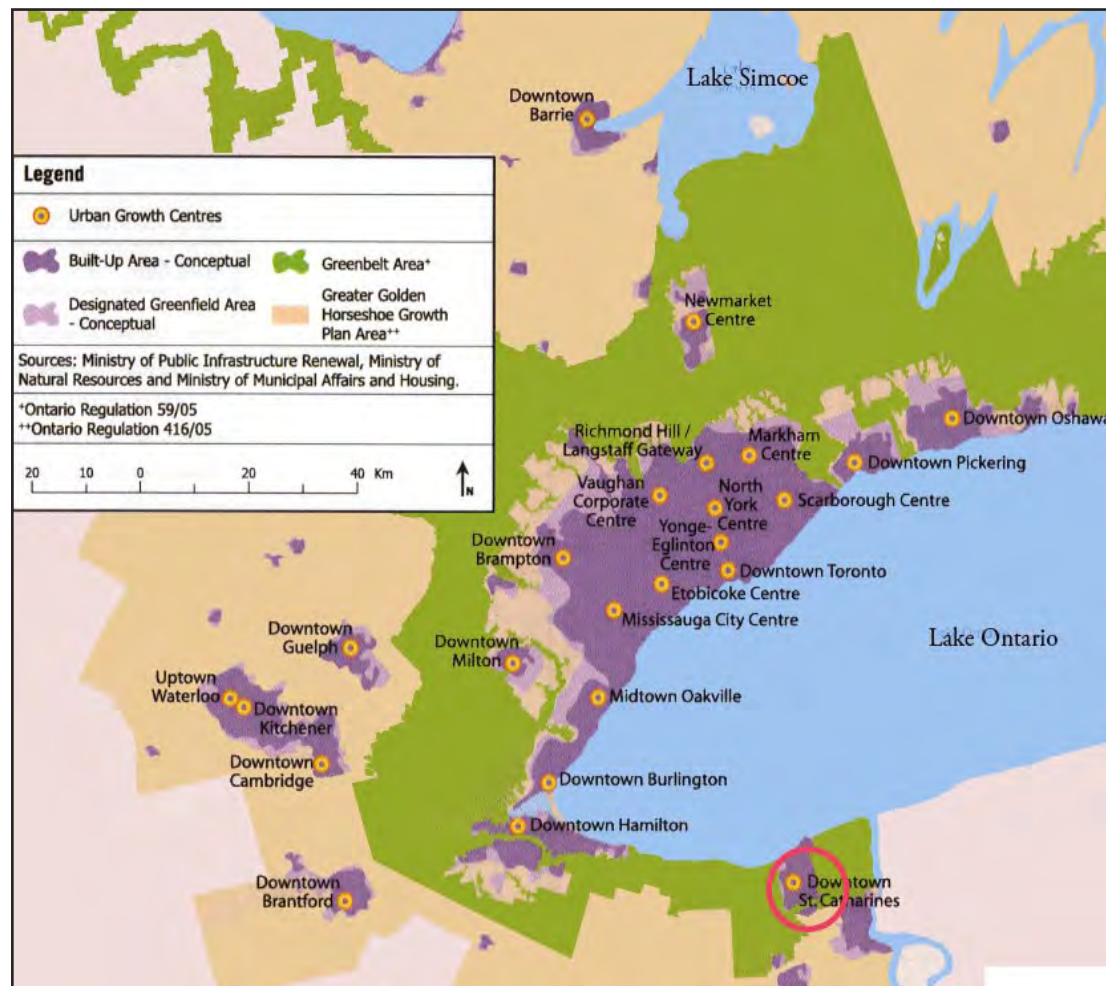


Fig 15: Downtown St. Catharines identified as an Urban Growth Centre, Schedule 4 of the Growth Plan (Source: Places to Grow, Better Choices, Brighter Future, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006, Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal)

In support of the Growth Plan, the proposed Master Plan will enhance the Downtown as a focal point for:

- regional public services, civic, cultural and entertainment facilities;
- major office uses and as a centre of the service and knowledge-based industries;
- residential intensification and mixed use developments;
- a walkable, pedestrian friendly urban environment that is safe, comfortable and attractive;
- reducing automobile dependence through enhanced increased population and enhanced transit;
- a framework to support the redevelopment and restoration of major cultural heritage assets of the Canada Hair Cloth building and the early Welland Canal Corridor;
- the reuse, protection and preservation of the historically significant buildings which are a key element in the character of Downtown st. Catharines.

Urban Growth Centre Boundary

The Growth Plan requires municipalities to delineate the boundaries of the urban growth centre in their official plan.

MPIR released the proposed Urban Growth Centre boundaries on April 3, 2008. St. Catharines' proposed Urban Growth Centre boundaries are Welland Avenue to the north, Page Street to the east, Gale Crescent-Race Street- McGuire Street to the south, Cherry Street to the southwest, and Leslie Street to the northwest. These boundaries were derived in consultation with the City and are broader than what is currently shown in the Official Plan as the Downtown and the boundaries used for this study.

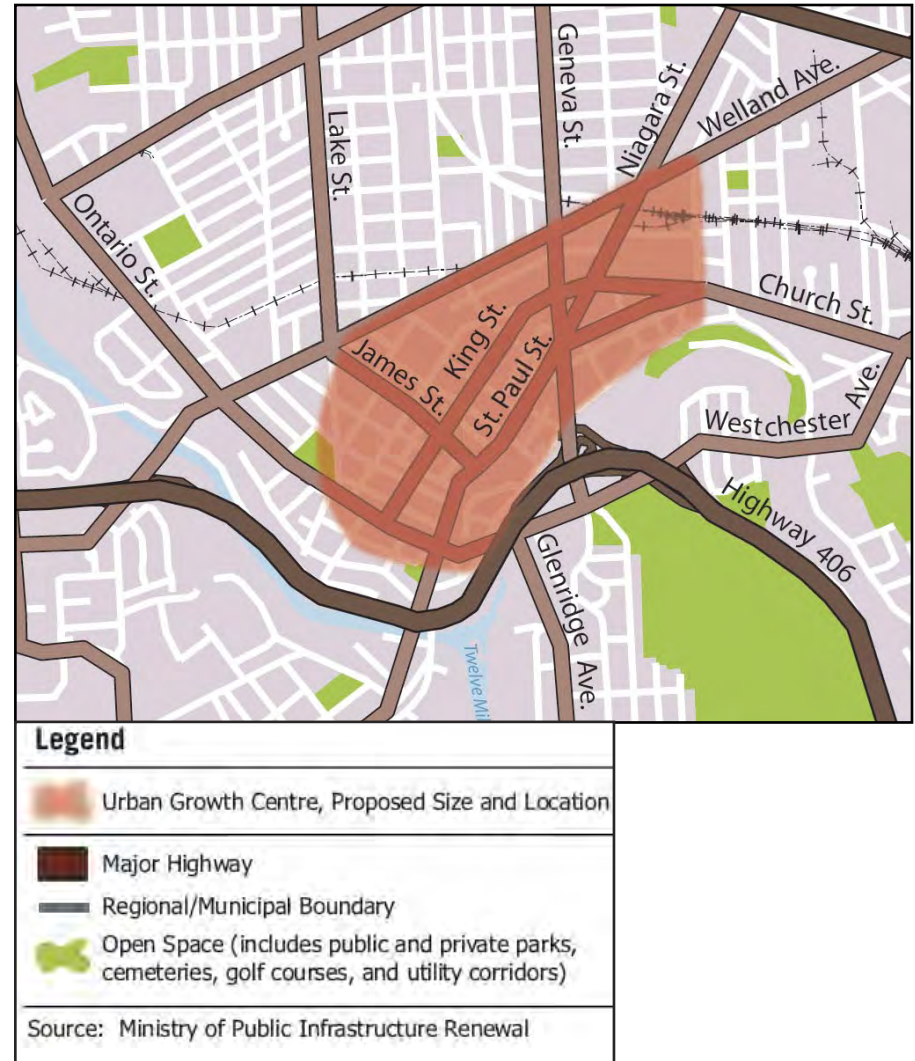


Fig 16. MPIR Urban Growth Centre Boundary for St. Catharines (Ontario Growth Secretariat and Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (2008). Proposed Size and Location of Urban Growth Centres in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Technical Paper. Queen's Printer for Ontario.)



3.1.3 Niagara Region Official Plan

The Regional Official Plan encourages opportunities to increase the number and type of employment opportunities throughout the Region (objective 5.5). Tourism is an important part of the Region’s economic base, and it is well supported in the Regional Plan. Policy 5.11 states that, “the Region recognizes the importance of the tourist industry to the Region and will co-operate with agencies involved with the tourist industry to promote the tourist attractions and facilities in the Region”.

The Region requires local municipalities to identify means to increase the supply of housing, partly through the provision for infilling, redevelopment, and increased densities in existing residential areas (policy 5.32).

The Master Plan responds to the Regim’s goals by identifying areas for residential intensification and redevelopment in support of a Creative Cluster, of which tourism is an important component.



Fig 17: Regional Niagara Strategy for Development and Conservation. (Source: Niagara Region Policy Plan, July 2007.)

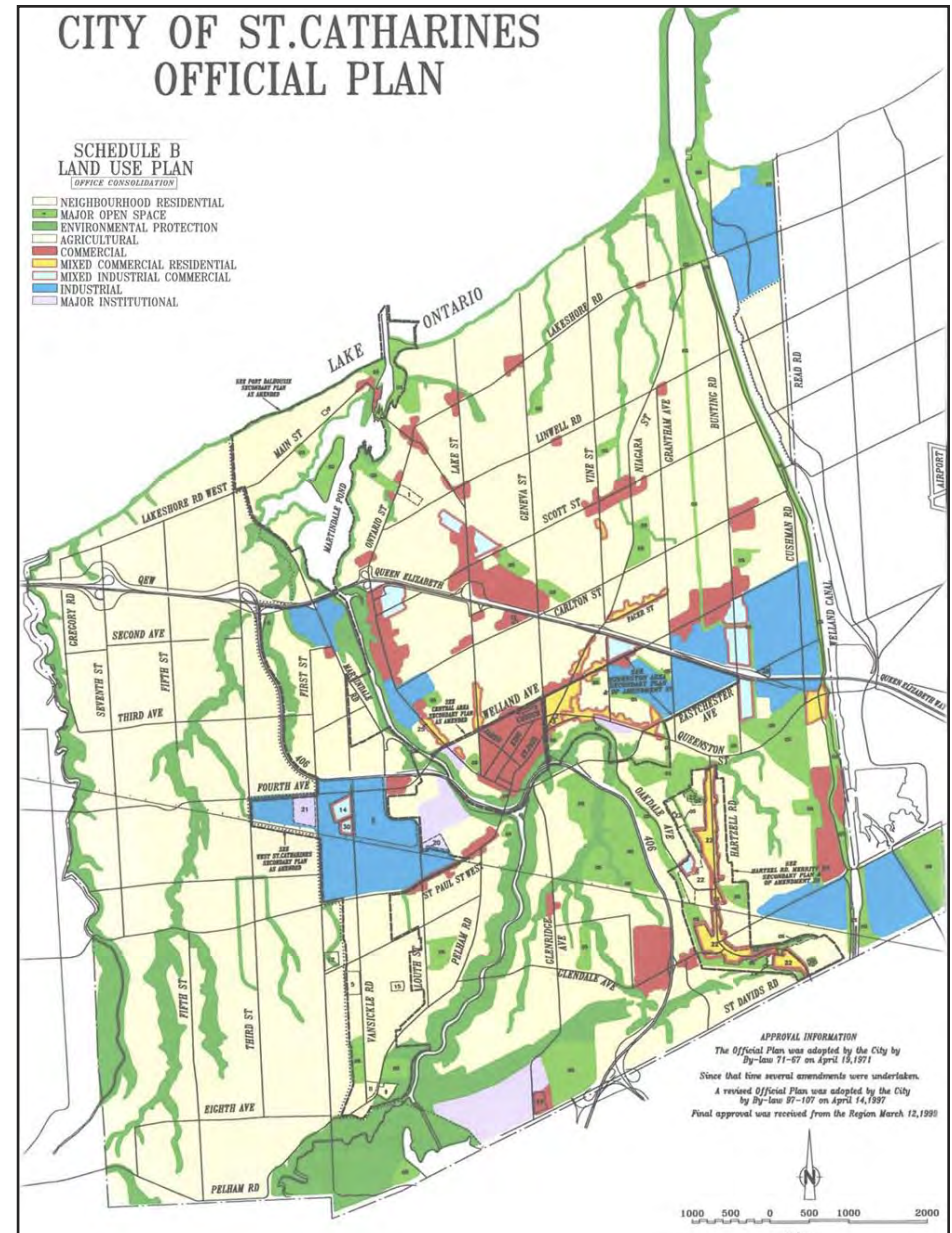


Fig 18: City of St. Catharines Official Plan Schedule B Land-Use Plan (Source: The Official Plan of the City of St Catharines Planning Area, March 2006.)



3.1.4 The City of St. Catharines Official Plan

The Official Plan outlines the long term vision for St. Catharines' physical form and community character. This vision is to preserve and enhance quality of life across the broad range of social, economic and natural components of the downtown and surrounding areas of the municipality. The Downtown is addressed specifically in two sections of the Official Plan: Central Area, Section 6 and the more detailed Central Area Secondary Plan, Section 15.

Central Area, Section 6

The general goals and policies of Section 6 of the Official Plan, specific to the Central Area, encourage large-scale entertainment industry type uses, especially those that are large employers. In particular, Section 6.1.3 provides,

“Major office buildings and administrative quarters, large hotels and convention facilities, large and specialty retail operations and major cultural activities are encouraged to locate in the Central Area.”

The Plan also recognizes that the Downtown is comprised of primarily small lots, which may be an obstacle to intensification and future large building footprint uses such as hotels and convention facilities, and large specialty retailers. As a result, the Official Plan recognizes that intensification and the introduction of major employers, retailers, or cultural entertainment facilities would likely require land assembly. Section 6.1.4 provides,

“Where a major private developer is experiencing difficulty in assembling land for a development that is encouraged under Section 6 of the OP, the City will offer assistance.”

Central Area Secondary Plan, Section 15

The Downtown falls within the Central Area Secondary Plan. The primary goal of the Central Area Secondary Plan is to improve the amenity and attractiveness of the Downtown and to promote its use both in the daytime and evening hours. The Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan shares these fundamental goals.

Commercial uses

In efforts to improve the attractiveness and continued significance of the Downtown, policies of Sections 15.2 and 15.3 direct retail and commercial uses into strategic locations, and specific uses are encouraged. Specifically:

- Retail functions, especially comparison goods shopping facilities, are encouraged to locate in the retail core to maintain and reinforce the viability and attraction of this core. (15.3.2.4);
- Commercial uses are limited in the transition and civic-square related zones, (15.2.1.1); and,
- Convention and related facilities and services, including hotels and restaurants are encouraged (15.2.1.2).

Residential uses

The Central Area Secondary Plan recognizes the importance that residential uses play in contributing to a vibrant downtown and with policy that seeks to improve the residential environment (policy 15.1.3). As well, high density residential use is encouraged (15.1.4), as are mixed use apartments (15.1.4.2).

The Secondary Plan also strongly encourages intensification with some guidance for focused areas of intensification which reflected in the basic planning framework for the Master Plan. Proposed policy modifications are addressed in Section 7 of this report.

Intensification and Targets

There are no specific intensification targets provided in the Official Plan, as setting and achieving such targets is only a recent provincial policy requirement. Nevertheless, the Plan supports residential development and intensification to provide for a range of dwelling unit types, lot sizes, and tenure (policy 3.2.b). The Official Plan also provides that, “high (greater than 30 units per acre) and medium (10 to 30 units per acre) density residential development and intensification shall be located on or near arterial or collector streets and in proximity to shopping facilities, parks and open space natural areas and transit service as a means of efficiently using land, services and amenities” (policy 3.3.2.1.b). These policies express the intent of the new provincial policy.

Population Growth

In the City’s Official Plan Review Issues Report dated April 2006, it was found that 5,700 additional dwelling units are needed by 2026 to accommodate the Region’s projected population for St. Catharines of 136,600. However, Ontario’s Greenbelt Plan effectively freezes the City’s urban area boundary, leaving little remaining vacant residential land supply within the urban boundary.

If the City is to meet the Region’s population target as well as the intensification targets of the Growth Plan, a greater level of residential intensification will be required, particularly in the Downtown.



Fig 19: St. Catharines Central Area Secondary Plan and Land Use Schedule, (Source: taken from Schedule 15-A, Land Use Plan and Legend from The City of St. Catharines Official Plan, March 2006.)



3.2 Economic Growth and Downtown Revitalization

The ability of the Downtown area to achieve long-term success as a creative centre both for St. Catharines and the broader Niagara Region depends on being able to attract additional residents and employees, as well as additional spending and capital investment. As previously discussed and one of fundamental drivers of the Master Plan, St. Catharines is designated in the Growth Plan as an “Urban Growth Centre”. This growth analysis looks at St. Catharines’s potential from a number of perspectives:

- Residential
- Office
- Retail
- Institutional
- Culture
- Tourism

In keeping with the parameters of the Growth Plan, this analysis considers the planning period to 2026. The following section begins with a short assessment of the current Downtown, followed by a review of the growth prospect for the four markets being considered.

3.2.1 Downtown Area is not Meeting its Potential

The Downtown area of St Catharines has the physical and economic make-up, as well as the market challenges that are found in most medium-sized cities in Southern Ontario. It is the historic centre of the city and contains all the elements that would be expected: City Hall, the Courts, major office buildings and traditional main street retail space. It also contains a wide mix of older residential properties from some of the city’s most desirable to some of its most affordable. The area also contains much of the city’s best architecture in both individual buildings and groups.

Today, the Downtown economy is anchored by office uses. As with most other older cities, the Downtown is the primary location for lawyers, accountants and government. The Provincial Ministry of Transportation is a key presence and the Downtown is home to the many other businesses that are office-oriented including a significant high-tech presence: notably Silicon Knights which develops internationally renowned video games. Little new office development has occurred in past five to ten years and there are vacancies in existing space. As in other urban centres, office building projects in St. Catharines’ Downtown face strong competition from “suburban” projects. This competition stems from a number of factors:

- Many prospective space users have limited need to locate Downtown;
- Inexpensive and abundant surface parking can be provided in suburban locations; and,
- Employees often prefer the superior accessibility of suburban locations.

The retail and service sector in the Downtown demonstrate weaknesses commonly found in older downtown areas:

- Few retail chains;
- Vacant stores; and,
- Significant number of ‘lower end’ operations (e.g. dollar stores, thrift stores, tattoo parlours).

At the same time, there are some positive elements in the form of new independent specialty retailers, and café/restaurants, in addition to a number of successful long-established businesses.

There is a very strong entertainment/bar business that has both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it brings “traffic” to the Downtown and occupies spaces that might otherwise be vacant. At the same time, most bars are closed during the day thus reducing the level of street animation. Some are closed all summer. At night, antisocial

behaviour by some patrons discourages others from coming Downtown. The residential area of Downtown appears relatively stable. A limited number of new apartments have been built and a townhouse project opposite the Hotel Dieu Hospital is underway with redevelopment of the hospital site likely in the next five years. However, the limited size and number of vacant sites restricts the potential for major new developments particularly of a low-density form.

Overall, the Downtown area appears to be relatively healthy, despite a number of specific weaknesses. It has the potential to perform better but like most older downtown areas, has lost some of the prestige and focus that it enjoyed before the advent of auto-oriented suburban development.

As to the future, the Downtown will depend partly on public policy and investment initiatives and partly upon market activity in the residential and non-residential sectors.

3.2.2 Provincial Plan Requires St. Catharines Downtown to Achieve a Combined 150 Persons/Jobs per Hectare

As previously mentioned, a key element of the policy aspects affecting Downtown is the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This has a general objective of increasing the share of new growth that is to be accommodated in existing urban areas.

In the Outer Ring of the Greater Golden Horseshoe, St. Catharines has been designated as an Urban Growth Centre and is expected, at a minimum, to achieve 150 persons/jobs per hectare. City staff has estimated that the current combined employment and population density in the city's current Downtown boundaries as per the Official Plan is between 130 and 139 persons/jobs per hectare (dependent on the assumed persons per unit used for the population calculation). By 2026 and before allowing for new residential development, the estimated density in the Downtown core would be 133 persons/jobs per hectare (assuming 2.1 persons per unit).

To make up the difference between the projected 133 pj/pha and the 150 pj/pha required by the Provincial target, approximately 1,000 new residential units will have to be built in the Downtown core.

At the time of this report writing, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (MPIR) released the proposed Urban Growth Centre boundaries. The proposed Urban Growth Centre boundary for Downtown St. Catharines extend beyond the boundaries of the Downtown Secondary Plan, reaching as far east as Page Street. Based on the new Downtown boundary, MPIR approximates the current density to be 100 jobs and residents per hectare. The target represents a 50% increase over current density or approximately an additional 5,750 persons and jobs. Subtracting the employment projection for the Downtown of 400 jobs an additional 2,550 new residential units would be needed to fulfill the MPIR boundary.

However, for the purpose of exploring the opportunities for revitalization of St. Catharines' Downtown core, the following analysis looks at residential and employment projections for the city's established Downtown boundary. Further study is needed to assess the impact of the MPIR expanded boundary on the Downtown core.

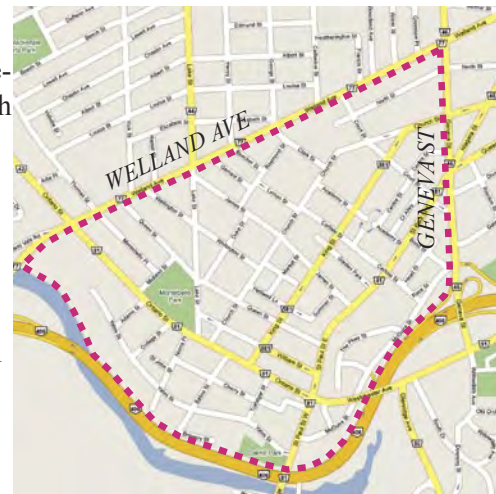


Fig 20: Downtown Boundary as per the Central Area Secondary Plan



Fig 21: MPIR Urban Growth Centre Boundary

3.2.3 Approximately 10 Hectares of Land Will Be Required to Construct 1,000 Residential Units Downtown

As shown on the table below, St. Catharines has averaged about 350 completed units per year between 2001 and 2006.

Annually, of these units, around 154 (42%) are either row-houses or apartments. This is a relatively high percentage of rows and apartments and is possibly due to the fact that St. Catharines has a very limited supply of new development land to accommodate single-detached units. This level of medium and higher-density development leads to the conclusion that there is a potential market for this form of housing in the Downtown core.

City of St. Catharines: Housing Units Created, 2001 to 2006

Year	Single-detached	Double (Semis)	Rows	Apartments	Total
2001	179	18	13	77	287
2002	228	32	120	18	398
2003	243	12	33	35	323
2004	234	17	82	134	467
2005	144	20	124	73	361
2006	90	16	87	124	317
Avg	186 (52%)	19 (5%)	77 (21%)	77 (21%)	359 (100%)

Using the above-noted ratio, a land budget for the approximately 1,000 units anticipated to be built by 2026 has been developed. Based on a density assumption for apartments of 200 units per net hectare and for rowhouses of 60 units per net hectare, the land requirement would be about 3.5 hectares for apartments and 4 to 6 hectares for rowhousing. Accordingly, the total amount of land required to accommodate the additional 1,000 units in the Downtown core would be in the range of 7.5 to 9.5 hectares.

There are a number of potential markets for this new Downtown residential development:

- *Singles and Childless Couples*: A prime market for condominium apartments is singles and childless couples. To some degree, this demographic segment will be attracted to the downtown area because of unique advantages such as:

- o Walking distance to office jobs;
- o Proximity to services (such as groceries, drugstores, restaurants, health clubs, entertainment and cultural activities [prospective]);
- o Heritage character; and,
- o Proximity to recreational areas.

Some of these elements already exist but others need to be strengthened.

- *Empty-nesters*: The Niagara Region has a high percentage of older residents which represents a natural market for apartments. However, as with singles and younger couples, the Downtown area will need to provide a more extensive breadth and depth of services if it is to become a more desirable location for growth from this market segment.

New development in the Downtown area is unlikely to attract many larger families with children since only townhouses would be suited to their needs. However, existing single-family houses in the Downtown's established neighbourhoods, especially those in the heritage districts, will continue to attract families.

3.2.4 The Projected 400 Jobs Will Require a Relatively Modest Amount of Land

According to estimates prepared by Niagara Region, projected employment growth in Downtown St. Catharines to 2026 is 400 employees. This is in addition to the current adjusted base of 9,800 employees. This estimate includes an adjustment to account for loss of 600 jobs from downtown that will occur when Hotel Dieu Hospital closes.

To accommodate the additional 400 employees, approximately 120,000 sq. ft. of new space will be required. This is based on an assumed space requirement of 300 sq. ft. per employee. Assuming that a new office building in the Downtown area would be built at a density equivalent to two times lot area, a site or sites totaling about 1.4 acres (0.6 hectares) would be required. The anticipated additional demand to 2026 is considered relatively small and could easily be surpassed should either an existing business expand substantially or if one or more major space users are attracted to the Downtown.

Companies in the high-tech field have the potential for explosive growth. In the coming years, office relocation out of the GTA may occur as congestion and costs increase, making St. Catharines an increasingly attractive alternative.

3.2.5 Retail Likely to Improve in Quality, Not Amount

Some new retail space will likely be constructed as ancillary components of condominium apartment or office building projects. However, because the existing base of retail space is currently not being well utilized, there is no evident need for additional retail space in the Downtown area. However, while the quantity of space is unlikely to change there is good potential for a significant improvement in the quality of space users.

If initiatives to bring more people Downtown are successful, the area has the potential to increase retail sales, thus improving property values and attracting higher-value retailers. By doing so the appeal of the Downtown to visitors will be improved. With increased retail sales there will also be the potential for additional retail employment.

3.2.6 Institutional, Cultural and Tourism Development Will Play an Important Role

Institutional development can be a key element that can aid in rejuvenation of a downtown area. This can take a number of forms including, for example, government offices (e.g. the MTO facility), court buildings, hospitals or college or university facilities. These types of facilities can be very advantageous to a downtown area since generally they bring with them new employment and significant numbers of visitors. In turn, this traffic generates additional demand for services and new retail spending. Finally, institutions are valuable to an area because they tend to provide greater stability than private sector organizations. The relocation of Brock University's School of Fine and Performing Arts is a prime example of an academic/cultural institution that would produce the type of spin-off/synergistic effects noted above.

Cultural facilities and the activities that they house are also particularly effective catalysts for urban rejuvenation. They too, can take many forms, from small galleries occupying retail space up to full-scale arts

centres. Combining an arts centre with Brock University's School of Fine and Performing Arts and locating it Downtown, as has been suggested, would give the area a significant cultural presence. This type of joint venture could also involve the private sector, thereby establishing a new 'Creative Cluster' of some substance. (The Creative Cluster is described in Section 3.9).

Tourism investment would provide a final complementary element to this mix. The addition to the Downtown of new tourism-oriented facilities, such as hotels as well as new events and other activities that draw visitors, would foster new spending in the city which, in turn, would support additional jobs. The Master Plan plans the framework for and encourages investment of the various types noted above.

3.2.7 Summary

The data that has been reviewed together with the physical character of the Downtown area suggest that there is realistic potential for both residential and employment growth. Based on the analysis discussed above, a variety of sites totaling approximately 10 hectares will be required to accommodate the anticipated new residential and employment-related development. Additional sites to accommodate institutional and other uses will also need to be planned for. While there is not likely to be a need for a significant quantity of new retail space, there is substantial potential for improvement in the quality and performance of the existing base.



United Church, St. Paul Street



Office building, Church Street

3.3 Opportunities, Constraints and Issues Affecting Intensification

It is clear by Places to Grow, the Central Area Secondary Plan, the Official Plan, and recent market study that efforts need to be made to increase employee and residential populations in conformity with Places to Grow, and in attempt to stimulate revitalization of the Downtown.

A key element to revitalization is bringing people back to Downtown. Ensuring the highest and best use of Downtown lands through intensification for mixed-use, residential and employment is a solution that cannot be ignored, especially given that Downtown St. Catharines is the only Urban Growth Centre in the Niagara Region.

Intensification Opportunities and Constraints

In general, the Downtown can be characterized by a retail corridor along St. Paul Street with residential occupying the upper floors; office/employment in the western end of the study area of Church and King Streets which are occupied by offices and other professional or specialty services. In the eastern half, there is a mix of low density homes and apartments, low-end-market and specialty retail and services, some commercial offices and a few high density residential apartment towers. There is a large supply of unbuilt and underutilized lots which signal this area as an opportunity for intensification.

Intensification opportunities exist, given the number of low-lying office buildings; single detached residential buildings, some of which remain residential, but many of which have been converted to other uses; lots used for surface parking; and, relatively large lots with small building footprints. The existence of some high density residential in the eastern end of Downtown, within close proximity to the bus terminal also creates intensification opportunities; higher density development may serve residents who may not own cars and would be more likely to take transit.



Knights Inn is a low intensity use on St. Paul Street



Examples of some vacancies along St. Paul Street

A. Retail, Commercial and Cultural Uses

As described earlier, St. Paul Street can be thought of as: a primary and secondary retail Main Street corridor. Based on character, vibrancy, and vitality, the primary retail corridor is between Ontario and Carlisle Streets, and the secondary retail corridor is between Carlisle and Geneva Streets.

Opportunities

- The built form along St. Paul Street has potential for a vibrant Main Street;
- Many of the merchants sell specialty items, which creates a unique shopping experience;
- James Street has a healthy main street commercial mix and functions as a good link between St. Paul Street and the Civic and Office Precincts;
- There is a healthy sponsor relationship between community arts and local restaurants that have proven to be effective at driving business to those establishments; and,
- The bar scene provides a fair bit of live entertainment, and is an important source of entertainment for youth.

There is opportunity to expand the product diversity, and specialty/boutique character of Downtown. That is the type of experience necessary to attract the creative class.

Constraints

- The “20 minute-walk length” of St. Paul Street presents a challenge to develop a continuous, consistent and vibrant Main Street;
- Some types of tenants affect vibrancy of the street during the day. For example, an abundance of bars operating only during the evening offer no daytime activity on the sidewalk;
- The perception of lack of safety affects the Downtown as an evening destination;
- Besides the Farmers’ Market and other institutional uses surrounding the Farmers’ Market, there is a lack of meeting places especially during the day; for example, there are few public squares;
- Existing coffee shops are found around King and Church Streets, and James Street which cater to employees, but are not obvious for visitors. St. Paul Street cafes and restaurants are much more visible but are concentrated in the western section;
- There is a lack of retail services to meet the daily needs of residents;
- There is a lack of diversity in entertainment and cultural facilities for evening, day, and weekend activities, i.e. movie theatre, galleries, book stores, and cafes. Such uses could support existing stores, bars, and restaurants and broaden the evening patron base;



View of the western section of St. Paul Street



View of the Farmers' Market



View of the Old Courthouse

- There is little visibility of entertainment and cultural facilities; there are not enough cultural facilities – either in number or significance - to support and promote the activity that is already taking place;
- The book stores and galleries that are in Downtown are not recognized retail chains and are dispersed along St. Paul Street to such a degree that their existence as a collective grouping is not obvious;
- The arts facilities that do exist Downtown are almost hidden;
- There are also no long-established arts facilities that can provide the combination of more popular entertainment while nurturing local artists to develop original programming that is distinctive to St. Catharines; and,
- There is no film house, which often generates cafe and bookstore uses.



B. Residential

Generally, stable residential neighbourhoods are adjacent to the western and northern study area boundaries and there is some high density residential, especially north of St. Paul Street, between Academy and Geneva Streets. However, more residential is needed to contribute to daytime and night time vibrancy.

Opportunities

- Areas north and south of St. Paul Street, east of Carlisle Street, offer opportunity for intensification because of the following factors:
 - Much of the building stock does not have heritage character, unlike west of Carlisle Street;
 - Buildings and properties are underutilized;
 - Type of tenants are more disparate and do not create a sense of connection or character with one another, unlike west of Carlisle Street;
 - Walking distance to bus terminal and existing high rise apartments offer opportunity for compatible intensification and greater mix of uses;
 - The combination of these existing uses provides greater population to support new employment, retail, and future cultural and entertainment venues; and,
 - There are many lots with a small building footprint, but the remainder of the property is used for parking. These sites offer good potential for intensification.



Residential streets around Montebello Park and Queen Street

Constraints

- There is a lack of community amenities such as community centres within walking distance for the existing and future residential population;
- There is a lack of other daily amenities such as a medium sized food store, to accommodate existing and future population;



Students' Residence, Ontario Street



C. Offices

There already exist a fair number of office buildings and variety of tenants which contributes to daytime vibrancy. But more office use is needed to support the existing daytime activity and encourage employees to stay Downtown after work hours.

Opportunities

- In general, offices are concentrated along King and Church Streets between Ontario and Carlisle Streets, creating a “node” of employment area;
- Some office buildings are single storey and therefore offer opportunity for intensification; and,
- Improving amenity services adjacent to existing office buildings could make leasing in the Downtown more attractive.

Constraints

- There are existing office vacancies, which need to be filled/addressed prior to further new office development; and,
- There is limited convenient parking to serve the office population.

D. Parks and Open-spaces

Opportunities

- Montebello Park, Farmers’ Market, City Hall and Civic Precinct, and nearby Library offer good pedestrian connectivity and public meeting places; and,
- Twelve Mile Creek offers an excellent tourism amenity which would be well-integrated with cultural and commercial revitalization of St. Paul Street.

Constraints

- There are not enough public meeting places across Downtown. There is a lack of parks/parkettes and open-space within the Downtown;
- The “Rock Pile” and nearby Memorial Park at St. Paul and Ontario Streets are not located in an area that fosters casual public gathering; and,
- Twelve Mile Creek is a valued and well-used natural, recreational open space but has difficult connections to the Downtown.



James Street, looking south east, towards St. Paul Street



The Cor-Bloc Mall, King Street



Montebello Park in winter



3.3.1 Downtown Retail Focus

Rather than competing with the suburban mall, the Downtown needs to capitalize on its eclectic retail base, cultural heritage, built form, and community and civic stock to lend itself a competitive edge over the typical mall.

The Downtown has a unique opportunity to create a function entirely different from a suburban mall. That function is based on creating an experience of place where people will not only want to shop and be entertained, but also live and work. The role of Downtown need not be a singular use destination such as purely shopping, like that of the mall. The current land use pattern and building stock in the Downtown creates a basic framework for a destination for a unique shopping and entertainment experience. The Downtown can be envisioned as a place with special ambience that appeals to many by combining a variety of special and diverse entertainment and cultural amenities with the potential for downtown living.

In the Commercial Land Use Review and Market Analysis report by John Winter Associates Ltd. (2002), it was found that Downtown uses were made up of:

- o Office (53%);
- o Retail (General Merchandise, Home Furnishings, Clothing) (20%);
- o Restaurant (10%);
- o Personal Service (6%);
- o Recreation (5%); and,
- o Food and Convenience (4%).

It was also determined that the Downtown had lost market share over the past two decades as some of the older and larger retailers had moved out to more expansive locations that offer free parking. Despite the loss of large retailers to out-lying areas, the study found that the Downtown did not show any signs of blight. This was likely attributed to the special function that Downtown tenants provide. The function of Downtown retailers were identified to perform either:

- A convenience function for office workers, and/or,
- A specialty function offering unique products for which people are willing to make special trips.

These functions should be the focus for further growth and enhancements in the Downtown.

Downtown retailers are primarily small and independent merchants, rather than large chain retailers. In general, it is the large chain retailers that are retail magnets and none of these types are located in the Downtown. However, the unique character and experience offered by the Downtown can be a destination reason in itself, and should be further enhanced in addition to the current functions of the Downtown. Given the special mix of current tenants, the Downtown is an appropriate location for specialty retailing, dining, and entertainment, where an eclectic variety of local retailers dominate and contributes to the character and experience of the Downtown.

Despite the lack of large chain retailers as anchors, the Downtown can be a thriving economic centre by building upon its current character. The Downtown can be a place that specializes in unique, specialty, and local retail, local restaurants, outdoor cafes, cultural institutions, galleries, and the unique experience offered by the heritage built form and the outdoor shopping and strolling environment that the suburban mall can't offer. This character must be enhanced as part of Downtown becoming a Creative Cluster.

The Commercial Land Use Review and Market Analysis (Winter Associates Ltd., 2002) did not recommend major redevelopment in the Downtown, although it did recommend more office workers and residents to support the economy. Moreover, it was noted that in addition to efforts to increase employment and residential populations within the Downtown, the greatest drawback was lack of parking. The report recommended that the greatest potential for boost to the Downtown economy lies in municipal hands; specifically, the removal of parking charges for retail trips and elimination of one-way streets.

The City has already begun implementation of the conversion to a two way street system. The City is also reviewing parking charge and developing planning policy to encourage developers to provide parking with new development.



3.4 Cultural Assets

Strengthening St. Catharines' cultural sector is one of the fundamental principles of developing a Creative Cluster Master Plan, an aspect which sets this Plan somewhat apart from other more economically driven master plans. That is not to say that culture is not an economic driver – indeed, the opposite. Based on the Regional Culture Planning Committee's recent cultural asset mapping study, St. Catharines has the greatest concentration of arts and culture-related activity in the Niagara Region. This fact may be surprising to many, who assume that Niagara-on-the-Lake's Shaw Festival is Niagara Region's cultural hub. St. Catharines boasts a broad range of visual and performing arts, ethnic culture and new media. While much is at the local, community-wide scale, versus "big ticket" travelling events, these performances and galleries draw a cumulative, large audience. As one stakeholder stated: "Small does not mean amateur".

Further Policy

To support this strong cultural fabric, the City has undertaken a number of culture-focused policies, funding programs and feasibility studies, some of which are described below:

- **St. Catharines Municipal Cultural Policy**

Approved in March 2000, this policy provided 17 recommendations, 11 of which have been achieved. This policy provided the foundation for cultural development in St Catharines, including the development of a Public Art Policy and the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Policy.

- **Public Art Policy**

This is policy to guide the management of the City's art collection and provide a foundation with which to develop a community endorsed Public Art Program.

- **City of St. Catharines Cultural Investment Policy (SCCIP)**

Since 2004, the City has provided an investment fund of \$124,000 annually to the not-for-profit cultural sector, including arts, heritage and ethnocultural organizations and projects. In 2008 this investment was increased to \$150,000. This funding has resulted in an increase in activity, facilities, level of creativity and increased engagement of youth and marginalized members of the Downtown community.

- **James St. Arts Cluster Feasibility Study**

In 2006, the St. Catharines and Area Arts Council Commissioned Toronto Artscape to prepare a preliminary study to create live/work artist space on James St. The study was truncated by budget limitations, but it resulted in the establishment of The Arts Council's office cluster on James Street and raised awareness that there is a need for more creative space.

- **Cultural and Academic Development Feasibility Study**

Concurrent with this Master Plan, a consultant team has been retained by the City and Brock University to undertake a detailed space needs assessment economic impact analysis and business case review for Brock University's School of Fine and Performing Arts (SFPA) and the city's arts community's cultural space needs to be considered in conjunction with a proposal to move Brock University's Centre for the Arts (CFA) into Downtown. The study results will identify a preferred site for the SFPA and the expanded Niagara Centre for the Arts (NCFA) to prepare concept plans and create a business plan. The latter facility is intended to provide a showcase for student, amateur/professional and visiting artists. The study is due for completion in Fall, 2008.

The cultural spirit in the Downtown is high and full of anticipation for much needed facilities and acknowledgement and validation of the importance of cultural activities to all Downtown community members.

The Master Plan recognizes the local importance of individual cultural organizations, by noting them as Creative Cluster elements that should be retained and supported in their current locations across the Downtown. As well, the Plan provides flexibility for the outcome of the Cultural and Academic Development Feasibility Study by providing multiple locations for mixed use development. Finally, the Plan proposes changes to planning policy to ensure that artists are included in intensification and redevelopment, so they can continue to live and work, affordably, in the Downtown.

The cultural policies developed by the City have played an important role in developing this new energy and spirit, and a resurgence of cultural activity located in Downtown. Future renewal and development of the three core cultural policies can continue to foster the activity levels and impact of this sector, to ensure this sector continues to be a vital partner in Downtown renewal.

3.5 St. Catharines' Wine Country Role

Niagara's wine industry dates back to the 1940s when hybrid grape varieties were first introduced. The region's ideal climate and soil conditions contributed to more developed varieties in the 1970's that have produced internationally recognized wines. Today, Niagara's core and supporting attractions include the wine industry which has made the Region an international destination for affluent and educated visitors.

Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities (prepared by Peter J. Smith & Company Inc, 2007) was developed in parallel with the principles of the Niagara Region policy plan as well as several other regional documents such as "Niagara Economic Growth Strategy", which endorse public/private partnership for the prosperity and growth of wine industry in Niagara Region. The *Niagara Region 2006-2012 Tourism Strategy and Annual Action Plan* identifies "Enhancing Wine Country Communities" as a fundamental goal.

3.5.1 Downtown St. Catharines' Role

According to *Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities*, Niagara Wine Country has been destination of younger visitors in recent years. Customers are first time visitors with a brief stay in Wine Country, visiting just one or two properties. The Report notes that this trend suggests that current visitors could enjoy the Wine Country experience allied with a historic downtown, cultural activities and the beauty of the Region. The Report proposes that a better strategy for growing the Region is to appeal a broader base of visitors for whom the leisure experience of wine and wineries expands from wine sampling to enjoying visual and performing arts, local interest and heritage. St. Catharines Museum and St. Catharines historic districts are among the cultural and heritage sites in the Niagara Region that are seen to be attractive to visitors.



Fig 22: Nodes of Niagara Wine Country (Source: *Energizing Niagara's Wine Country Communities*, Peter J. Smith & Company Inc., 2007)



Niagara wine Festival in Montebello Park (Source: NRCC Presentation, Recreation and Community Services)



A fine Wine Boutique, Napa Valley, California



3.5.2 The Wine Route

In support of this demographic shift and Regional policy goals to “enhance Wine Country Communities”, the Report proposes re-orientation of the Wine Route into Downtown St. Catharines. However, before the Route will succeed or be implemented in the Downtown, quality attractions and services need to be in place. The proposed SFPA and NCFA are key elements of this package of attractions, as well as the overall quality and experiences of the Route as it leads visitors before, during and after it enters the Downtown. Attractive streetscape improvements and gateways into the Downtown are critical.

It is also important to note that the Wine Route has proprietary ownership by the Wine Council of Ontario and their criteria will need to be further explored and met. However, the Report does note initiatives that St. Catharines has already taken that signal to the Wine Council that the St. Catharines’ City Council has made a commitment to downtown revitalization in support of bringing the Wine Route through the Downtown:

- “ • *In 2002, the City completed its Comprehensive Development Strategies*
- *The 2006 Community Improvement Plan and streetscape beautification program*
- *The parking study and City Council approval to convert the one-way street system to two-way traffic.”¹*

3.5.3 The Wine Embassy

A second major proposal of the Report, is the definition of a series of “Signature Destinations”. These are located in communities that are geographically situated to encourage cross-travel throughout Wine Country. The Report notes that it is imperative to the prosperity of the region to link the Signature Destinations, spaces and wine nodes to create an enhanced, connected circulation system.

St. Catharines is one of these Signature Destinations and the Report recommends locating Wine Country Embassy in Downtown St. Catharines with the potential to develop the complex as the ‘Headquarters’ of Wine Country. The identified program is very broad but could include a programmable outdoor space providing a place for outdoor theatre, musical performances, art and sculpture exhibits and other

similar events. The Report also notes that a Wine Embassy also could assist in the revitalization of the Downtown and could support further investment in supportive companion uses, such as: hotel opportunities; higher end destination retail, entertainment and office development; linkages to Rodman Hall Arts Centre, Market Square, Montebello Park, Wine and Grape Festivals, other cultural festivals; and the appeal of Downtown historic districts and heritage buildings.²

3.5.4 The Master Plan’s Wine Country Role

The Master Plan presents a framework for areas of enhancement and intensification along Ontario Street and St. Paul Street. With streetscape improvements, new investment and upgrading to existing properties, the potential for the Wine Route through the Downtown becomes more viable. The Master Plan also identifies potential locations for a Wine Embassy or Wine Council presence, in the context of revitalization along St. Paul Street and other Downtown redevelopment opportunities. It is important to note that further, extensive consultation with key stakeholders in the wine industry is still needed. However, it is also understood, that the Wine Route and Wine Embassy’s success are interdependent with the evolution of civic and private investment in the Downtown. The Master Plan was developed on the foundation that not one element will trigger overnight success; rather, coordinated and integrated steps are needed to stimulate related events.

Tourism is a key component of the Master Plan. Its implementation will require co-operation from all levels of government, especially with assistance from the Region with the proposed re-orientation of the Wine Route along St. Paul Street and the designation of the Downtown as the Wine Embassy Signature Destination.

^{1,2} Peter J. Smith & Company Inc., Energizing Niagara’s Wine Country Communities, 2007.

3.6 Natural and Recreational Links

3.6.1 Emerging Trends

In a survey of Canadians undertaken in 2005, the types of activities that are supported by trails rank highest among adult users aged 45 to 65. In fact, walking was ranked as the top physical activity for both men and women, with seven in ten (71%) of all adults 20 years of age and older, reporting having undertaken it in the three months prior to the survey. Bicycling also ranked in the top five activities (20%) for all adults, exceeded only by gardening (49%), home exercise (33%), and swimming (22%). The same study identified that for youth under the age of 19, walking (66%), jogging, running (56%), and bicycling (49%) were the three top-ranked activities.

As the population of Ontario ages, it is anticipated that there will be a shift away from participation in more strenuous outdoor activities such as team-based sports and skiing, toward more passive pursuits. This combination of factors suggests that in the future, an aging baby boomer cohort nearing retirement will be strong supporters of environmental conservation and of initiatives such as trails that combine nature-based recreation and stewardship activities.

David K. Foot, economist and author of the widely-read *Boom, Bust and Echo* and *Boom, Bust and Echo, 2000* notes:

“Even with the impacts of the echo generation, Canada probably has all the football fields, squash courts and volleyball courts it needs. If funds are available for new facilities, they should be devoted to walking trails, curling rinks and swimming pools for recreational swimming, because an older population continues to engage in these activities. As a majority of the population moves from activities like tennis and spectator sports to ones like walking and birding, the movement to make the countryside more accessible will intensify.”

Canadians (71 percent in a 2006 survey) ranked “appreciation of the natural environment” over issues of employment and national security. The same study found that these views are strongest among adults aged 44-65 and that the degree of support for the environment increased with levels of education.

People are combining their interests in fitness, travel, food, wine, history and culture. Commuter cycling, recreational and leisure touring participation rates, especially through Ontario’s largest and best known wine producing area where the number of wineries to visit continues to increase, provides the Downtown with an unparalleled opportunity to act as a culturally-minded eco-green tourism hub for the surrounding greenbelt. Through well-considered, practical place-making improvements, the stories of wine and tender fruit farming, the Old Welland Canal, and the largely extant mercantile history of Downtown St. Catharines can be experientially knitted together.

Increasing too, is interest in commuter cycling, especially among a ‘creative class’ of twenty-something’s. Cycling is seen as a viable ‘green’ alternative, having both personal and environmental benefits such as a healthier heart and a reduced carbon footprint.

ACTIVE2010 is the Province’s strategy to increase levels of physical activity among Ontarians for personal health benefits in an effort to reduce overall health care costs. The Ontario Trails Strategy (OTS) 2006 is a long-term plan and part of the Active 2010 Strategy that establishes strategic directions to assist in the planning, management, promotion, and use of trails in Ontario. It was developed in collaboration with other Provincial ministries and a wide range of stakeholders.

The OTS identifies a number of potential community benefits related to trails-based activities. These include:

Support for Active Living

- Having access to trails encourages an active, healthy lifestyle affordable to a wide range of users including the physically active as well as the elderly, children and youth, and persons with disabilities.
- Unstructured trails-based recreation activities such as walking, cycling and jogging are seen as fitness opportunities to many with increasingly busy lives.



Social Benefits

- Trails help build the social fabric of a community, connecting neighbourhoods and communities and encouraging casual interactions. Trail improvements can be a collaborative effort including community volunteers and local sponsors. Volunteerism and collaboration strengthen community bonds and foster interaction and partnerships with business and community organizations.
- By linking shopping, entertainment, workplaces, and parks, trails can help to structure compact neighbourhoods that promote alternative transportation, and contribute to economically and environmentally sustainable, and liveable communities.
- Trails offer low cost, unstructured recreation that can be enjoyed in solitude or in an organized group.
- With appropriate design, most trails can be made physically accessible to a wide range of ages, skills and abilities and can be used in all seasons, through a variety of activities.
- Trails support relatively inexpensive activities already popular in the Region such as bird watching, walking, cycling and cross-country skiing.

Environmental Benefits

- Trails support both urban and rural recreational lifestyles and can support broader environmental and ecological objectives through the protection of greenspace corridors.
- By rationalizing and re-routing random and informal paths, trails can serve to keep users away from sensitive environmental areas.
- The use of trail maps and interpretive signage can help to enhance appreciation and awareness of ecology and promote stewardship.

Economic / Tourism Benefits

- As one of the most highly requested recreational amenities, trails promote a high quality of life for communities and indicate a desirable place to both live and operate a business.
- Trails can be used to connect key destinations such as natural parks, cultural heritage features, or other community amenities and in doing so, can encourage visitation by both local residents and tourists.
- Trails can create both direct jobs through construction as well as indirect jobs relating to tourism and visitation. These might include restaurants, lodging, food and beverage.
- Many trail users purchase local goods to support their trail activities, e.g., mountain bikes, jogging gear, hiking shoes, etc. These purchases contribute to the local economy through jobs and taxes.
- Research has indicated that proximity to trails contributes to real estate values, and properties close to or adjacent to trails are often highly marketable.
- Witness the rise in travel to and through other wine regions such as California's Napa Valley or the wine regions of France or Italy.
- Enhancement of the City's commuter and recreational cycle and trail system has a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits.



An example of a cycling trail



A fine wine boutique, Napa Valley, California



3.6.2 Pedestrian and Recreational Opportunities

Downtown St. Catharines was built along an old Native trail on the banks of the 1st and 2nd Welland canals. Twelve Mile Creek, running the length of the City and providing a major open space corridor, along with other heritage features, provides the City with tremendous potential to create an attractive, memorable and livable city (this context is actually graphically interpreted in the Garden City's logo, showing an abstracted waterway wrapping around a green space).

Similar to the Ottawa River and Rideau Canal in Ottawa, or the St. Lawrence River below Quebec City, the Creek valley lands are a unique and significant living natural and cultural heritage corridor/green band that provides the City with its principal defining landscape character and quality. All three cities sit on a plateau or promontory partially surrounded by a natural resource that figured prominently in their earliest habitations and industrial development. As with Ottawa, this defining relationship for downtown St. Catharines needs to be preserved through protection of prominent views, sightlines and connections to both natural and cultural landmarks.



Fig 23: Redeveloped Lachine Canal Heritage (Source: Welland Canal Heritage)



View of the pedestrian bridge into Twelve Mile Creek Valley



View of the pathway between St. Paul Street and the Twelve Mile Creek/Welland Canal Valley



Old Welland Canals Heritage Destination

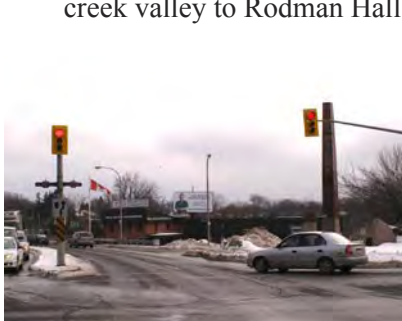
The Niagara Region Planning Department is currently proposing to Parks Canada, that the Welland Canal system be designated as a National Heritage Corridor, to create it as a national park and restore, renew and re-invent the Old Welland Canals. Despite its pivotal historic and current active role in trade and transportation, the Welland Canal system is absent from Parks Canada’s Historic Sites Inventory. Following the lead of cities and regions around the world and in Canada, celebrating old canal routes and structures are opportunities for creating unexpected urban open spaces and opportunities for tourist development.

The City should support the Region’s proposal to Parks Canada to recognize the old Welland Canals as a natural historic corridor, a designation that would boost tourism, redevelopment and restoration as evidenced by the Rideau Canal and the more recent revitalization of the Lachine Canal in Montreal - from a formerly neglected industrial corridor to a desirable and distinct mixed-use community and recreational amenity. Similarly there is potential for urban design place-making moves that both successfully negotiate the grade change between the St. Paul/ Downtown ‘plateau’ and the Lower Level, and act as civic landmarks – with an articulation that can further reinforce the distinct qualities and character of St. Catharines. These include building a formal vertical stair connection and establishing gateways that focus views into the Canal valley.

Gateway Opportunities

The confluence of many cultural and natural heritage features at the west end of the Downtown begin to reveal some of the historical narrative of St. Catharines:

- the intersection of St. Paul and Ontario Streets
- the “Rock Pile”
- the cenotaph
- the former home of Hon. William H. Merritt
- the Yates Heritage Conservation District
- the Historic Lower Bridge together with picturesque vistas looking south along the creek valley to Rodman Hall.



View of “Rockpile” from Ontario Street.



The Centotaph.



William H. Merritt Statue.



The Keg Brownfield/Historic Redevelopment, St. Catharines.



Canal Restoration in Huddersfield, England.



St. Catharines Old Welland Canal. (Source: Welland Canal Heritage)



St. Catharines 1875. (Source: Welland Canal Heritage)



Opportunities exist to enrich this experience for local residents and visitors in the form of improved public amenities, access, public art gestures, interpretation, and streetscape revitalization. These are primarily located at the city’s entrances:

- Fourth Ave/Welland
- Welland/Ontario
- St. Paul/Ontario
- Carlisle/Mcguire

Cycling Opportunities

The Niagara Region is regarded as having the best bike path system in Ontario. This system includes the Friendship Trail from Fort Erie to Port Colborne, the Welland Canals Trail from Port Colborne north to St. Catharines, and the Niagara Parkway recreational path to Niagara Falls, all woven through a dense fabric of natural and built cultural landscapes, heritage sites and cultural attractions. To reinforce this network, the Master Plan has the opportunity to provide better connections to the off-road Merritt and Club Trails running through the Twelve Mile Creek and Old Welland Canal Valley Corridors, located just below but surrounding the Downtown on three sides.

As mentioned earlier, group-based or self-guided touring can be seasonally adjusted to reflect a whole calendar of events and interests such as viticulture, gastronomy, live theatre, birding, cycling, kayaking, and hiking and specific regional festivals. A safe, complete and connected open space system would support the expectations and growing demand for life-smart, authentic, regionally-based cultural experiences.

By connecting commercial, institutional and cultural clusters/precincts, “green” pedestrian and cycling routes can provide safe, pleasurable alternative routes for non-motorized transportation and potentially reduce automobile use. These routes provide local and inter-community circles, with the added benefits of exercise, closer connection with natural surroundings and encourage practical conservation.



Examples of cycling trails in Southern Ontario

3.7 Transportation and Transit

3.7.1. Future Downtown Street Network

In 2005, the City of St. Catharines initiated the Downtown Street System Conversion Study Class Environmental Study. The primary goal of the study was to identify a preferred implementation strategy for the conversion of the Downtown Street system from a mixed one-way/two-way system to a strictly two-way system. The technically preferred option included the conversion of a significant portion of the Downtown street network to two-way traffic. In summary, the entire section of Ontario Street, King Street, St. Paul Street and Niagara Street will be converted to two-way traffic operations along with the majority of Queenston Street and Church Street. Streets remaining as one-way include William Street (St. Paul Street to King Street), Court Street (St. Paul Street to Geneva Street), Church Street (King Street to Court Street), and Queenston Street (Geneva Street to Riordon Street).

Specific details of the one-way to two-way conversion strategy include the following:

Ontario Street (St. Paul Street to King Street)

- converted to two-way operation
- two lanes operating in the southbound direction
- one lane operating in the northbound direction

St. Paul Street (Ontario Street to Geneva Street)

- converted to two-way operation

King Street (Ontario Street to Church Street)

- fully converted to two-way operation
- functions as a two-lane road
- left turn lanes at all major intersections

Church Street (Queenston Street to King Street)

- fully converted to two-way operation
- will function as a two-lane road



Fig 24: Recommended Downtown Street Conversion Plan (Source: City of St. Catharines Downtown Street, Dec 2005).

- left turn lanes at all major intersections
- the portion of Church Street between King Street and Court Street will remain as a one-way street.

Niagara Street (St. Paul Street to Church Street)

- fully converted to two-way operation
- function as a two-lane road
- auxiliary lanes at intersections where possible

Queenston Street (Geneva Street to Page Street)

- fully converted to two-way operation except for a small section between Geneva Street and Riordon Street
- will function as a two-lane road

At present, the one-way to two-way street conversion process is underway and the City expects the street conversions to be completed by 2009.

3.7.2 Benefits of the Two-Way Conversion**Roadway Network and Connectivity**

A two-way street system within the downtown will provide improved emergency response times, better way finding for travelers, and increase business exposure and accessibility. The two-way system will also provide better roadway network continuity with the continuous two-way roadway connections along the St. Paul Street-Niagara Street corridor and the Queenston-Church-King Street corridor.

Emergency vehicles may encounter difficulties with one-way circuitous street systems within the downtown, increasing emergency response times. A two-way street system will provide emergency service vehicles with improved opportunities to reduce emergency response times, while simultaneously allowing a greater number of alternative response routes to be selected. Circuitous one-way routes can also present a problem for drivers traveling within the downtown area which typically leads to an increase in the amount of vehicular traffic within the downtown.

Traffic way finding can be difficult with a one-way/two-way street system. The primary access routes into and out of the downtown from Highway 406 are via the Geneva Street/Westchester Avenue interchange and also via the Fourth Avenue interchange and Ontario Street. Both of these streets connect with the current one-way streets and may be confusing for travelers not familiar with the street layout. Connectivity from the QEW is provided mainly from the Lake Street interchange and from James Street, Queen Street, Ontario Street, or Niagara Street/Welland Avenue. Travelers are, again currently required to use one-way street connections to reach the majority of destinations within the downtown and may find it difficult finding their way.

A two-way street system will provide improved opportunities for way finding, particularly in the case of travelers seeking downtown destinations who may not be familiar with downtown area.

The arterial ring route that has been designated in the City's Secondary Plan for the downtown will encourage through traffic to by-pass the higher activity areas of the downtown. The increased use of the arterial ring route will help reduce through traffic within the downtown core areas and help improve the continuity of traffic flow along Ontario Street between St. Paul Street and King Street while maintaining reasonable traffic operations at the key intersections of Ontario Street/St. Paul Street, Geneva Street/St. Paul Street, and Geneva Street/Church Street. A reduction of downtown core traffic will also contribute to less congestion resulting in the provision of spare traffic capacity during critical peak hour conditions. Additional improvements to future traffic flow could also be realized through the encouragement of McGuire Street as a local by-pass route for through traffic wishing to avoid the downtown area.

The implementation of a two-way street system in the downtown will encourage traffic calming and support an improved business environment and better environment for both pedestrians and cyclists. Other opportunities with the implementation of a two-way street network include greater flexibility during the need for street closures as a result of special events, roadway or utility maintenance, or emergency service operations. Opportunities will also be created for enhanced tourism development, particularly in the case of better circulation within the downtown area, as new tourist destinations can now be drawn to the downtown such as the Wine Route or other features which rely on slower traffic conditions through the downtown to attract visitors.

The one-way/two-way street conversion of the downtown will result in the loss of approximately 60 parking spaces. The majority of spaces (23) will be lost on King Street between Ontario Street and Queen Street with the remaining being lost throughout the downtown area.



3.7.3 Service and Delivery Access

Service and delivery access on the north side St. Paul Street will be provided through rear-lane delivery access on Summer Street or May Alley under two-way traffic conditions. An additional loading zone will be created between William Street and Queen Street. However, some current delivery practices will be eliminated (i.e. “double parking” on St. Paul Street to make deliveries). The creation of a two-way street system throughout the majority of the Downtown will also provide greater access to local businesses.

With the reduction of traffic volumes on William Street between St. Paul Street and King Street due to the two-way conversion, this stretch of road will be promoted as a service corridor and additional commercial loading opportunities will be created.

3.7.4 Transit

Exploration of the positioning of a GO Transit terminus located in the current Transit hub at the Carlisle Street Terminal would greatly improve the regional linkage to the Downtown. Improvement of bus connections from the VIA Train Station to the Downtown may encourage train travel to St. Catharines as part of a Wine Route excursion.

The implementation of the two-way street network will provide improved opportunities for modifications to current transit routes. This additional flexibility may assist the Transit Commission in planning out more efficient routes and improved service within the downtown.



View of William Street which will be programmed as a primary service route



View of St. Catharines VIA Rail Station



MTO Building, view from St. Paul Street



Access to May Alley, which function as an east-west service alley parallel to St. Paul Street

3.8 Parking

Parking Implications for Future Redevelopment of the Downtown

Lack of parking has been cited as one of the key issues related to future investment and redevelopment of the Downtown. Despite the Downtown’s current lower office rental rates in comparison to outlying suburban areas, there is a trend for new businesses and tenants to locate outside of the Downtown in order to have convenient parking. Stakeholders have indicated that these potential Downtown businesses are, indeed, attracted to a Downtown environment – for its walking convenience to local amenities and visual and physical diversity. However, access to parking is a key amenity for employers and its apparent lack in this remains a deterrent.

The future redevelopment of the Downtown will “re-energize” the City’s downtown core and in turn, create “traffic generators” (e.g., office, commercial, and residential developments). These anticipated new developments could be designed with multi-modal transportation in mind in order to reduce travel and parking demands and encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation. However, there is a delicate balance between how much increased parking can be supplied by new development and attracting such development.

The encouragement of Travel Demand Management measures such as transit, pedestrian, and cycling will help to alleviate the pressure created by increased development. However, in the short term, the city may need to provide multiple parking solutions to attract new development. Reconstruction of the Carlisle Garage is one primary initiative which has already been recommended by the Downtown Parking Strategy. The City should consider construction or control of other smaller parking lots or spaces distributed across the Downtown, to provide a range of parking options that are within easy walking distance of St. Paul Street.



View of Lower Level Parking Lot



View of street parking along St. Paul Street



View of surface parking lot at 123 St. Paul Street

4.0 KEY COMPONENT ELEMENTS OF A REVITALIZED DOWNTOWN CREATIVE CLUSTER

Section 1.4 of this report presents the elements and supporting networks of the Creative Cluster Master Plan. Although many of these elements are in early stages of realization and are currently embarking on feasibility studies and business cases, their stakeholders have voiced commitments either to locating to the Downtown or reinforcing their existing Downtown presence. The following paragraphs discuss the elements and their implications on the Master Plan.



Canada Hair Cloth building Lower Level



St Paul Street



Carlisle Parking Garage, Carlisle Street



Niagara Regional Police Headquarters,
Academy Street

Brock University School of Fine and Performing Arts and Niagara Centre for the Arts

The president of Brock University, Dr. Jack Lightstone, advised Council in April, 2007 of the potential relocation of Brock University’s School of Fine and Performing Arts (SFPA) to the Downtown. The facility would encourage use of the Downtown both within and outside regular business hours and evening activity would be expanded considerably with the development of the Niagara Centre for the Arts (NCFA). The latter new operation is envisioned as a merging of Brock University’s existing Centre for the Arts with much needed arts facilities for the local arts sector. Together, the two new developments create a multi-use, multifunctional complex. Currently, a detailed space needs analysis, concept design and business plan study, *The Program, Site and Facility Management Feasibility Study for SFPA and NCFA*, will recommend a preferred location in the Downtown. The Study is to be completed in Fall 2008.

During the Master Plan process, stakeholders expressed strong opinion that the SFPA/NCFA would have a critical, symbiotic relationship, with the power to capture current and future synergies and capitalize on shared resources. Comments noted that the relationship needed to be a strong visible connection and adjacency. It was also noted that location within the same structure or creation of a “mega-project” may not be necessary, however, some degree of physical connection is required.

Other comments clearly supported the separation of the two primary arts uses to function as “anchors”, to draw the public along St. Paul Street, to enliven the Downtown before, during and after performances and events. The advantages of the separated “destination” sites were seen on a broader, city-wide scale, as opposed to the direct needs of the two uses.

Whether combined or separate, the stakeholders unanimously emphasized that the arts centres must have major visibility on St. Paul Street to best impact revitalization of the street as well as preservation of the Downtown’s heritage buildings. Clearly, creating new facilities with entrances and public rooms at street level will require redevelopment of building stock. Innovative and modern architecture can be achieved in combination with sensitive approaches to heritage structures and features.



Niagara Wine Route and Signature Destination Centre, Wine Embassy

The Wine Country Embassy, proposed for Downtown St. Catharines, is an element that crosses all interests – retail, business, cultural, tourism, recreational and transit. This facility, while designated for Downtown St. Catharines in the report, *Energizing Niagara’s Wine Country Communities* (prepared by Peter J. Smith & Company Inc, 2007), has yet, a broad and undefined function: “regional urban centre, office retail commercial character, mixed use, urban residential” (p. 24) In addition, St. Paul Street has not yet been approved by the Wine Council as part of the Wine Route. However, identifying the proposed route in the Master Plan is important to demonstrate the City’s commitment to the bringing Wine Route Downtown.

Various options for the evolution of the Wine Embassy were explored with the stakeholders. In the short term, it is envisioned as an enhanced LCBO and in the long term, as a VQA Centre and Wine Embassy, focusing on all the region’s VQA wines, with support by the Wine Council, Tourism, Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Association office locations. There are several options in the Master Plan for a phased Wine Embassy, which are described in Section 6.0 of this report.

Despite the broad options for the form and function of the Embassy itself, *Energizing Niagara’s Wine Country Communities* proposes a very important element of the Wine Route for the Downtown location, namely enhanced streetscaping and infrastructure improvements. Throughout all stakeholder consultations, safety and security for pedestrians were noted as major priorities to success for any St. Paul Street revitalization. Improved streetscaping, pedestrian crossings, consistent signage and pedestrian scaled lighting must accompany the first phases of the Wine Embassy. The report illustrates potential enhancements to create more comfortable, attractive sidewalks which offer greater street visibility and accessibility.

Niagara Interactive Media Cluster

On January 28, 2008, a press release announced the Provincial government’s funding contribution to nGen – the Niagara Interactive Media Generator – a collaboration of Brock University, Niagara College, Silicon Knights, the City of St. Catharines, Region of Niagara, Niagara Enterprise Agency and Interactive Ontario to “help promote the Niagara region as an industry leader in interactive new media development.”

Stakeholders stressed that, beyond the economic benefits of the infusion of new office space, the culture of youth that such development brings with it is a key component to Downtown revitalization. nGen and other new media businesses will attract a unique demographic of young, entrepreneurial professionals to live in the Downtown and will be a vehicle to retain Brock University and Niagara College graduates in St. Catharines. Providing a visible, accessible and unique location for the nGen use will send a clear message about the City’s commitment to retain and build a new Downtown generation.

Currently, the start-up location for nGen is at Silicon Knights’ location at 1 St. Paul Street. Several other potential opportunities for the expanded nGen are available throughout the Downtown through eventual mixed-use redevelopment along Ontario Street, St. Paul Crescent, the Carlisle Garage redevelopment and Lower Level Lot redevelopment. These locations are further described in Section 6.0.



One of the many scenic vineyards that line the Wine Route (Source: Energizing the Niagara’s Wine Country Communities.)



Garden City Arena Complex

The Garden City Arena Complex houses both Jack Gatecliff and Rex Stimers Arenas. The Jack Gatecliff Arena is home of the Niagara Ice Dogs and the St. Catharines Falcons Jr. “B” Hockey Clubs and has 2,900 spectator seats. The venue, although located on the eastern periphery of the Downtown provides an important public draw to the Downtown area and street life activity in the evening hours. The site is partially occupied by a one storey commercial plaza and surface parking. The City is currently considering expansion of this facility to a 5,000-plus seat venue which would occupy its current block and the adjacent block to the north, extending to Queenston Street.

Niagara Regional Police Headquarters

As the Region’s only Urban Growth Centre, retaining the Niagara Regional Police in St. Catharines is critical to managing the City’s growth and promoting its promise as a safe and attractive place to live, work and do business. Expansion and redevelopment of the Regional Police Headquarters’ existing site, at Church and Carlisle Streets, is the preferred location in the context of the Master Plan.

The Niagara Regional Police Services Board is currently in a Request for Proposal process to receive bids from the Niagara municipalities to house the expanded location. At the time of this report writing, St. Catharines is preparing its proposal. The future of keeping the Police in the Downtown is unclear, but it is seen as a key component to a variety of success factors for St. Catharines.

Carlisle Garage Redevelopment and Lower Level Parking Lot Mixed-Use Parking Redevelopment

As described in previous sections of this report, the Carlisle Garage is in poor condition and has the potential to be reconstructed and developed as a mixed-use site for commercial and/or residential uses with integrated structured parking for private and public use. Its central location, across from the bus terminal and MTO office building makes it an excellent high density, parking solution.

The Lower Level Parking Lot is one of the City’s major parking suppliers. However, as surface parking, it underutilizes the potential of the Lower Lot. In the past, development proposals for the Lower Lot have been unsuccessful because of environmental and geotechnical costs to build on the site which is situated on the former Welland Canal. A current Class A Environmental Risk Assessment is underway to determine the extent and nature of environmental and structural implications. It is anticipated that construction is possible, and the site presents an excellent opportunity to build structured parking in combination with residential and/or commercial uses above.

McMaster Family Medicine Clinical Teaching Site

A teaching unit for McMaster University residents of the Department of Family Medicine has been designated for the ground floor space at 22 Ontario Street, at the base of the Ontario Parking Garage structure. This site will be a first phase location, with the potential for it to expand to other office intensification areas or take up a St. Paul Street location with good street-related access for Downtown residents.



Residential Intensification and Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

St. Catharines has the potential to accommodate a range of residential, mixed-use locations. The intent of this intensification is to provide housing for all ages, in recognition that different generations can take advantage of walkable convenience to Downtown amenities. Stakeholders stressed that residential redevelopment and revitalization would open St. Catharines to a broader demographic: not only “creating a positive climate for retirees”, but to “create the right climate for the emerging knowledge-based economy to flourish in all its diversity: students, employees of new business and institutions and other creative industries coming to invest St. Catharines.”

In support of residential intensification, the Community Improvement Plan was adopted in 2006 resulting in City partnership with the private sector to stimulate residential development of the Downtown. Financial incentives approved in 2005 resulted in the creation of 652 new residential units in the Downtown and approximately 100 additional units were approved in 2006. Section 7.0 suggests modifications to the CIP that could make it even more effective to shape the Creative Cluster vision of the Downtown.

Hotel Development Potential

As a component to residential intensification, stakeholders commented that the Downtown would need a new hotel, both for the performance-attending public, but also, parents and guests of the SFPA and Niagara College students related to the interactive media cluster. The Leonard Hotel was seen as a redevelopment opportunity as a stand-alone boutique-style hotel, or incorporated into a comprehensive Carlisle Garage mixed-use development with new building frontage on St. Paul Street. Such a development may start as a mid-range hotel development and eventually upgrade to a specialty or boutique style, paralleling the development market and overall success of the Downtown’s future cultural offerings.

A National Heritage Corridor for the Old Welland Canals

The 1st and 2nd Welland Canals were filled in at the Lower Level. For the Master Plan, finding ways to re-trace the closed up 1st and 2nd canals and their associated features presents a unique direction to celebrate St. Catharines’ cultural heritage. Uncovering a portion of them or “re-watering” them would reinforce development of the Canada Hair Cloth building and provide a captivating “start” to rediscovering this unique cultural heritage resource.

As mentioned in Section 3.6.2. the Niagara Region Planning Department is preparing a proposal to Parks Canada to designate the Welland Canal system as a national Heritage Corridor.

5.0 MASTER PLAN FRAMEWORK OPTIONS

Mid-way through the Master Plan study process, a series of planning “frameworks” were developed to explore different distributions of the Creative Cluster elements and to “test” their impact and relationships within the Downtown precincts. The program, size and location of most of the elements are in the process of being determined by the afore-mentioned concurrent and ongoing detailed studies and feasibility analyses. Therefore, the consultants and stakeholders determined that the Master Plan needed to have a built-in flexibility to respond to the eventuality of critical decisions about any one of these key elements in the very near future and over the next few years. For example, in the event that particular elements may not evolve as currently anticipated, the Master Plan should provide a range of options as to where these elements could be located.

5.1 Common Cluster Elements

The outcome of the “framework” exercise was a clearly defined group of redevelopment and intensification opportunities and elements for Downtown revitalization over the short and long term. As the framework options were developed, it became apparent that the locations and areas of these elements did not change from option to option, establishing a basic set of “Common Cluster Elements”. These include:

- Boutique Retail – extends between Ontario and Carlisle Streets;
- Hotel Redevelopment of Leonard Hotel as higher end hotel;
- Niagara Regional Police Headquarters expansion – preferred on current site;
- McMaster University Family Medicine Clinical Teaching Site at ground floor of Ontario/William St. parking garage;
- Sports Arena Redevelopment – expands to north block to accommodate new larger arena, possible 5,000-plus seat complex;
- Mixed Use Parking Redevelopment at current Carlisle Garage Site;
- Lower Level Lot development of a mixed-use, integrated parking structure with east-west pedestrian access along the roof of the parking structure;

- Vertical Access to Lower Level – redevelopment of the city-owned properties at 136 St. Paul Street into a glazed, 24 hour stair and elevator access between St. Paul Street and Canada Hair Cloth building redevelopment;
- Open space / linear park behind St. Paul Street along old ‘Raceway’, connecting new mixed use development and Canada Hair Cloth building;
- Proposed Wine Route – re-orientation along St. Paul and Niagara Streets;
- Enhanced Pedestrian Areas at key intersections along James and St. Paul Streets;
- New Gateway at Carlisle/Race Streets – to announce new entry to eastern section of St. Paul Street;
- Heritage Character Areas – low density residential areas around Montebello Park, Yates Street and James Street that could further be protected to preserve St. Catharines’ traditional urban neighbourhood character;
- Mixed Use Residential/Commercial Redevelopment – ground floor retail and upper story commercial/residential redevelopment of the eastern section of St. Paul Street and along Geneva Street;
- Convenience Commercial Redevelopment – improved local amenities for surrounding Downtown residents at the Midtown Plaza site with street related development with parking located internally; and,
- Commercial/Office Intensification Area – short term redevelopment of vacant/underutilized lots and long term commercial intensification of surrounding areas in the Church and Ontario Street vicinities.

The diagram on the following page illustrates the established locations for these elements and areas.

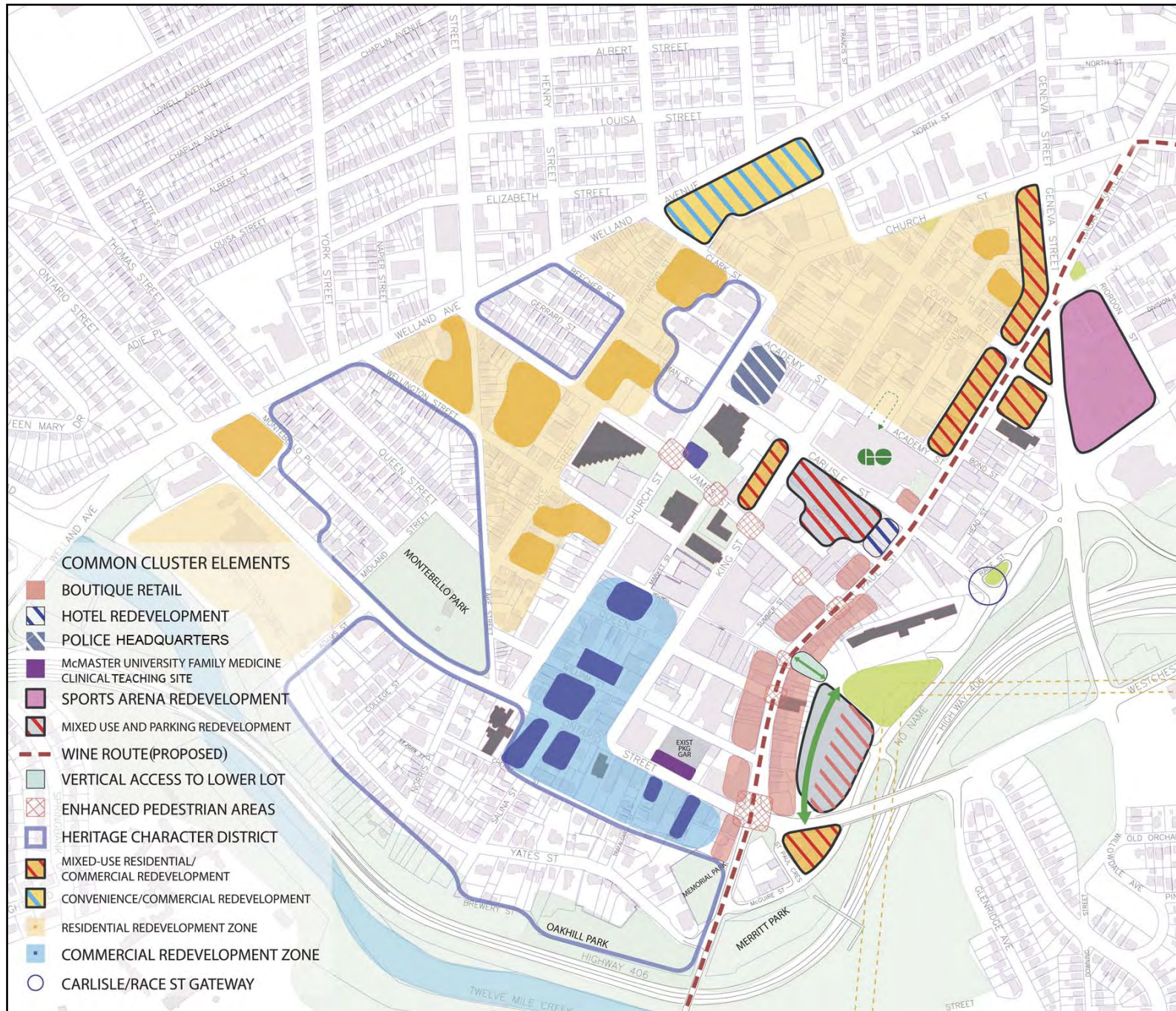


Fig 25: Common Cluster Elements



5.2 Dynamic Cluster Elements

The second group of key Creative Cluster elements explored in the framework exercise revealed elements that had the potential for multiple locations without compromising the overall structure of the Common Elements or their own potential success and impact on the Downtown. These were termed “Dynamic Cluster Elements” and include:

- Brock University SFPA
- Niagara Centre for the Arts (NCFA) (in association with the Brock University SFPA location)
- Individual Community Cultural Facilities
- The Interactive Media Generator
- The Wine Embassy
- The Civic Square

Three basic frameworks were developed arising from a workshop with the Downtown Revitalization Task Force Committee and further refinement with the Master Plan Steering Committee. These frameworks are presented on the following pages.

The primary differences between the three options are that Options A and B illustrate the Brock University SFPA and NCFA as a joint redevelopment of the Canada Hair Cloth building with additional area to either the east or west of the Canada Hair Cloth site. Alternate locations for the Wine Embassy, Civic Square and Interactive Media Generator locations are also shown.

Option C shows the SFPA/NCFA on blocks to the east of Carlisle Street, with frontage along St. Paul Street. The Canada Hair Cloth site would be available for another development, such as the Interactive Media Generator or office redevelopment.

The Civic Square is shown in two different locations; one, as a redevelopment of the parking lot across from 136 St. Paul Street, and the second, as an enhanced streetscape zone at the intersection of Church and James Street. For purposes of revitalization of St. Paul Street, the former location was pursued as the preferred location in the development of the Master Plan.

After further analysis of the merits of each option, the Master Plan was developed, using the preferred locations and relationships explored in the frameworks. The Master Plan translates these elements and zones into building mass with a proposed streetscape and open space improvement concept. The Master Plan is discovered in detail in Section 6.0.

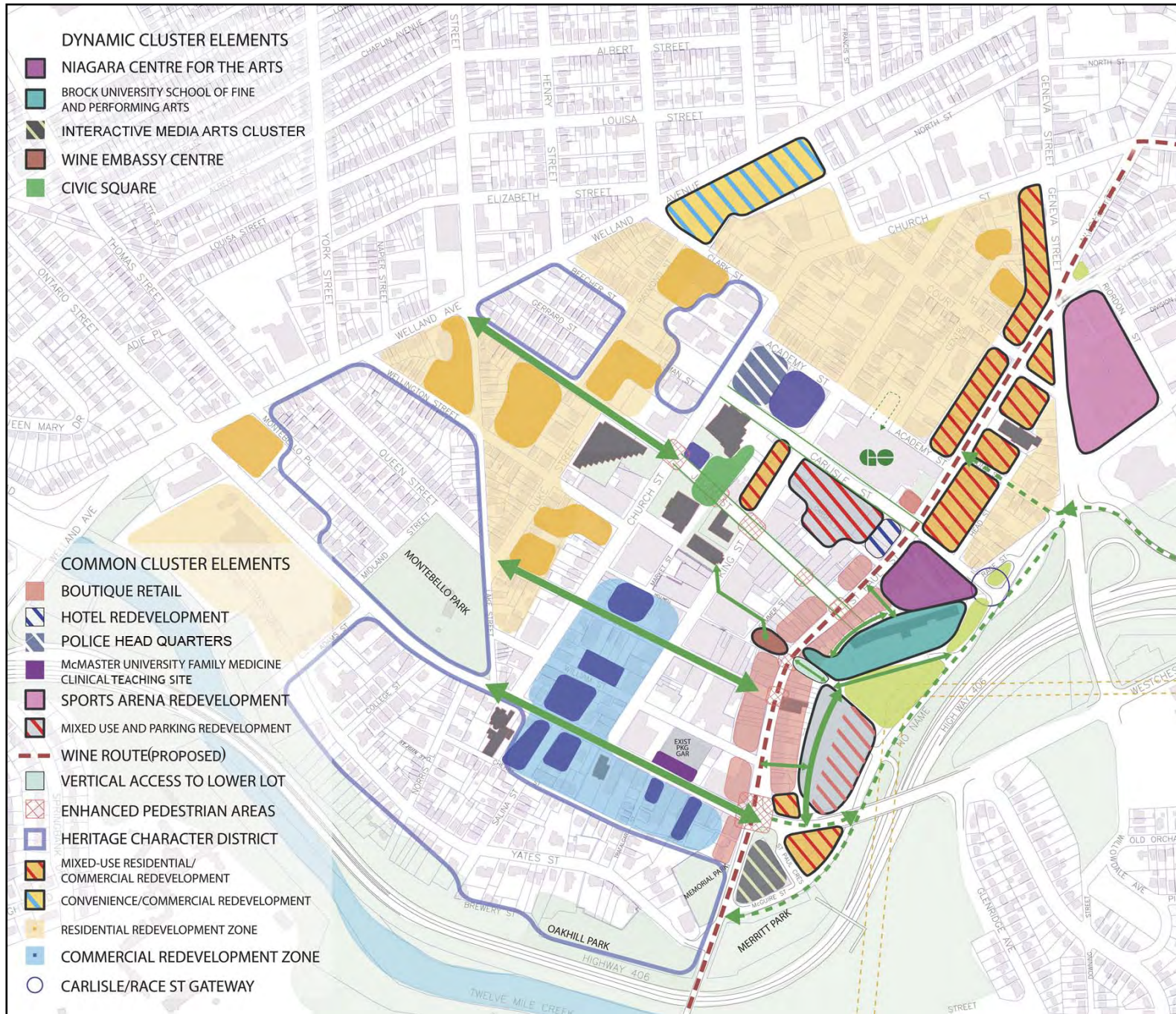


Fig 26: Framework Option A

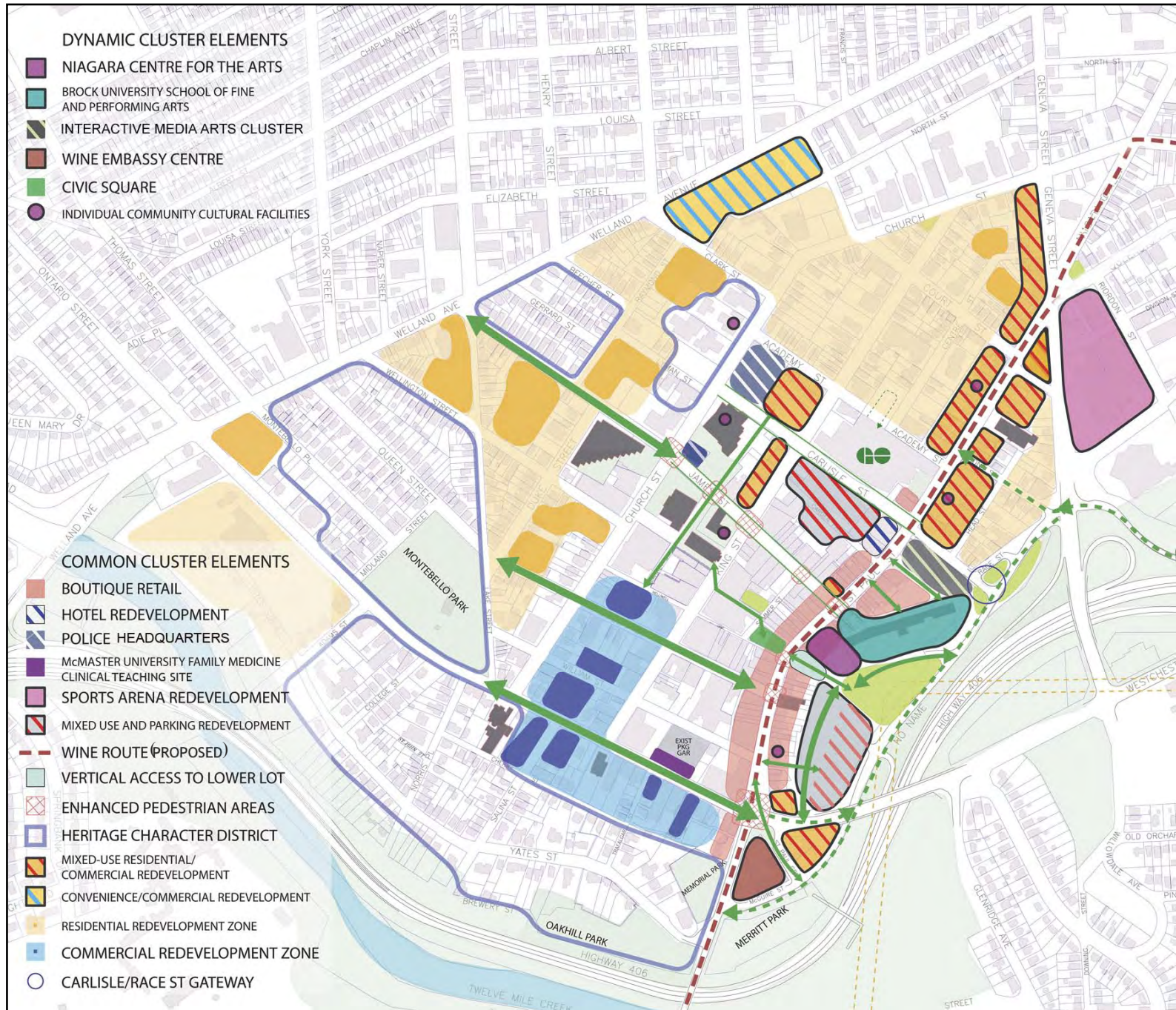


Fig 27: Framework Option B

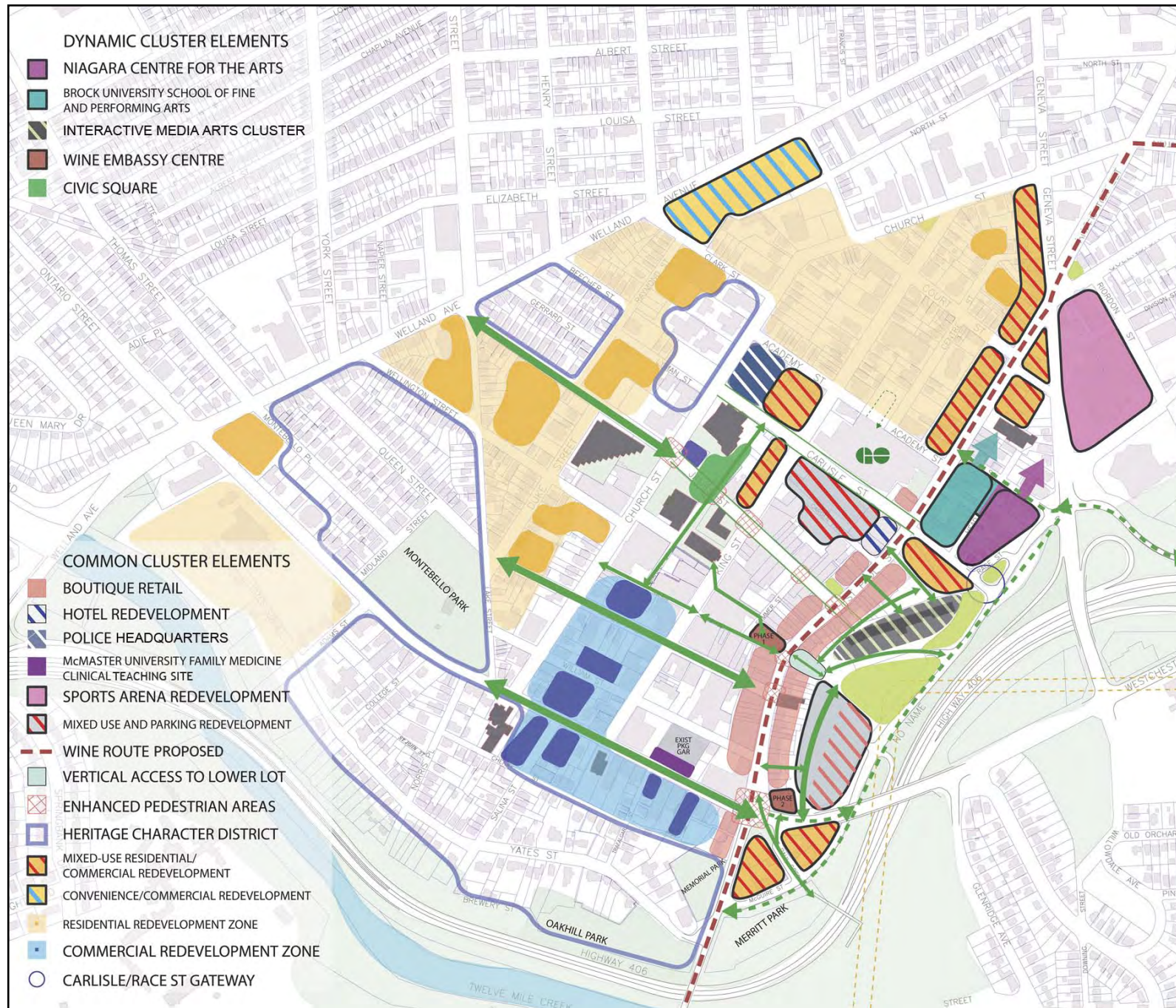


Fig 28: Framework Option C



6.0 THE MASTER PLAN CONCEPT AND ITS SUPPORTING NETWORKS

6.1 Conceptual Structure

The Master Plan Concept presents:

- A broad scenario for redevelopment across the Downtown;
- Opportunity locations for the key elements of the Creative Cluster;
- Focused development along and near St. Paul Street;
- An overall flexible fabric for growth in the Downtown;
- Formalization, reinforcement and interconnection of the Downtown’s strength of existing patterns of distinct precincts and unique built and natural elements;
- An interconnected network of streetscapes, open spaces and natural features; and,
- Major and minor vertical links between St. Paul Street and the Lower Level.



Fig 29: Downtown St. Catharines Creative Cluster Master Plan

6.1.1 The Creative Cluster Elements

As described in Section 4.0, the single-use elements that are projected to come to the Downtown will act as catalysts for new development. The Master Plan identifies general locations, with the intent that infill and redevelopment of neighbouring properties will grow outwards from these sites along St. Paul Street.

The key factors of these identified locations are:

- They are located at or near St. Paul Street with direct street exposure and frontage;
- They have strong adjacent pedestrian connections and attractive streetscapes; and,
- They are in convenient walking proximity to parking.

The **SFPA/NCFA development** as envisioned would occur on one of two major areas:

Sites A+B

- St. Paul Street, west of Carlisle and incorporating re-use of the Canada Hair Cloth building – Sites A and B
 - Brock University has the capacity to successfully rehabilitate the Canada Hair Cloth building;
 - Excellent pedestrian destination from St. Paul Street and Twelve Mile Creek and Welland Canal Valley;
 - Prime redevelopment opportunity of Knights' Inn Motel and adjacent site to the south; and,
 - Opportunity to introduce ground floor gallery, performing arts and public entrances within existing buildings along St. Paul Street.



Fig 30: Potential SFPA and NCFA development sites west of Carlisle Street.



Views of and around the Canada Hair Cloth building.

Site C

- St. Paul Street, east of Carlisle, including the entire block extending to Bond Street down to Race Street.
 - Potential for consolidated property ownership, facilitating a comprehensive development;
 - Excellent new frontage along St. Paul Street;
 - Excellent visibility and access from Geneva Street and Hwy 406;
 - Potential to initiate revitalization of the eastern section of St. Paul Street, which has more redevelopment challenges than the western section of St. Paul Street; and,
 - Close proximity to the Carlisle Garage and St. Paul street parking.

However, another site could be recommended by the *Program, Site, Facility Management Feasibility Study for SFPA and NCF*A which is concurrent with this Master Plan. In this case, the Master Plan can accommodate longer term redevelopment options for the Canada Hair Cloth building, such as office or hotel/residential development. These developments, however, are dependent on the private sector and market. The City would lose the opportunity to capture the potential of an institutional and public use for the Canada Hair Cloth building and site.

The Master Plan purposely shows both these general areas as preferred broad redevelopment opportunities. However, from an overall planning and economic development potential redevelopment, the redevelopment of the Canada Hair Cloth building for the SFPA offers the best short term opportunity to transform the building into an asset for both the University and the City's image.



Fig 31: Potential SFPA and NCF A development sites east of Carlisle Street



View of Head Street, towards St. Paul Street



View of Bond Street towards St. Paul Street



The **Interactive Arts Cluster Development** could develop in several locations:

- St. Paul Crescent redevelopment sites;
- Office Precinct redevelopment sites;
- Prime tenant for Carlisle Garage mixed-use redevelopment; or,
- St. Paul Street or Canada Hair Cloth building – pending location of the SFPA/NCFA development.

The **Wine Country Embassy** could be developed in several locations:

- The redevelopment sites on St. Paul Crescent at Ontario Street;
- Redevelopment of the parking lot on the western end of St. Paul Street on the south side, a highly visible location with strong street and open space connections;
- As part of a mixed-use redevelopment with a ground floor retail / visitors' location along the eastern section of St. Paul Street; or,
- A two-phased development, with a St. Paul Street LCBO/VQA location and a second, larger development in one of the locations noted above.



- Interactive Arts Cluster Potential Locations
- Wine Embassy Potential Locations
- Existing and Potential Community Cultural Locations



6.2 Evolving Land Use – Redevelopment and Intensification

Mixed use development is the fundamental principle of the Master Plan Concept and is the key factor in creating vibrant streetscapes that are active day and night. It is the underlying principle of establishing redevelopment in each of the precincts of the Master Plan.

By providing commercial and retail uses at the ground floor, convenient amenities are provided to both building users and surrounding areas. The Master Plan builds on the existing character of each precinct to establish the foundation for the type and focus of envisioned mixed use development. Current vacancies or tenant mixes that do not appear to support a vibrant street life signal these places where redevelopment could occur.

6.2.1 Main Street Retail Mixed-Use Revitalization and the Impact of Cultural/Commercial Development

The two primary areas of ground floor mixed use intensification and revitalization are the western and eastern sections of St. Paul Street. Their revitalization is strongly linked to the effect of the SFPA/NCFA potential location along or near St. Paul Street. This cultural/arts development has the potential to attract shops, restaurants, cafes and other amenities along St. Paul Street. There are already a few art galleries and a large furniture store along St. Paul Street, east of Academy Street, and just a few blocks east is St. Paul Street United Church. These uses contribute to the basis for a cultural/arts/commercial main street and are located in close proximity to the bus transit terminal. The concentration of the Farmers’ Market and Old Courthouse Theatre are located only one block away from St. Paul Street and form another distinct cluster of cultural and civic uses. These locations, highly accessible for pedestrians from St. Paul Street and public transit riders, present excellent opportunity for growth and diversity.



Attractive “main street” commercial use with active upper level uses at the western section of St. Paul Street



View along St. Paul Street’s eastern section



St. Paul Street, Western Section – Ontario Street – “The Curve”

As described in Section 2.3, the western section of St. Paul Street has a more vibrant street life, several notable buildings with heritage-character facades; and, a higher concentration of shops and restaurants than the eastern half of St. Paul Street. This vibrancy is enhanced by the perception of a shorter street resulting from the street’s crescent shape. The type of intensification and redevelopment that would be encouraged would:

- Preserve or support the character of heritage facades and the scale and rhythm of traditional, narrower storefronts;
- Maintain consistent “0-lot line” setback, which creates the effect of an enclosing “street wall”;
- Encourage redevelopment and intensification to create higher quality yet affordable livable units on upper floors;
- Maintain ground floor uses for retail only. In the short term, other commercial uses could be permitted with the view that, after a limited time, they will eventually transfer to retail, restaurants, galleries etc;
- Preserve the street’s heritage scale by setting a maximum building height to match the highest existing building;
- Support contemporary renovation and infill developments that reflect the scale and major patterns of the facades. Avoid prescribing that all new development must be historicized in order to be compatible with the heritage streetscape;
- Preserve views to the Lower Level; and,
- Continue improvement of streetscaping.



Fig 32: St. Paul Street, western section.



St. Paul Street, western section.



Example of contemporary infill that fits with adjacent traditional main street facades (USA).



New theatre lobby as infill along a main street (USA).



St. Paul Street, Eastern Section – Carlisle Street to Geneva Street

East of Carlisle Street, the stronger heritage character, more intimate streetscape and overall vibrancy of the western section of the St. Paul Street fades as the street widens, and the consistency of higher quality heritage building stock diminishes. Redevelopment along the eastern half of St. Paul Street is envisioned as:

- Increased building heights of 6 to 8 storeys, with street related retail, office and/or residential on upper floors; higher buildings may be considered on a case-by-case basis;
- A broader range of mixed use retail, commercial and residential development, to expand the range of redevelopment potential;
- A Downtown location for larger retail tenants;
- New development with integrated structured parking or combined rear surface parking with underground parking;
- Continued streetscape improvements that integrate the planting, lighting and pavement treatments of the western section of St. Paul Street; and,
- A more pedestrian-friendly streetscape with frequent crosswalks; possible “sidewalk bump-outs”.

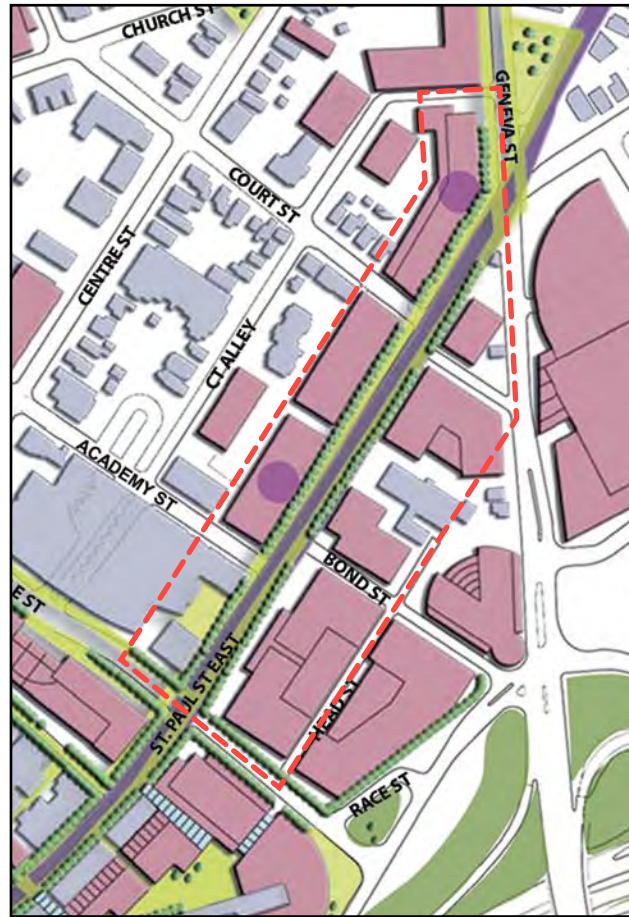


Fig 33: St. Paul Street, eastern section



Some buildings along St. Paul Street, east of Academy Street have interesting historic facades, but the street-related retail could be improved and better integrated with upper level facades



Example of new mixed-use, main street development that is contemporary yet reflects a traditional character and scale (USA)



6.2.2 Proposed Mixed-Use, Residential and Commercial Intensification Areas

Based on the existing land use pattern, general areas for mixed-use and residential intensification opportunity exist:

The Midtown Plaza – 104 Welland Avenue

The existing retail plaza on Welland Avenue, between Clark and Court Streets serves the daily and weekly convenience needs for local residents. The site is located on an arterial road and has three high density residential apartments nearby. The existing building is one-storey and surrounded by parking. The property presents a good opportunity for redevelopment without causing negative impacts on its surrounding environment. Development form is envisioned as:

- Mixed use development of ground floor convenience / food store retail, personal and business service uses on the second floor and residential above; with,
- Parking accommodated at the rear of the site, as a mix of surface and structured parking, to serve occupants and shoppers.

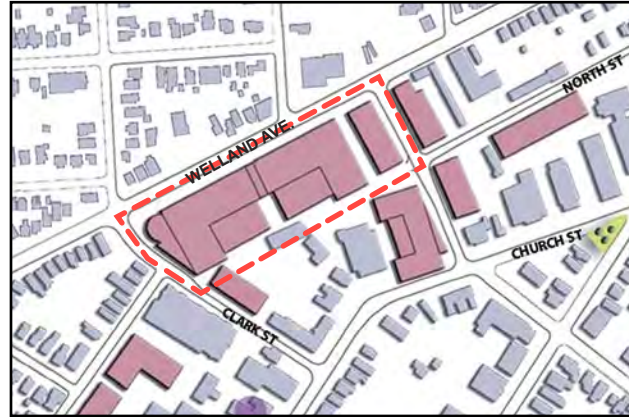


Fig 34: Potential redevelopment of the Plaza site



View of the existing plaza looking north east



Aerial view of the Plaza site



Example of a strip mall before and after its hypothetical transformation as an illustration of intensification opportunity for existing and new developments in major urban areas.
(Source: "A Place to Grow", Canadian Architect, April 2007, text by John van Nostrand; Images by Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal)



Interior blocks bound by Welland Avenue, Geneva Street, Bond Street, Academy and Clark Streets

This large area consists of apartment buildings adjacent to converted single-detached residential buildings, and single-storey commercial buildings. Generally, the building stock of this area does not hold any cultural heritage character, and the type of tenants are disparate. These blocks present good opportunity for high density residential intensification based on the following factors:

- Arterial roads separate the area from more stable residential areas to the north and to the east;
- Proximity to the bus terminal;
- Nearby office buildings such as the MTO building and office/businesses along King Street;
- The majority of the properties have small building footprints with the remainder of the site used for surface parking; and,
- Many low density residential buildings have already been converted and are used for other non-residential purposes; Some lots are used as private parking lots.

The type of intensification envisioned is:

- Solely residential buildings up to 10 to 12 storeys, and high density residential buildings with either retail/commercial and professional services on the lower levels;
- High quality local-serving institutional uses such as day-cares, community centres, personal services, small scale grocers; and,
- Public gathering places such as coffee shops and parkettes; Parkettes may be part of a residential redevelopment site, or conversion one of the many surface parking areas.



Fig 35: Potential area for mixed-use redevelopment



View of apartment building and school property, between North and Church Streets



Aerial view of area



Mixed-use opportunity along south side of St. Paul Street



Example of medium rise, high density residential building with pedestrian open space



St. Paul Crescent and McGuire Street Block

The area bound by St. Paul Street, Westchester Avenue and McGuire Street is a small, isolated pocket in the Downtown consisting of a one-storey office building; a partially vacant retail space; an auto-repair shop with a large car-storage/ parking area on St. Paul Street; the “Rock Pile”; and the statue of William Merrit (1929). It is set in a primary gateway location, being adjacent to the Twelve Mile Creek ravine to the south, Westchester Avenue to the south-east, which funnels traffic into Downtown from Highway 406, and St. Paul Street West, the primary road leading into the Downtown’s boutique retail area. This site is envisioned for:

- Small footprint, taller mixed use or residential towers with non-residential uses on the lower levels, but not necessarily restricted to only the ground level;
- High quality architectural design to reflect its prominent location;
- Taller narrower towers to preserve sightline views down into the Twelve Mile Creek ravine, as opposed to lower, wider buildings that could potentially create a wall, and cut off view corridors;
- Possible site for the expansion of Interactive Media Cluster Development; or,
- Possible site for the Wine Country Embassy / tourist hub.

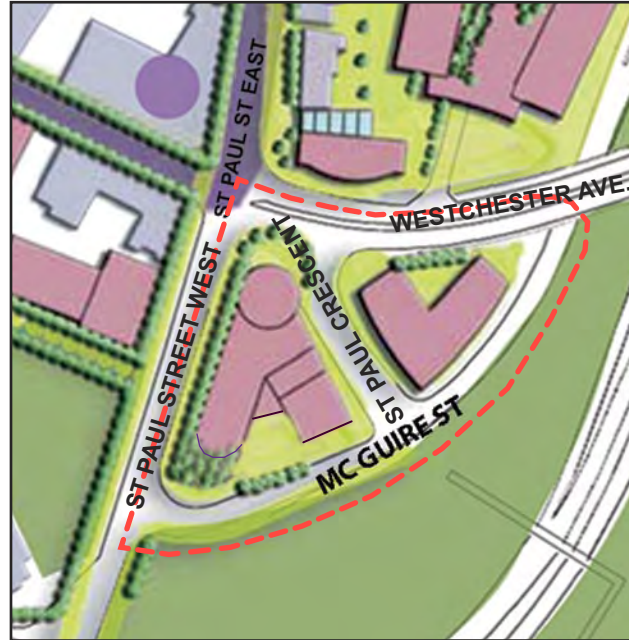


Fig 36: Intensification opportunity at St. Paul Crescent and McGuire Street



View of parking lots along St. Paul Street



Aerial view of site



View of retail along St. Paul Crescent

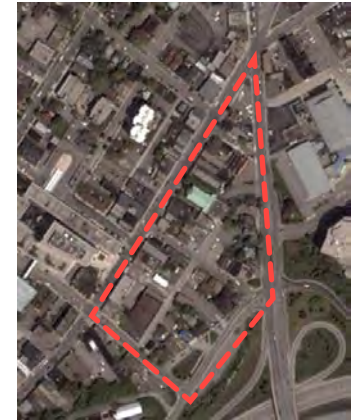


St. Paul Street to Head & Race Streets – between Carlisle and Geneva Streets

The intensification area South of St. Paul Street, bound by St. Paul Street, Geneva, and Carlisle Street is envisioned to contain overall less residential land use, and few solely residential buildings. Residential intensification would occur in the form of mixed-use high density buildings or live-work buildings in conjunction with the potential for an arts/culture/commercial mixed use precinct adjacent to the west.



Fig 37: Intensification opportunity between St. Paul Street and Race Street



Aerial view of area



View of residential buildings, Bond Street



6.2.3 Residential Intensification

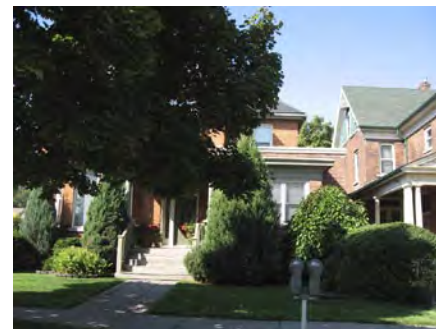
The areas identified in the previous section are the most appropriate places for high density residential intensification. Low density single family homes are not proposed as part of the residential intensification plan of the Master Plan. However, renovations and minor additions will likely occur in the established low density, heritage residential areas. Heritage Design Guidelines should be prepared to provide guidance on the extent and desired appearance of new construction within these districts. At areas adjacent to these neighbourhoods, natural infilling that is compatible with the character of the stable residential areas south of Ontario Street and the area between Montebello Park, Duke and Raymond Streets and Welland Avenue would be supported. Higher density residential intensification should not occur in these general areas.



Example of residential intensification that could act as a transition to low density and heritage residential areas



View of existing building along St. Paul Street between Carlisle and Bond Streets



View of traditional single family homes in the vicinity of Montebello Park



6.2.4 Parking Lots

A number of underutilized private and publicly owned parking lots exist throughout the Downtown that present opportunity for redevelopment. Existing City-owned surface parking lots are most suitable for short term intensification developments that would be office or residential-focused, depending on their location.

The two largest city-owned parking lots - the Carlisle Street Garage and the Lower Level Parking Lot also present excellent mixed use/parking development potential. Both parking lots are on large lots and are in highly visible and central locations. As recommended by the Downtown Parking Strategy, any redevelopment of structured or surface parking should ensure that, at a minimum, the existing amount of parking is retained.

The Carlisle Street Garage

The Carlisle Street Garage redevelopment is envisioned as:

- High density residential or combined commercial / office development;
- Structured parking with ground floor retail uses to serve the high pedestrian traffic from the bus terminal, the MTO office tower and nearby St. Paul Street and Civic Precinct; and,
- Potentially incorporating or replacing the Leonard Hotel for a new hotel use.

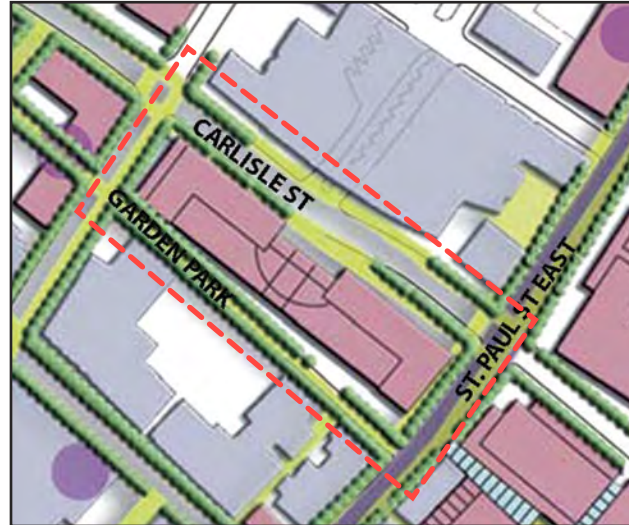


Fig 38: The Carlisle Street Garage and Leonard Hotel redeveloped as a comprehensive mixed-use/structured parking complex



View of the existing Carlisle Street Garage



Example of a new mixed-use development, Santa Monica Civic Centre Parking Garage Complex



Lower Level Parking Lot

The Lower Level Parking Lot currently offers much needed parking space, but is not easily accessible as patrons must climb the steps underneath the buildings along St. Paul Street to reach their destination. It is also a highly visible spot for traffic along Westchester Avenue and Hwy 406. Because this location is at the edge of the Downtown, abuts a major arterial road and the highway, is located at the rear of commercial buildings, and occurs at a lower elevation, this property can afford to be redeveloped into high density mixed-use with less concern for adjacency and compatibility impacts to surrounding builtform.

There is a current Site Specific Risk Assessment Study underway to determine the nature and extent of environmental and geotechnical constraints. Depending on the outcome of this assessment, redevelopment of the Lower Level Parking Lot site is envisioned as:

- Combined underground and above-ground structured parking at the lower elevation along McGuire Street;
- Mixed use office / commercial or residential development with Westchester Avenue and Hwy. 406 exposure;
- 2-3 storey residential development, possibly student residences, at the upper elevation, backing onto the rear facades of St. Paul Street;
- A planted, green parking deck, as outdoor amenity space for the residences;
- A tree-lined, public walkway between the residences and the St. Paul Street rear facades; and,
- High quality architectural design, representative of its highly visible and public location.



Fig 39: Potential residential/commercial mixed-use/parking development



Existing stair access up to St. Paul Street



Existing stair connecting St. Paul Street and Lower Level Parking Lot



View of Lower Level Parking Lot from Westchester Avenue



6.2.5 Proposed Employment Intensification

Currently a concentration of office and professional service buildings exists along Ontario Street, Church, Queen, and King Streets. However, many of the office buildings are single-storey buildings, with lands used for surface parking. The single storey buildings, surface parking, and the area's location along St. Catharines' major entry corridor to the Downtown with relatively good access to Highway 406, present excellent opportunities for office intensification. Office uses are envisioned as:

- Buildings of 10 – 15 storeys, with entrances and commercial uses at grade to face the street;
- Facades and main entrances that address the street, with commercial uses at grade and office uses on upper floors, to create a dense, visually interesting street frontage;
- New development on properties adjacent to the Yates Street Heritage District should incorporate massing or other design details to recognize the site orientation and architectural significance of the heritage district; and,
- Parking to be provided by structured or combined surface/structured; if development occurs on an existing parking lot, those public spaces should be replaced in any new parking solution.



Fig 40: Office-focused intensification area



View of Ontario Street looking north-west



View of Ontario Street, looking south towards St. Paul Street



Surface parking lots along William Street



Example of a redeveloped main street of mixed-use office/commercial in Waterloo, Ontario



6.2.6 Recreational / Community Facilities Development

The Garden City Arena Complex

The Garden City Arena Complex houses both Jack Gatecliff and Rex Stimers Arenas and is under consideration by the City for expansion to a 5,000-plus seat venue. The site would expand to include the adjacent block between Division and Queenston Streets which currently has a two storey office building and a three storey residential building with surface parking. The site is also flanked by a large apartment complex to the south, with large setbacks from the street. The site has a direct access to Highway 406 and good visibility.

The Master Plan supports the potential expansion and envisions:

- A new parkette / open space at the intersection of Geneva/ Niagara / Queenston and St. Paul Streets as an eastern gateway to the Downtown;
- Improved pedestrian crossing to St. Paul Street;
- Positive impact on the revitalization of Geneva and St. Paul Streets; and,
- Parking for the venue to be located in a centralized Downtown location, such as the re-construction of the Carlisle Garage.



Fig 41: Potential expansion of existing arena to include adjacent block northwards to Queenston Street



View of the Garden City Arena from St. Paul Street



Recently completed General Motors Centre, Oshawa



Existing Garden City Arena entrance



The Wine Route

As discussed earlier, the Wine Route is proposed to be re-directed along Ontario Street, eastward along the length of St. Paul Street, crossing Geneva Street, and then routed along Niagara Street, toward Niagara-on-the-Lake. The increased vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic along St. Paul Street presents clear potential for new wine-related retail and commercial development. The Master Plan proposes:

- Identifying St. Paul Street as the new Wine Route for St. Catharines;
- The potential for an LCBO/VQA store along St. Paul Street as the first phase of the Wine Embassy;
- Improved streetscaping with improved connections to the surrounding trail system;
- A possible second phase of the Wine Embassy at other St. Paul Street mixed-use redevelopment sites (refer to Section 6.1.1); and,
- A parkette at the Geneva / Niagara / Queenston and St. Paul Streets intersection / gateway to integrate wine-related events and themes at this terminus of St. Paul Street and function as a gateway of the Wine Route.



Fig 42: Proposed Wine Route reorientation along St. Paul Street

6.3 The Pedestrian Network and Open Space System

The St. Catharines Official Plan, the Provincial Greenbelt Plan and Provincial Policy Statements support the protection and preservation of natural heritage systems such as Twelve Mile Creek. The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, in its 2000 Twelve Mile Creek Watershed Strategy also calls for the protection and management of natural heritage areas. These natural features and corridors are important to the environmental sustainability of St. Catharines.

Natural and Cultural Heritage

Natural areas help create and preserve balance in the urban system - as growth intensifies, these green spaces will become essential to the ecosystem. While the Official Plan, Schedule F, identifies major City natural environmental features, there are limited policies related to these features to ensure these are protected and enhanced. Although the City's current policies do include some provision for acquisition of natural areas (during the development process) to ensure protection and public access, a more comprehensive open space and natural resource policy would be beneficial.

There is also a wealth of cultural heritage sites within the Twelve Mile Creek valley lands requiring protection. The watershed is rich with sites dealing with 18th and 19th Century water-based commerce and industrialization. The 1st and 2nd Welland Canal pathways, their associated locks and piers, all travel along the edge of St. Catharines' Downtown. Despite this diversity of cultural resources, the ties to the landscape may be threatened with new development and the costs of their restoration unknown or deemed too high.

Consequently, while the area provides a vast educational resource of settlement history, economic development and land formation, this resource is either underappreciated or underutilized. If maintained and protected, it can provide a sustainable signature landscape and a significant link to the past. As mentioned throughout this report, Niagara Region's proposal for Parks Canada to designate the old canals as a National Heritage Corridor fully supports Provincial and Regional cultural heritage, environmental and open space policy and it becomes an integral part of St. Catharines' Open Space Concept.

6.3.1 Highlights of the Open Space System

Linking Significant Features

Significant landmarks and built heritage features such as Rodman Hall, the Walker Botanical Garden, the Canada Hair Cloth building, and old sections of the Second Welland Canal and spillway are also contained in the Twelve Mile Creek Valley zone. Scenic vistas open up across the valley south and east of St. Paul Street at Ontario Street at its west end and at its east end at Carlisle and McGuire Streets, reinforcing the sense of gateway and arrival at these locations. To underscore these arrival sequences, the Master Plan proposes:

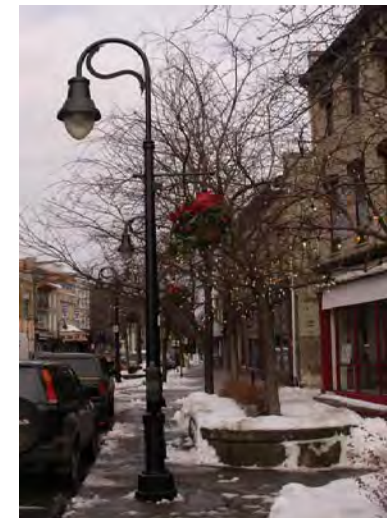
- An eastern Downtown gateway opportunity is proposed within the vicinity of the Garden City Arena, Geneva Street and the Creek Valley;
- An on-street cycling route that links the Lake Ontario shoreline, Port Dalhousie and the Waterfront Trail as a city wide looped trail configuration; and,
- Enhanced streetscapes that connect St. Paul Street through the Downtown to Montebello Park.



View of the Raceway



Oakhill and Memorial Parks



St. Paul Street light standard

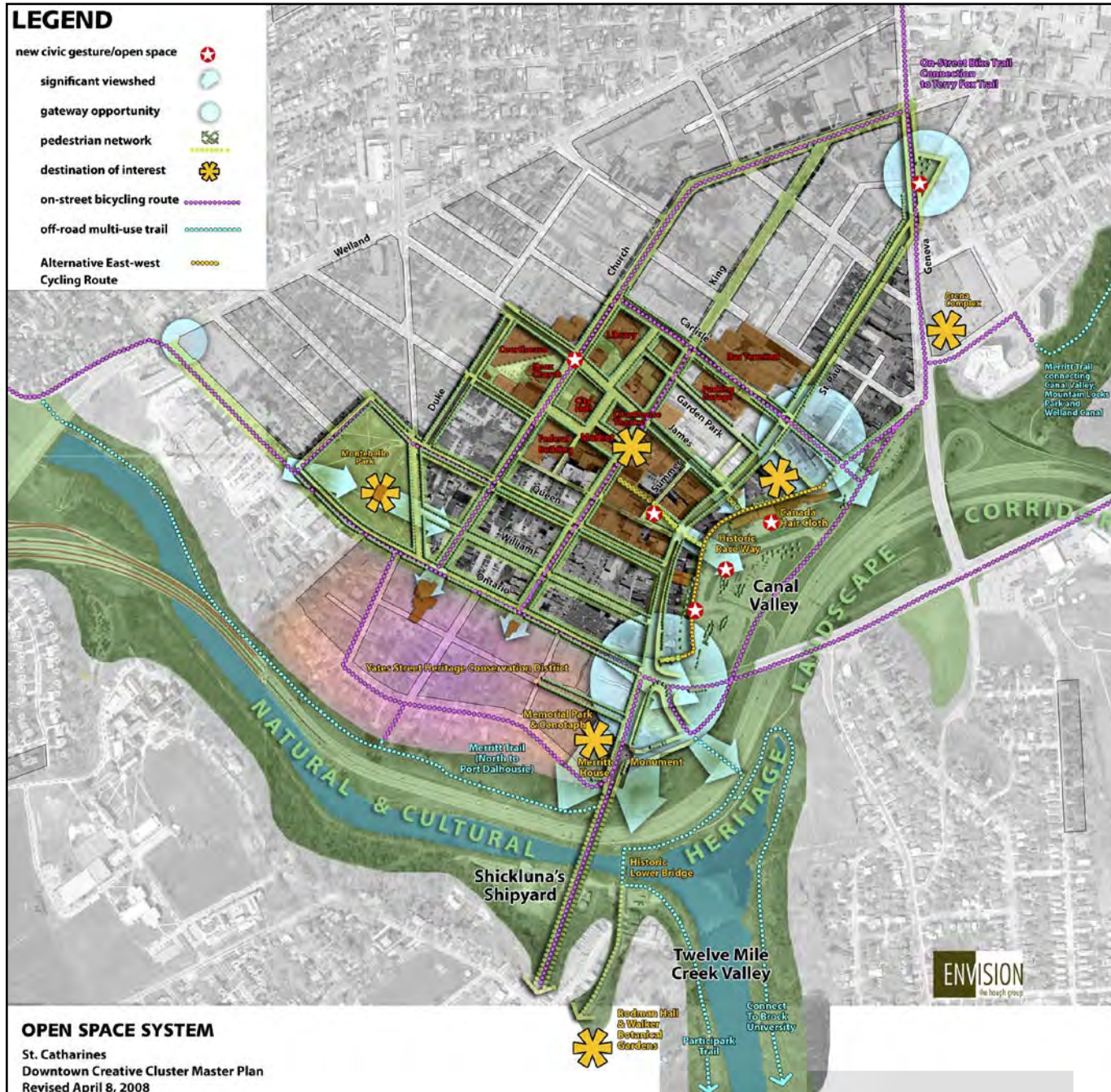


Fig 43: Proposed open space system

Pedestrian Network

The compact nature of Downtown St. Catharines, supported with an appropriate residential density is well-placed to support a livelier, more animated public realm. A strong public realm makes significant contributions to quality of life concerns; public spaces provide a forum for the possibilities of direct interaction and a rebuilding a sense of community.

Accenting the Civic Precinct

The Civic Precinct has a campus-like quality with a relatively dense pedestrian scaled network of streets and laneways - an assemblage of civic and cultural 'landmark' destinations within walkable proximity - that is complementary to the collection of heritage sites within the Creek valley. The Civic Precinct or 'campus' should be distinguished within the Downtown through:

- More refined, articulated paving that crosses sidewalks and roadways, allowing the potential for street closures;
- Plantings, street tree canopies and site furnishings such as a generosity of benches;
- Bike parking, bus shelters;
- Branding or thematic signage;
- Articulated paving continuing down James Street as the main pedestrian spine that connects the heritage landscapes of the 'lower' creek floodplain with the 'upper' contemporary civic landscape; and,
- Tree planting along Queen and Ontario Streets to tie Montebello Park (one of the most prominent and cherished Downtown open spaces and a significant cultural heritage landscape) to St. Paul Street and the valleyland beyond.

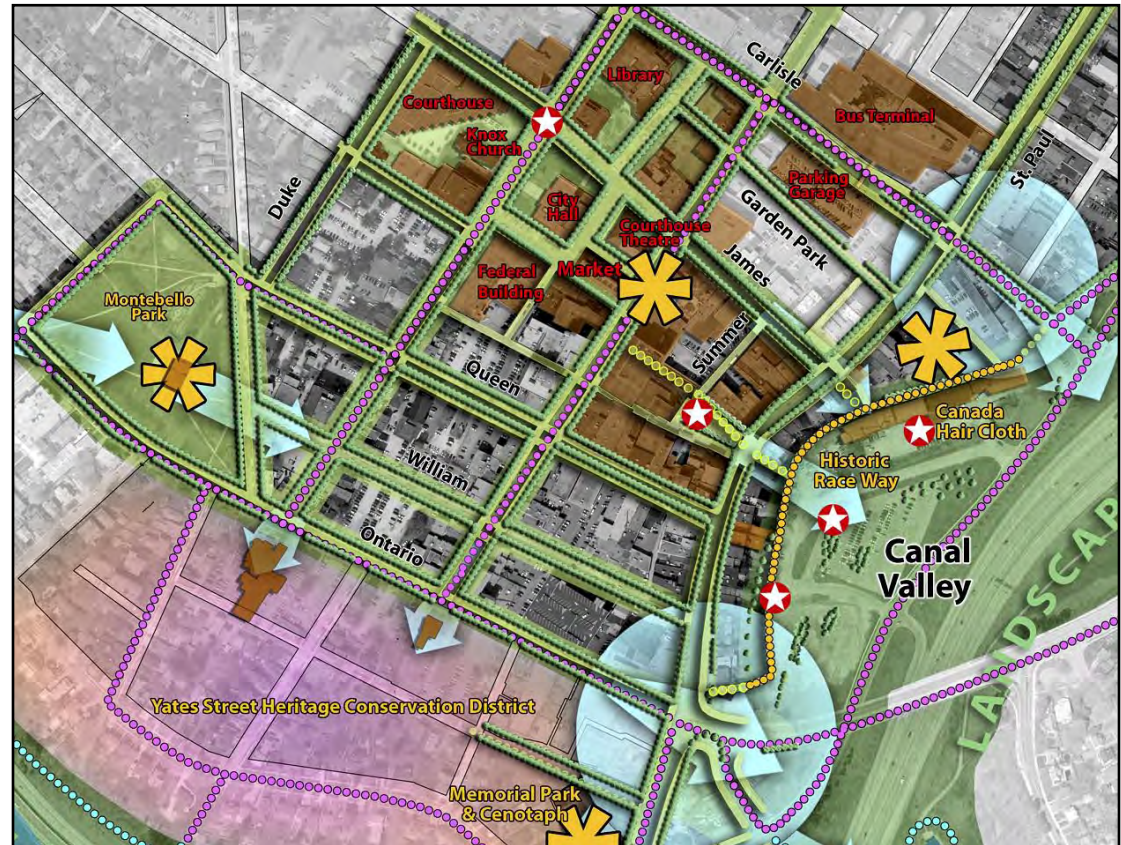


Fig 44: Proposed Downtown pedestrian structure



Articulated paving and streetscaping, Kingston



View of St. Catharines' City Hall

Vertical Connections

There are several existing pedestrian interfaces that negotiate the grade change to the Lower Level and connect the Downtown with the historic raceway of the Old Canal. These occur at James/St. Paul Streets, and Helliwell Lane and St. Paul Street. These links should be developed as major gateways with:

- Prominent, glazed, built form that announces their function as key connectors;
- Elevated site controls for accessibility, such as escalators or elevators;
- High quality open space or streetscape treatments; and,
- Adjacent mixed use development along St. Paul Street or behind the St. Paul Street facades, potentially related to the Brock University SFPA and NCFCA development.



Fig 45: Major and Minor vertical glazed connections.



Example of glazed public atrium vertical link.



Examples of glazed and open air stair connections.

Urban Open Spaces

The Open Space Concept presents new formal urban open spaces:

- 1) A new Civic Square is proposed on St. Paul Street, across from 136 St. Paul Street at “The Curve”. It is directly across from to the proposed major glazed vertical connection.
- 2) An additional longer-term or phased civic open space revitalization opportunity exists at St. Paul/Geneva Streets.
- 3) Streetscape improvements and new sidewalk and roadway paving of the Civic Precinct, including articulated paving along James Street.
- 4) A Parkette at the base of the Vertical Connection at the Lower Level.
- 5) A multi- purpose terraced gathering space at the Canada Hair Cloth building facade.
- 6) A treed walkway across the entire Lower Level, connecting Carlisle Street to McGuire and St. Paul Streets.

Public Art

Public artworks in public spaces can also play a key civic role that could further define and distinguish Downtown St. Catharines’ role as a hub within the Niagara tender fruit and wine-growing region. Public art serves to enrich the experience of every day life, and remind people of their common heritage. Opportunities for public art can be incorporated as part of the civic improvements along streetscapes and urban open spaces.

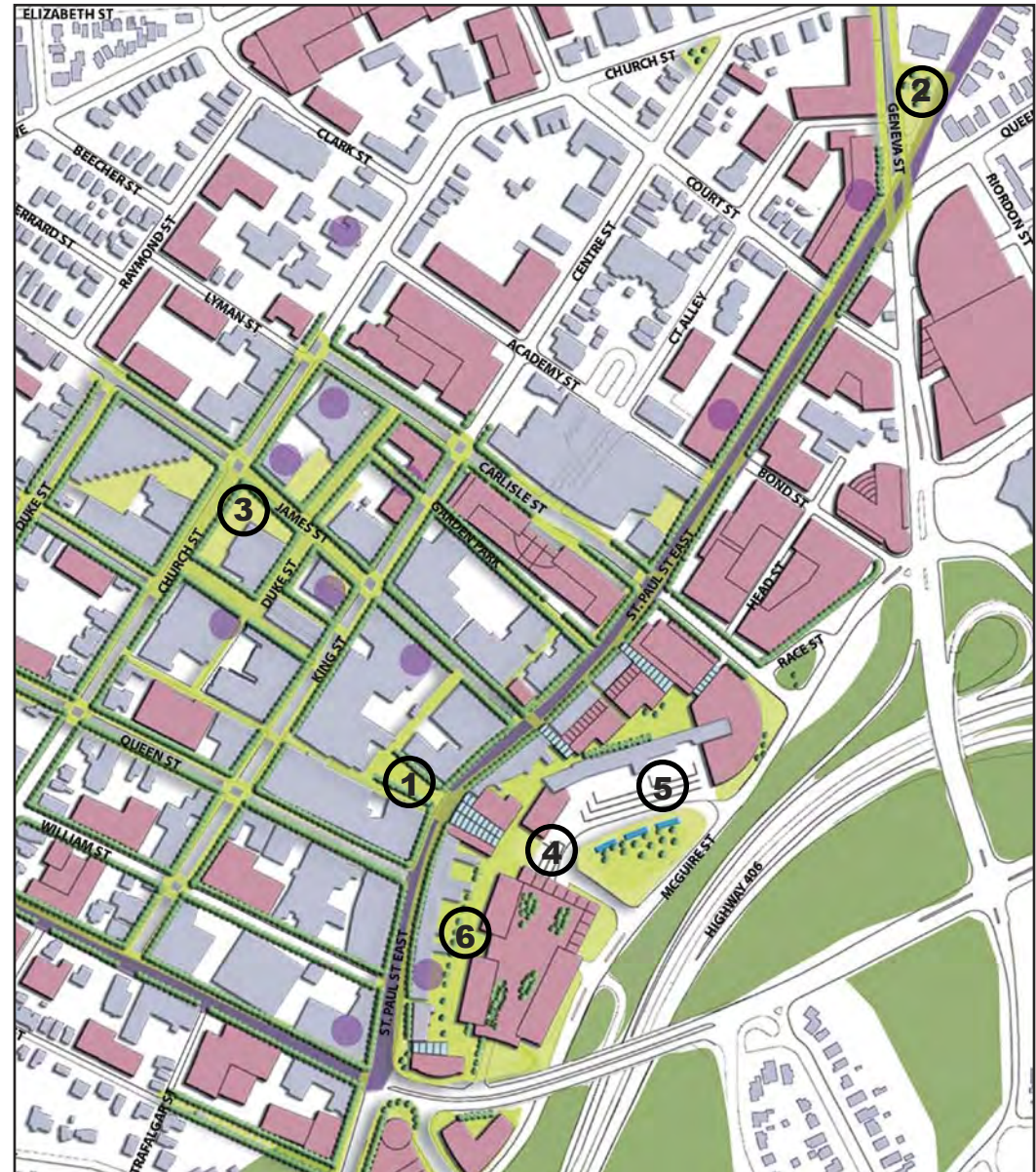


Fig 46: New and enhanced public open spaces of the Master Plan

Trails and Cycling

Improvements to the network of Municipal Trails and Club Trails directly supports the objectives of the Master Plan and Brock University's interest in developing satellite Downtown facilities. Trail improvements would also support the possible redevelopment of the Lower Level and Canada Hair Cloth building site.

Trails

Establishing clearly dedicated and/or designated on-street bike routes within the Downtown that are safe, accessible, well-lit and well-connected to the established trails network would enhance the opportunities of the Master Plan and support the objectives of the Official Plan and the Green Plan (1995). The Open Space Concept recommends the following on and off road cycle and trail improvements:

- A direct alternative/commuter transportation corridor between Brock University and the Downtown;
- Lighting, paving, trailheads, wayfinding, interpretive signage and staging areas as a multi-use commuter and recreational circuit for alternative transportation/leisure-touring;
- A new marked, on-street system following Carlisle, Church, Ontario Streets;
- A dedicated multi-use route connecting Brock University to the Downtown along the Twelve Mile Creek (the existing trail on the east side of the creek south of Downtown is an unlit, irregularly surfaced Hydro right-of-way that is not maintained);
- Identifying adequate, practical and obvious areas for bike parking; and,
- An east-west cycle connection through a series of open spaces and pathways across the Lower Level.

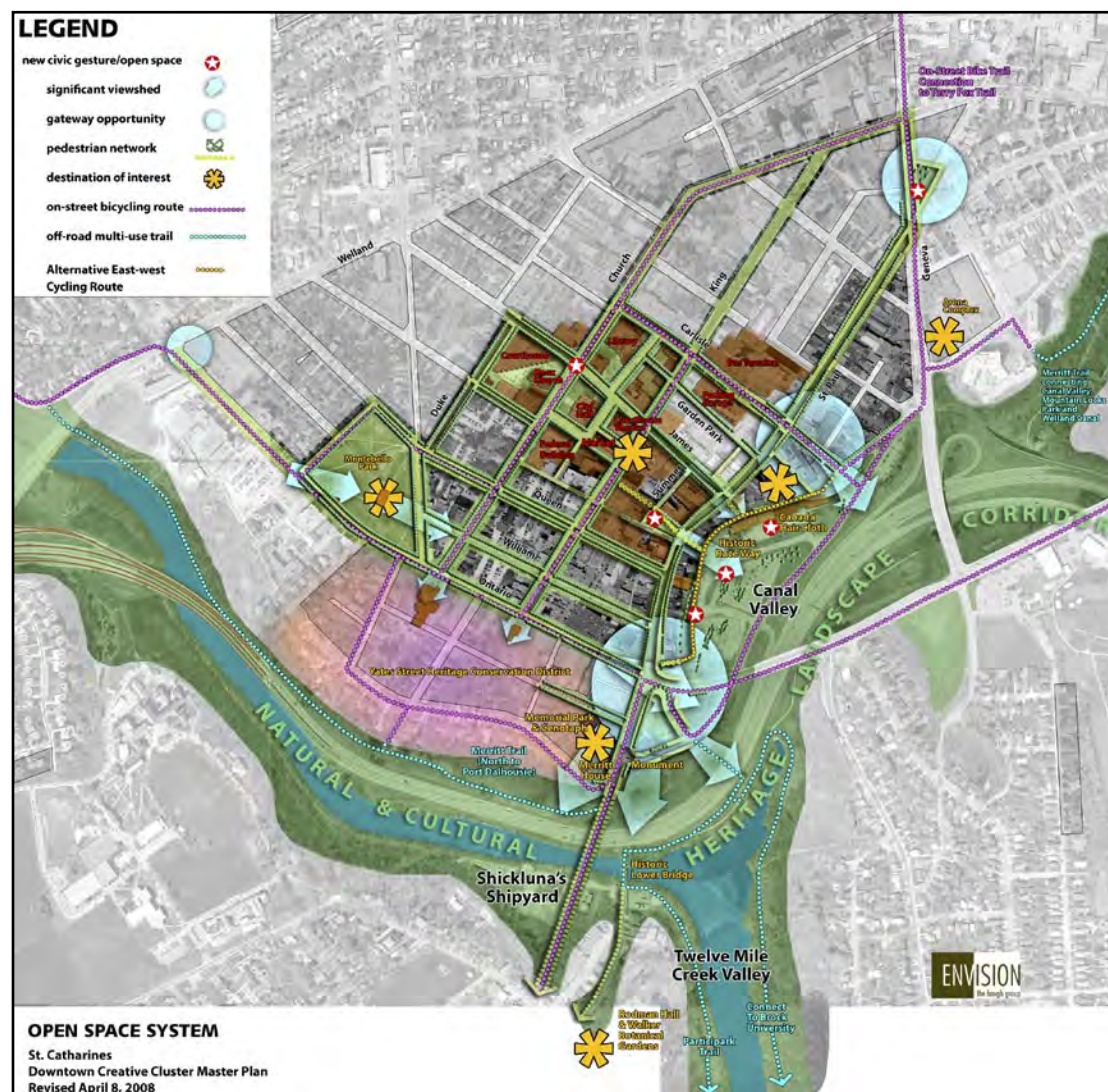


Fig 47: Proposed trails through the Master Plan

On-road Cycling

The compact fabric of the Downtown is also ideally suited to support commuter cycling. Local trips and errands between multiple destinations can be efficient and easily managed on two wheels, such as market, library, restaurant or “doctor visit” runs and would indirectly support the growth of the service and retail sectors. Bike commuting saves money, reduces energy needs and environmental impacts, and provides important health benefits.

As described in earlier sections, provisions for on-road cyclists are poor. The Open Space Concept recommends:

- A generally east-west bike route through the Downtown, principally along King Street (moving east) and Church Street (moving west) to connect commercial and civic uses and destinations such as Market Square, City Hall, the Library, Garden City Arena and Montebello Park;
- The proposed on-road routes connect with the off-road Merritt Trail (via Welland Vale Road), and the Canal Valley and Terry Fox Trails (via Geneva). These opportunities provide two different, mutually supportive circuits - an ‘upper,’ street-based route and a ‘lower’ ‘natural heritage’ route along the Twelve Mile Creek valley;
- Providing generous bike parking, especially around the City Hall, the Civic Precinct, and key future destinations such as the SFPA, the NCFCA, the Wine Embassy, and in front of restaurants or coffee houses. Bicycle parking has negligible installation or servicing costs when compared to traditional parking provisions; and,
- Dedicated bike lanes to provide ‘natural’ traffic calming effects and an enhanced sense of safety.

There has been discussion, that the two-way conversion of St. Paul Street and lane modifications may eliminate the potential for a dedicated cycle path on the street. In this case, there are other opportunities to explore, such as along the proposed re-opened east-west Raceway path, behind the Canada Hair Cloth building, connecting Carlisle Street to McGuire. However, cycle activity along St. Paul Street would contribute to revitalization through:

- Adding to the desired increased pedestrian activity along St. Paul Street and “moving pedestrians” along the streets;
- Functioning as natural traffic calming; and,
- Increasing exposure of shops, restaurants and businesses.

The Master Plan recommends that a cycle lane be seriously investigated and perhaps tested along St. Paul Street, before determining that the pavement width is too narrow to accommodate all Downtown users.



A two-way, physically separated bike lane on a busy avenue, Montreal



New clearly marked on-road cycling lanes, Vancouver



An example of an on-road bike rack, Montreal



Bike lanes can share sidewalk space but should be clearly separated from pedestrians, Berlin

7.0 STRATEGIES AND POLICIES TO GUIDE DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Policy Recommendations

7.1.1 Urban Growth Centre

The Official Plan should be reviewed to recognize the boundaries of the Downtown as an Urban Growth Centre, as required by the Growth Plan. As noted earlier, the boundaries of the Urban Growth Centre differ from the current Official Plan boundaries and from this Master Plan with the inclusion of greater areas east of Geneva Street to Page Street. An updated Secondary Plan should be prepared for the Downtown Urban Growth Centre, which implements this Master Plan and considers appropriate land use designations and density requirements east of Geneva Street. At the time of this report writing, an Official Plan Review to address the province policies was underway.

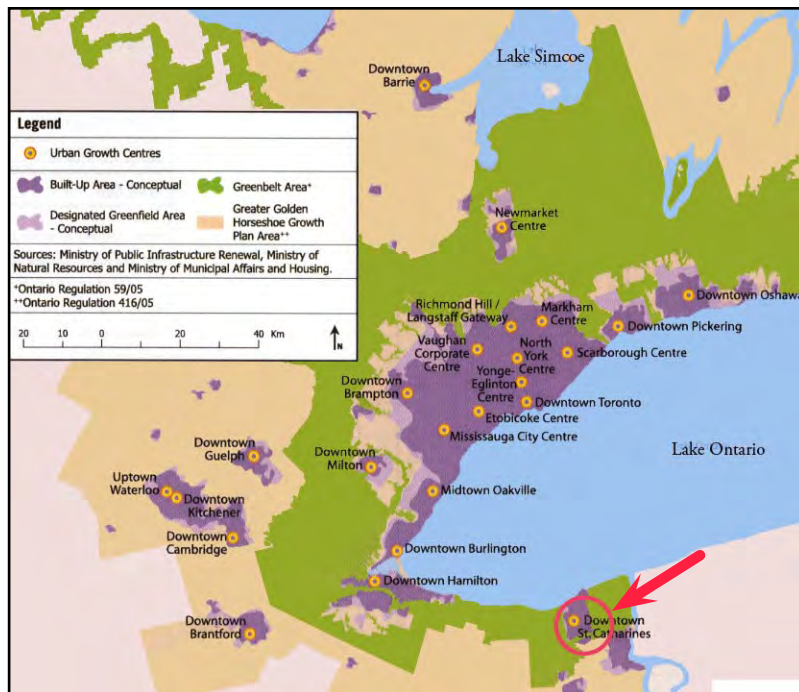


Fig 48: Downtown St. Catharines identified as an Urban Growth Centre, Schedule 4 of the Growth Plan (Source: Places to Grow, Better Choices, Brighter Future, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006, Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal)

7.1.2 The Downtown as Focal Area for Investment

St. Catharines is often the place residents from surrounding communities travel to for major public services, and other urban amenities. The Downtown has a good start in that it is already home to the Small Claims Superior Court of Justice, the Ministry of Transportation, a number of federal government offices, financial, bank, and insurance offices, the Garden City Arena Complex, and specialty retailers that are unique in the region. However, there is an opportunity for the Downtown to enhance its commercial, recreational, cultural and entertainment amenities. The Official Plan should encourage the expansion of existing regional serving public and professional services and institutional uses and location of new facilities. Policy and implementation strategies to help achieve that are as follows:

- Strengthen the Official Plan to require rather than encourage Major Offices to locate in the Downtown;
- Attract office and professional service uses away from suburban areas. It is recommended that the Downtown be marketed as the focal area in the City for office and professional service uses;
- Similarly, the Downtown should be marketed as the focal area for “Major Institutional” type uses. The “Major Institutional” designation permits health, welfare and educational establishments, government offices and activities and similar uses (policy 4.3). The permitted uses of the “Major Institutional” designation should be added to the Central Area Secondary Plan;
- Maintain the current flexibility in height and density. However, appropriate built form according to urban design guidelines should be stressed. The Plan should also contain policies which require a transition in height and density adjacent to low density residential areas;



- In the Central Area Secondary Plan, major cultural and public facilities are restricted to the Civic Square (CS) designated area. The CS area represents the City Hall, Farmers’ Market and Court House. The “CS” designation was intended to recognize only what already existed, but does not allow opportunities for future uses to build upon the existing character of the area. The area bound by Geneva Street, St. Paul Street, and the Canada Hair Cloth building is an appropriate second arts and culture cluster; and,
- Policy 15.2.1.2 of the Central Area Secondary Plan encourages “convention and related facilities and services, including hotels and restaurants”, but none of the existing land use designations in the Secondary Plan allow for major cultural and entertainment uses. The area in the Master Plan identified for arts/culture/community mixed uses (the area bound by Geneva Street, St. Paul Street and the Canada Hair Cloth building) should be appropriately designated to allow for these uses to evolve and in particular to provide the opportunity for major attraction venues such as the SFPA/NCFA development.

7.1.3 Accommodate and Support Major Transit Infrastructure

The Downtown is currently well served by the St. Catharines Transit Commission, which typically operates every 30 minutes during the weekdays and Saturdays and every 60 minutes on evenings, and Sundays. The transit service could be better supported by capitalizing on the central location of the bus terminal located on Carlisle Street. The structure of the Downtown should take shape in a Transit Oriented Development form. Strategies to do this include encouraging or restricting uses in certain locations, and ensuring appropriate densities within a 400 m. radius (or approximately 5 minute walk) around the bus terminal, and bus stops within the Downtown. To achieve this, policies should address the following:

- Encourage higher employment and residential densities, and mixed-use buildings surrounding the bus terminal; and,
- Encourage cultural and entertainment venues with high volume patronage such as the Niagara Centre for the Arts and the Brock University SFPA within walking distance of the bus terminal.



7.1.4 Intensification and Transition

To implement the intensification requirements of the Growth Plan, the Official Plan should:

- Specifically identify and designate the employment and residential intensification areas identified in the Master Plan; and,
- Identify the type and scale of intensification development appropriate for each of the intensification areas. This should include design requirements but not density or height restrictions except in transitional areas.

The current housing stock in St. Catharines is primarily low-density housing with some higher density apartments. The focus should be placed on stimulating the market to provide housing products to meet the desire and needs of a more diverse demographic profile. One of the keys to attracting the residential intensification is the perceived character of an area. That character relates to a large extent, to the types of shops, services and amenities in the Downtown. But it also reflects the streetscape character in the Downtown and in adjacent low-rise residential neighbourhoods. People will be attracted to live in high-density apartments adjacent to desirable neighbourhoods. Policy and implementation strategies should include:

- Encourage a full range of housing form, tenure, and affordability in the Downtown;
- Encourage affordable rent, and flexible office/studio space such as live-work opportunities;
- Undertake streetscape improvements to create an attractive and coordinated image for the Downtown and adjacent neighbourhoods;
- Provide incentives through the CIP to renovate upper levels of commercial buildings along St. Paul St. and above other retail stores for residential live/work studio space; and,
- Consider extended business hours to create a balanced and diverse street activity level for day and evening hours.

7.1.5 A Simplified Secondary Plan

Currently, the Central Area Secondary Plan contains twelve land use designations. Many of the designations are repetitive. For the investor, a simplified flexible land use approach is desirable. A revised secondary plan should consider the following:

- Simplify the number of land use designations;
- Broaden the permitted uses in all designations in the Downtown. Currently the permissions are too specific and exclusionary. Since the objective of the Downtown is to create a dense, mixed use precinct, the designations should be more general, leaving specific use permissions to the zoning by-law;
- Focus on built form and streetscape character rather than on differentiating uses;
- Promote a flexible mix of combined residential and commercial uses, such as live-work developments. Currently, designations permit residential and commercial, intended to be separate uses. Residential is often “permitted over and behind” other permitted uses, but there is no mention of more flexible live-work arrangements as previously mentioned;
- Include designations that permit limited combined manufacturing and commercial uses for artists to manufacture and sell their goods in one space. Such uses may be more appropriately addressed in the zoning by-law; and,
- Review zoning by-law provisions in the context of an updated Secondary Plan.



7.1.6 Community Improvement Program, 2006 (CIP)

The issues identified for the Downtown Community Improvement Plan are in line with the intent of the Master Plan that is residential intensification, walkability, identification of parking issue, need for a more diverse set of businesses, and support services for an increased population. However, the CIP can be updated in the following areas with respect to Municipal Initiatives:

- Reduction in required parking spaces should remain as an incentive as well as the provision of municipal parking facilities or joint public-private parking initiatives;
- The desired provision of art and community space is not addressed in the municipal initiatives. Consider public-private partnerships to be established to expand not only streetscape initiatives and create greenspaces, but also community and art spaces. The following statement: *“That the municipality establish partnerships with Downtown stakeholders to expand streetscape initiatives and create greenspaces”* should be revised to include community and art spaces;
- Clarify renovation or improvement of any façade facing the street, to include St. Paul Street’s rear facades in the Facade Improvement Grant Program qualifications. This view has the greatest visibility from the Lower Level and Highway 406 and could be developed as a unique cultural heritage asset, rather than allowing neglect and degradation of the facades. Their improvement could also be in concert with one of the Lower Level / Canada Hair Cloth building developments;
- Urban Design Guidelines should be prepared that provide clear and achievable directions for facade improvement, to allow property owners to undertake modest facade renovations, using simple design principles and materials. To review compatibility with the overall objectives of the future Urban Design Guideline document, the City could appoint an external review architect or an advisory group to provide design direction to property owners, prior to submission of documents for grant approval;

- Provide grant programs for property owners who improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of their properties. Simple modifications such as photo-voltaics, daylighting sensors for signage and building accent illumination, provision of outdoor employee open space and installation of bicycle storage racks could be considered; and,
- Provide incentives to renovate upper levels of commercial buildings along St. Paul Street and above other retail stores for residential live/work studio space.



CIP project development,
St Paul Street



Example of upgraded facades, St. Paul Street



7.1.7 Improving the Downtown's Amenities and Cultural Diversity

The Master Plan presents a scenario of how the Downtown could provide improved amenities and a quality of life environment. This includes such things as areas that present good opportunities for redevelopment because of their existing fabric and location; opportunity areas for cultural investment; and, an improved pedestrian environment and connection to the Downtown's cultural and recreational assets. All of these elements are proposed to entice the creative community, entrepreneurs and major employers to the Downtown. Implementation of the following measures would establish these goals:

Amenity Offerings

- Establish a Trails Schedule in the Official Plan, or a Recreational Trails Master Plan to improve the opportunity trails have to contribute to the lives of Downtown residents and visitors;
- The Trails Plan should include natural heritage trails, and urban pedestrian connections between specific culture and heritage points of interest. Connect trails of the Twelve Mile Creek, linking to Merritt Park, Oakhill Park, and Montebello Park, to the Downtown core;
- Establish special interest pedestrian routes between key destination areas such as art galleries, theatres, coffee shops, parking, shopping, the bus terminal, civic hub (City Hall, Farmers' Market, and Library), and residential areas;
- Provide policies that require widened sidewalks where possible, and permit and encourage restaurant outdoor patios on the sidewalk through site plan control;
- High quality public open space is essential for high density residents who do not own their own private outdoor amenity space. Improve outdoor amenities by providing public outdoor gathering places such as parkettes, and outdoor furniture; and,
- Do not prohibit large chain retailers from the Downtown, since the creative class values and relate with many such mainstream brands. However, location restrictions should be applied based on com-

mercial gross floor area. Appropriate locations for large floor plate retailers would be St. Paul St. between Carlisle and Geneva Streets. Retailers along St. Paul St. between Ontario and Carlisle Streets, and James St. should be restricted to the existing building floor plates. Also, strict compliance to built form and façade treatments would be necessary.

Cultural and Artistic Vibrancy

- Investigate the provision of incentives for private development to include arts, civic and cultural community space in new developments, or contribute to a publicly developed and managed cultural infrastructure and/or public art fund. It is important that the type and quality of such space be coordinated and monitored by an overall cultural policy and inventory group. Incentives could include reduced parkland dedication or reduced common area amenity space provisions;
- Create a sense of place that embraces creativity, and allows the creative class to validate their creative identities. For Downtown St. Catharines' Creative Cluster, this means a policy that commits to allowing uses that are culture oriented (i.e. art galleries, cultural community centres, performing arts centres, and bookstores), lifestyle oriented (i.e. vibrant music scene, outdoor restaurants and cafes), outdoor lifestyle oriented (i.e. dedicated cycling lanes, connected walking trails, urban parkettes with furniture), and a wide array of nightlife and weekend oriented activities including non-alcoholic activities. This would enhance the wide array of activities the Downtown has to offer, and help create a bustling street scene; and,
- Continue to ensure that the local not-for-profit arts and cultural communities have access to city-owned facilities and properties for art shows, rehearsals, performances, etc. to encourage growth and development.



Quality of Life - Cultural Diversity and Youth

A diverse population is essential for a vibrant Downtown. More open and diverse places are likely to attract greater numbers of talented and creative people. They also possess “low barriers to entry” for people from all walks of life and backgrounds and enhance the quality of life a new resident to the area with minimal social network experience. According to the 2006 Census data, approximately 21% of St. Catharines’ population is made up of immigrants.

Retaining St. Catharines’ youth population is also a fundamental factor in building to create a diverse population, but also, a growing population. A wider range of convenience opportunities and providing a full range of daily life amenities may be a means to capture this group to stay in the Downtown.

Stakeholders registered concern that, with large capital investments in a downtown, property values increase and result in the “pushing out” of the grass roots culture, youth and entrepreneurial activities. These are the very activities that bring authentic animation and street life to the Downtown.

The current Official Plan already provides flexible policy intended to meet the needs of a diverse population. In light of the Creative Cluster Master Plan that encourages both significant investment and redevelopment in tandem with preservation of the Downtown’s cultural and physical fabric, review of policy should consider ways to ensure that these Downtown residents, that most benefit from the “low rent” opportunities of existing building stock can continue to function and shape the Downtown.

For example, the CIP (as previously mentioned) or other vehicles for investors could provide incentives for retaining a proportion of lower rent live/work spaces. As the fabric of the Downtown changes, policy should be reviewed and refined to reflect the changing needs of a dynamic population.



Picture of artist at NSCAD, Halifax



James Street Art Cluster, James Street



New Municipal Art Gallery as infill in La Caruna, Spain





7.1.8 Municipal Cultural Policy Recommendations

Development of the arts and cultural sectors of the City requires policy integration between the Official Plan, Economic Development and Cultural Planning. The City’s Culture Committee has recently begun a research exercise to identify links between the three planning processes, with the aim of stimulating new additions to the City’s Official Plan through its current review process, as well as in the Municipal Cultural Policy, which is ready for renewal after eight years.

The success of the City’s investment in culture through staff resources, policies and funding programs has been commented on by multiple stakeholders. A review of the City’s success to date and a renewal of the existing policies is encouraged to ensure this growth continues. Some recommendations to infuse support for cultural infrastructure have been identified in the previous policy recommendations for the Official Plan, Secondary plan and CIP. It will be important to review these recommendations in the context of Municipal Cultural Policy to determine the most appropriate policy tools for elective implementations. Some examples of what can be explored in policy and program review and renewal are:

- Establish a source of funding for a public art program - there are many models in other communities to consider, such as 1% of municipal capital infrastructure projects;
- Cultural infrastructure and built heritage are unsupported by recommendations in the existing Municipal Cultural Policy (MCP). The City should investigate its role in the provision of cultural infrastructure to allow for the growth, maturation and accessibility of arts and cultural activity in downtown for both residents and visitors;
- The City can consider cultural industries in the renewal of the MCP, linking these considerations to economic planning;
- Evaluate the success of the St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program (SCCIP) taking into consideration the objectives of the Master Plan and determine appropriate mechanisms to continue to encourage growth in the sector in relation to Downtown revitalization;

- Consider the growth of funding for SCCIP, through the establishment of an endowment in the St. Catharines Community Fund, or an identified funding source, to ensure the continued growth of the cultural sector;
- Until such time as sufficient purpose-built cultural facilities are available, allow the local not-for-profit arts and cultural communities access to City-owned facilities and properties for art exhibits, rehearsals, performances etc, to encourage growth and development;
- Further investigate how cultural policy can stimulate the engagement of new Canadians and provide a stronger presence of ethnocultural and other non-homogeneous communities in St. Catharines;
- Consider the establishment of, or identify an existing agency to oversee the development of live/work spaces for artists in downtown; and,
- Consider relocation of the St. Catharines Museum to the Downtown.

In summary, municipal cultural policy should be integrated with planning, economic development and tourism policy to:

- Encourage live/work space for artists as first-phase gentrification force – artists will move in and improve a neighbourhood, thereafter stimulating residential shift to more upscale market (i.e. other elements of the creative class);
- Encourage the preservation of heritage building stock – the Arts community can be responsive to adaptive-heritage re-use opportunities for facilities, live/work space, special events;
- Develop people-friendly spaces with amenities that include public art and heritage signage, to increase the sense of relevance and meaning to the community;
- Promote cultural tourism through the many stories of St. Catharines as an early community of Canada and a combination of local arts and heritage activity/product development as authentic experiences; and,
- Foster the distinctive nature of Downtown as the “heart and soul” of the community, as a unique destination with unique experiences to offer residents and tourists alike.



7.2 Transportation and Parking Strategies

7.2.1 Two-way Traffic Conversion

The conversion of the Downtown's one-way/two-way street system is described in detail in Section 3.7 along with its benefits to the Downtown. The Master Plan capitalizes from the increased connectivity, potentially calmer traffic and greater exposure of street related retail that two-way traffic brings. The conversion process is underway, which is an integral first step and clear message of commitment to revitalization of the Downtown. The following traffic circulation principles should be regarded throughout the conversion process:

- Establish a hierarchy of Downtown streets that defines the relative importance of moving through traffic and providing access to property. This hierarchy and functionality should be periodically reviewed;
- Encourage modes of transportation, such as transit, cycling, and walking, to reduce reliance on the automobile and help ease traffic congestion and parking demands;
- Direct non-Downtown traffic away from the core area by utilizing the Arterial Ring Road System as a by-pass route;
- Enforce direct access for emergency and service vehicles;
- Maintain efficient access to major roadways beyond the Downtown;
- Maintain interconnectivity and orientation of the street network to provide more than one opportunity to reach a destination; and,
- Continue the incremental phasing to the existing system to allow drivers to become accustomed to modifications.

7.2.2 Recommendations for Service and Delivery Access

The efficient movement and delivery of goods is essential to the economic growth of the Downtown. Service and delivery access to existing and future commercial establishments should be as convenient and efficient as possible. As the Downtown evolves there will be a need to ensure that adequate service and delivery access are provided.

The preferred method of service access to commercial businesses is to ensure that service/delivery does not encroach on the roadway. The use of streets for loading and unloading is not desirable as it detracts from the street's efficiency, safety and appearance. The most effective system incorporates off-street parking and loading facilities for service and delivery operations that are integrated into future development initiatives.

As part of the one-way/two street conversion, recommendations to improve current service/delivery access should include:

- Eliminate current delivery practices (i.e. "double parking") on St. Paul Street;
- Encourage rear access via alleyways and rear roadways or through established off-street parking areas. This will improve safety, traffic circulation and the general aesthetics of the streetscape from both the road user and pedestrian point of view;
- Establish loading zones of sufficient length to allow parallel vehicle access to as large a number of businesses in the area as possible, where curb zones are needed to provide space for the loading and unloading of commercial vehicles. (when alleyway and off-street loading areas are inadequate or unavailable, and frequency of loading and unloading operations, and general curb-parking conditions might result in truck double-parking); and,
- Install proper signage for the on-street loading zones and City policies, as they relate to loading zones, and enforce restrictions.



7.2.3 Transit Recommendations

As described in Section 2.6, bus transit is the dominant form of public transit within the City's Central Area and the Downtown is the best serviced area in the City for the bus network, supported by the main bus terminal's central location at the base of the MTO office building. The Official Plan provides that the city bus transfer point shall retain a location in the commercial core of CBD of the central area.

The Secondary Plan already encourages transit as the major mode of transportation to the Central Area, to reduce the number of parked cars especially for downtown employees. This policy reinforces Provincial and Regional policy for smart growth and transit-supportive development.

In general, the following principles regarding public transit within the Downtown should be regarded for in implementation of the Master Plan and future redevelopment:

- Bus transit should be given priority to use the entire street network to provide the most convenient service and provide direct transit access to primary Downtown destination areas;
 - Land uses should be located to capitalize on transit facilities as well as to maximize the market for transit;
 - Bus lay-by areas should be located within a short walking distance of existing and future developments (i.e. prime community nodes of activity) that provide sufficient densities and mixes of activities to support significant transit ridership;
 - Transit stops and waiting areas should have direct pedestrian connections to outdoor areas of adjacent developments or public sidewalks;
 - Through-routing should be a priority for all CBD transit facilities to avoid looping and artificial doubling of transit vehicle loads.
- Future transit stops within the two-way street network should be spaced to support existing and new land uses, reflecting the intensity of the development and passenger modes of arrival at the stops. Specifically, additional bus stops should be provided along St. Paul Street, King Street and Church Street, where practical, in conjunction with future developments;
 - Connections from the Downtown to outlying areas including the provision of GO Transit bus service to/from the Downtown or by GO Train to the VIA Train Station with a bus connection to the Downtown should be strongly pursued; and,
 - Should the Wine Route be redirected to Downtown St. Catharines, new transit routes from outside the community that link up with and follow the Wine Route should be considered.

7.3 Recommendations for Pedestrian and Cycling Facilities

The Secondary Plan identifies the need to facilitate the development of a safe and efficient pedestrian circulation system linking major activity areas and pedestrian focal points. To that end, the Secondary Plan provides a pedestrian network linking pedestrian gathering areas throughout the Downtown area. The main purpose of the walkway system is to connect pedestrian generators to major activity nodes so as to provide easy and direct pedestrian access between major centres. In addition to pedestrian connectivity and improved delineation, the Secondary Plan provides for such things as increased portions of street allowances available for use by pedestrians including sidewalks, landscaped and seating areas and other pedestrian amenities. Increased pedestrian safety will be ensured through the segregation from the vehicular roadway system wherever feasible.

The Master Plan Open Space Concept builds on these policies by establishing a hierarchy of streetscapes and strong linkages to the open space system. These are discussed in Section 6.3. The following principles as they relate to the provision of improved pedestrian and cycling facilities should be kept in mind as revitalization continues:

- Ensure continuity of pedestrian circulation between Downtown destinations;
- Pedestrian access from major parking facilities and transit stops should be located to avoid traffic conflicts and ensure safety;
- Main pedestrian routes should be clearly delineated through signage, landscaping, and lighting features;
- Pedestrian waiting and seating areas should have weather protection, waste/ recycling receptacles and lighting;
- The number and quality of pedestrian street crossings should be reviewed and potentially enhanced and increased; and,
- Create an Open Space Master Plan with phased, priority improvements for pedestrian and cycling routes.

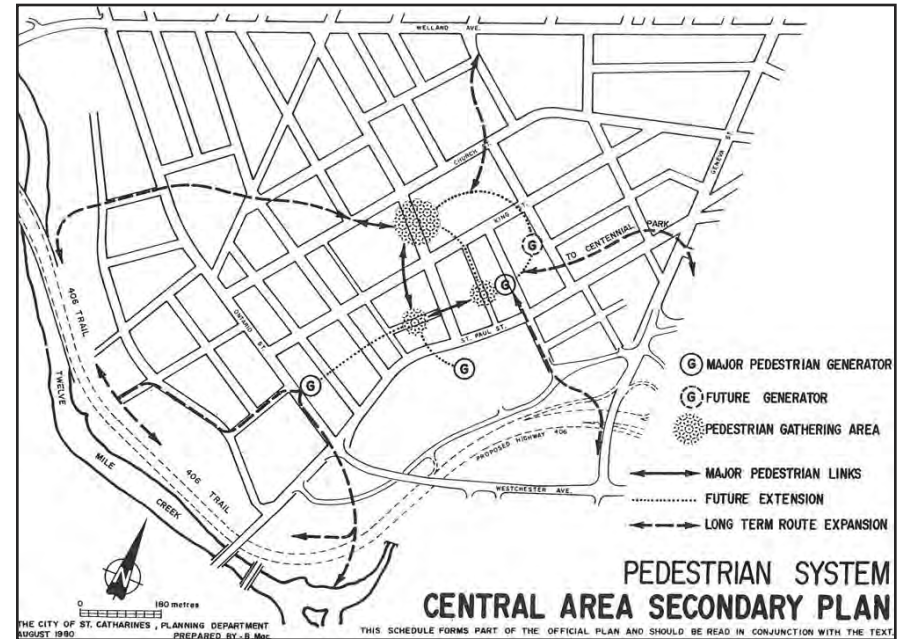


Fig 49: Pedestrian System Network from St Catharines Central Area Secondary Plan

7.4 Recommendations for Streetscaping and Infrastructure

The streets in the Downtown serve a variety of functions including the provision for motorized vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, and the creation of public spaces for social interaction and contact. There will be opportunities to improve streetscaping in conjunction with the one-way/two-way street conversion that support the Secondary Plan's goal of improving pedestrian access and connectivity.

Streetscape Master Plan

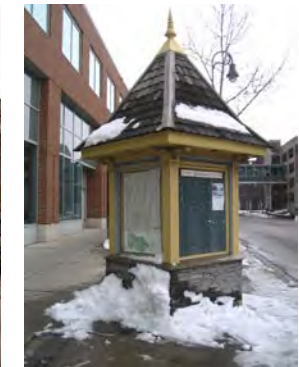
As mentioned throughout this report, the provision of an attractive and safe Downtown for all users is a high priority objective. The Downtown's existing streetscaping features need to be reinforced, enhanced and connected with other parts of the Downtown as supporting infrastructure to the Master Plan.

In general, the following recommendations for streetscaping within the Downtown should be kept in mind as revitalization continues:

- Undertake a detailed layout of existing roadways curbs and sidewalks and identify existing streetscape features such as light standards, benches and receptacles to create a streetscape Master Plan should consider:
 - Provide even and well defined walking surfaces for all weather conditions of suitable width;
 - Provide features which alert drivers and cyclists to pedestrian crossing zones;
 - Opportunities to widen roadside and sidewalks at street intersections and midblock pedestrian crossings in areas adjacent to busy roadways and in the vicinity of high pedestrian-generating land uses;
- Space for streetscaping elements that improve pedestrian comfort, convenience and aesthetic and built features;
- Explore further boulevard tree-planting opportunities;
- Continue installation of combined traffic/pedestrian scaled fixture with banner-mounting poles;
- Design/select wall-mounted fixtures for laneways;



Examples of tree planting in the boulevard, articulated paving and new street-related development



A St. Catharines community notice board kiosk - a feature that could be introduced into new streetscaping



- Designate new bicycle parking racks and areas; and,
- Develop and “brand” community-driven public art for the potential Wine Route signage and themed street furniture as well as a general theme for Downtown st. Catharines.

Gateway Development

Gateways are important elements in improving the public realm and providing visual evidence to local residents and visitors of community pride. The City continues to encourage the development of additional gateways where space is available at major entrance locations to the City and the Downtown. The Master Plan Open Space Concept identifies primary gateway opportunities and these should be included in a Streetscape Master Plan.

As part of the two-way traffic conversion, greening opportunities have been provided at the St. Paul-Queenston-Geneva-Niagara Streets intersection and at the intersection of Queenston and Church Streets. The City has already completed the upgrade at the intersection of Niagara Street and Church Street. The intersection of Ontario Street and St. Paul Street presently has the “Rockpile” feature and also streetscaping features on the south side of St. Paul Street. Future opportunities for more greening/streetscaping may be implemented in the future. Currently, there is a potential greening opportunity at the corner of Louth Street and St. Paul Street West that is being pursued by the Green Committee just outside the downtown area. The gore at the west end of the Burgogyne Bridge may also be a potential location for a future gateway feature.



Examples of new mixed-use and residential intensification



7.5 Recommendations for Parking

The Central Area Secondary Plan (policy 15.8.1) makes note of the need for a downtown parking strategy to address the needs of both current and future parking requirements. The Downtown Parking Strategy was completed in 2006 and is discussed in Section 3.8 of this report. This section discusses parking-related planning policy, as opposed to analysis of the number, type and ownership of parking spaces in the Downtown.

The existing parking policies of the Central Area Secondary Plan place emphasis on design and screening, accessibility for shoppers, and priority for parking to be provided for shoppers over employees. However, there is no policy that establishes or requires minimum parking requirements for commercial and residential developments. The provision places the responsibility to provide adequate public parking supply in municipal hands.

The Official Plan establishes a benefit assessment area. This area is bound by Church Street to the north (including the properties along the north side of Church Street), Ontario Street, and the rest of the Downtown. It was created as a special zone to offer additional flexibility to the parking requirements. Within this area, commercial development and partial conversion of commercial buildings to residential are exempt from any parking requirement. Other residential developments are subject to the parking requirement of the zoning by-law but with the option of paying cash-in-lieu of parking. The parking standards for new residential development will be less than the existing zoning by-law requirement. Additionally, the zoning by-law exempts commercial and residential uses within the Business Commercial (BC) zone from parking requirements. The majority of the Downtown is zoned Business Commercial (BC). In detail, the BC zone covers lands bound by Yates Street, Lake Street, Wellington Street, Welland Avenue, Geneva Street, Race and McGuire Streets. The benefit assessment area and zoning by-law relief are effective means to allow special parking treatment within the Downtown. However, this requires the municipality to be proactive in the provision of parking facilities.

However, downtowns can never meet all parking requirements, nor should they. Other strategies to supplement parking needs are through support for transit, streetscape and cycling improvements and increasing population within the downtown core.

Despite parking relief and lower rents in the Downtown compared to suburban developments, employers still choose suburban locations because of the convenience of adjacent suburban parking and the availability of land for cheaper parking. A parking stall within a below-grade structure can cost up to five times more than a surface parking stall. The municipality could play a major role in providing for some employee parking to help off-set developers' costs and pressure to provide parking for retail, cultural, and entertainment patrons, and office tenants in convenient locations. Furthermore, reduced parking requirements from commercial and residential developments should be maintained. It should also be a City priority to maintain convenient street parking wherever possible.

There is no doubt that the City faces difficulties with the provision of adequate parking in step with the envisioned redevelopment of the Downtown, as presented in the Downtown Parking Strategy, 2006. It is evident, based on the current parking requirements and in light of anticipated future development of the Creative Cluster, that the City must select an "increased supply" operating scenario for long term growth and the health of the Downtown. The Downtown Parking Strategy should be revisited in the context of the Master Plan. The following strategies can also be considered to increase the supply of public parking in the Downtown.



Off-Street Parking Alternatives

As noted previously, the one-way/two-way street conversion will result in the loss of about 60 parking spaces. The majority of parking spaces (23) will be lost on King Street between Ontario Street and Queen Street with the remaining being lost throughout the Downtown area. The replacement of these parking spaces should be undertaken through the addition of off-street parking facilities. The Downtown Parking Strategy recommends that the City replace and increase supply through the reconstruction of the Carlisle Street Garage and building out the Lower Level Parking Lot. Both of these recommendations support the Master Plan, which identifies the Carlisle Garage and the Lower Level Lot as prime mixed-use / parking redevelopments. Other options for off-street parking could include acquisition or partnership with private property owners who own undeveloped sites that are currently used (and under-utilized) for private parking for public parking use.

On-Street Parking Alternatives

Based on the available space along the roadways within the Downtown core, the one-way/two way conversion, and the need for streetscaping improvements (additional right-of-way space), other alternate parking space layouts (such as angled parking) are impractical for the Downtown. The principle hazard in angled parking is the lack of adequate visibility for the driver during the back-out manoeuvre. Additional hazard results from the driver who stops suddenly upon seeing a vehicle ahead in the process of backing out. Because empty parking stalls are difficult to perceive with angle parking, motorists who are seeking a place to park must either proceed slowly (thus stalling traffic) in order to see the empty stall, or slow abruptly when they come upon an empty stall.

In general, the following principles as they relate to parking needs within the Downtown should be kept in mind as the Downtown revitalization continues:

- Downtown parking facilities should be accessible from the primary approach routes into the Downtown and located in direct contact with major vehicle entry points;
- Downtown parking facilities should be distributed in relation to the directional distribution of vehicular approach to the area;
- The parking system should provide space for explicit use of long-term, visitor, and short-term parking;
- Where feasible, Downtown parking should accommodate dual or shared usage of facilities;
- Maintain the existing benefit assessment area and system;
- Alternative modes of travel should be encouraged and implemented by the City to reduce auto-dependency;
- Facilities should be provided to accommodate the needs of service and delivery vehicles; and,
- Provide readily accessible parking to all Downtown patrons, including shoppers, special event patrons, and employees.

The following short and long-term alternatives could be explored to support both the City's Central Area Secondary Plan and Master Plan.



Short-Term Alternatives

There are a number of short-term alternatives that could be implemented to help address parking needs, including the following:

- Use of Shared Parking Facilities – Shared parking allows for the adjustment of demand projections for time of day, day of week, season, and interaction in mixed-use developments to identify when the peak accumulation of vehicles will occur;
- Encouraging Multi-Modal Transportation – The use of public transit should be encouraged along with other modes of transportation such as walking or cycling to help reduce parking demand within the Downtown core;
- Ridesharing Programs – Various forms of carpooling, van pooling, and subscription bus service associated with employees’ trips to and from work should be promoted in order to reduce both traffic and parking demand;
- Off-Street Parking – Encourage employees and shoppers to park in off-street parking lots;
- Fees-in-lieu – Development fees are provided to the City to develop public parking rather than having each property owner provide sufficient parking for each building. Review and update any current policy;
- Consider parking permits to ensure parking for Downtown residents also depends on on-street parking;
- Flexible Paid Parking – Daily parking rates can be adjusted either up or down to help address parking demands. Increasing parking charges, parking fines, and extended parking enforcement can be seen by some as a deterrent to attracting visitors to the Downtown but turn-over of parking is necessary at on-street locations. The City could consider reduced meter parking fees, such as offering the first hour free in order to compete with suburban locales that offer ample free parking; and,
- Greater Provision for Municipal Parking – Introduce a municipal parking authority that is a public corporation owned by the City, with a mandate to provide safe, attractive, conveniently located parking, and to provide competitive prices. The goal for the municipal parking authority is to eventually become self financing from parking revenue and not rely on a municipal tax base to fund its development or operation.

Long-Term Alternatives

Longer term alternatives to address parking demands in the future could include the following:

- Public/Private Parking Lots – The City currently controls 30 percent of total commercial parking supply within the downtown with the remainder under the control of the private sector. Many of these private lots are small, internal parcels that could provide frequent parking nodes along St. Paul Street. An example of such lots can be found in the Toronto Beaches neighbourhood, along Queen Street East, where street parking is limited, yet tourist and other visitors travel to the area by car. Future redevelopment within the Downtown core may provide some opportunities for the City to provide additional parking supply through the acquisition of private parking facilities. Alternatively, there may be opportunities to enter into public/private partnership arrangements for the use of some of the private parking facilities;
- Replacement of the Carlisle Street Parking Garage – At a meeting on February 4, 2008, City Council engaged in a capital priorities planning session and selected the replacement of the Carlisle Street parking garage as a priority in the coming years. The City had previously committed to a 700 space utilitarian structure, and Staff was directed to seek partnerships to increase parking and include a retail/commercial/residential component;
- Redevelopment of the Lower Level Parking Lot – The redevelopment of the Lower Level Parking Lot into a mixed use and parking lot facility would help to alleviate parking demands and provide for additional parking for other developments as well as commercial areas; and,
- A key recommendation of the Downtown Parking Strategy is that development of the Lower Level Parking Lot should be “built-out” prior to taking the Carlisle Garage out of service. The Downtown Parking Strategy identifies expanding the Lower Level Lot to an additional 150 surface spots. The Master Plan envisions a mixed-use / parking development which could potentially provide more spaces.



7.6 Recommendations for Architectural Character and Built Form

The definition of distinct Downtown areas and landmarks is linked the overall impression of the city's architectural character. One of the roles of the Master Plan is to reinforce the Downtown's unique architectural attributes. St. Catharines' building stock exhibits a range of building type and architectural style, a variety which functions as a physical chronology of the city's growth and development. Building occupancies in the Downtown are obviously related to their building type (residential, multi-storey office buildings, special use institutional buildings) and in turn, define the understanding of the City's precincts, as described in earlier sections of this report.

Heritage and Adaptive Re-use

As cities transform from manufacturing bases, with industrial processes and factories occurring at the water's edge, along rail tracks, or, as in the case of St. Catharines, along the former Welland Canal, the buildings in these areas are now lending themselves to new occupancies and uses. As many cities in Ontario and around the world have done, Downtown St. Catharines is poised to re-activate architecturally significant buildings into new uses, while retaining, enhancing and interpreting their architectural character. There are countless examples of the re-use of industrial buildings transformed as new residential and office "lofts", galleries, major civic event spaces, restaurants, hotels and spas, educational institutions, performance spaces and more. In this context of adaptive re-use, building use is no longer tied to building form.

The Canada Hair Cloth building is already identified as a source of City pride. The Municipality and Brock University are strongly considering it as the keystone of St. Catharines' physical identity and its re-use is one of the key drivers of the Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan. Its strength is that it has the potential to be converted into a variety of uses – office, other institutional, hotel – all of which will positively impact the Master Plan.

Integration of Heritage and New Development

There are other major areas with distinct architectural character, which should be preserved, yet should also make way for innovative and complementary architecture to stimulate revitalization. New architecture can function successfully alongside or within existing, traditional built form. The major areas of the Downtown that have the potential for redevelopment and infill are along Ontario Street and St. Paul Street. There are heritage buildings along both of these streets, yet there are opportunities for innovative infill, where existing buildings are single storey and/or of limited architectural value. These corridors can be developed to create the Downtown's "edges" and provide a continuation of the Downtown's evolving architectural history.

Built-form Guidelines

To accompany the Master Plan, a comprehensive Heritage Review of the Downtown should be undertaken, to determine which buildings are of interest to the Downtown community and to identify which buildings have the potential to be replaced and incorporated into the new SFPA and NCFA developments. The City is in the process of preparing Urban Design Guidelines for the entire municipality. These guidelines should include specific built-form facade improvement and heritage guidelines for the Downtown. They should reinforce the sensitive integration of new development with existing built-form and should provide clear, simple strategies that are easily achievable by property owners and developers.

Urban Design and Built Form Principles:

- Compatibility of new and old building form;
- Preservation of views;
- Maintain consistent setbacks along Downtown streets;
- Building design to address the street; and,
- Promoting mixed-use development.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATED IMPLEMENTATION

This Master Plan was initiated by and jointly guided with hands-on involvement by the Directors of both the Planning and the Economic Development and Tourism Services departments. Through a careful combination of modifying planning policy and tools with reinforcing and building new economic development efforts, the Master Plan has the potential to be implemented over the short and long terms. There is already a demonstrated commitment to an integrated approach towards implementation through the coordination of planning policy changes with marketing and incentive programs. By working together, as well as critical input of other departments, such as Recreation and Community Services, Transportation and others, efforts can be focused and convey the City's dedication to recapturing a vibrant, healthy and innovative Downtown.

The following table provides a preliminary summary of how planning policy and economic development could continue to work in tandem to facilitate coordinated development. The supporting specific planning, transportation and urban form recommendations have been presented in Section 7 of this report. Strategies for building an economic development business case and promotion of the Master Plan to attract investment to the Downtown are presented later subsequent sections.

Planning Policy	Economic Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Master Plan as input to the current Official Plan Review to fulfill recent Provincial growth targets and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize the Master Plan as a tool to demonstrate that Provincial policies are being fulfilled as a means to obtain more governmental funding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with the Niagara Region's Growth Management Study to determine an appropriate population target. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Downtown marketing plan geared to the demographic and population targets of the Growth Management Study.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that land use policy delineates and reinforces the Downtown as the primary location for major office and major institutions, as well as major cultural and entertainment uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a dedicated Downtown Development Team from all relevant departments to facilitate new development that supports the Master Plan's and Downtown objectives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify preferred or priority areas for intensification and specific land uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate negotiation and strategic acquisition of key land parcels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Community Improvement Plan to address parking incentives, broader qualifications to building and streetscape improvement, community and art spaces, sustainability; and, streamline the application process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a "portfolio" of preferred development sites, with illustrative proformas and impacts of the applicable incentive programs on the development costs. Establish a business plan that maintains existing incentives and incorporates new programs, such as brownfield redevelopment, to improve the financial viability and innovation of projects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a new Downtown Secondary Plan that is simplified and flexible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the economic and development experience semi-annually and make recommendations to planning policy as market conditions evolve.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Streetscape Master Plan that identifies priority and phased improvements with capital costing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicize and promote public streetscape improvements to attract private sector investment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to expand Heritage Designations to include cultural heritage landscapes. Develop achievable building / façade improvement guidelines as part of new Downtown Urban Design Guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimize and promote the Heritage Loan and Heritage Grant programs under the Ontario Heritage Act as an incentive for owners to upgrade their properties, attract adaptive re-use development for existing Downtown building stock and finance public space improvements.



8.1 Steps for Economic Development Implementation

The preparation of Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan is the first and very important step in the long process of returning the Downtown area of St Catharines to the focal position of the community that it should represent. This decline in its role has occurred over a long period and its full restoration cannot be accomplished quickly. For this reason, it is very important that everyone who will be involved in the process recognizes that a sustained effort will be required over a period of years in order for the area to become the vibrant and prosperous creative centre of Niagara. The City has already embarked on Action Plan with its 2006 Strategic Plan. This Plan should be reviewed in the content of the Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan to ensure coordinated objectives.

To achieve success, the plan will need to be implemented on a number of different fronts:

- City;
- Public and government agencies; and,
- Private sector.

8.1.1 The City Must Take the Lead

The City must take the lead in implementing the Master Plan. Its first step should be to take “ownership.” In doing so, there should be a clear recognition that the Plan will not happen of its own accord and will require a substantial investment of time and resources by the City and other public and private participants. It is also important that expectations concerning the pace of progress be realistic.

While there are certainly short-term initiatives that can be undertaken, major investments usually take years rather than months to get underway. Specific steps that the City should consider taking include:

- Establishing a Permanent Downtown Advisory Committee: having such a committee would provide an ongoing forum for the Master Plan;
- Dedicate Staff Resources to the Downtown Plan: This could be provided through Economic Development and Tourism services or Planning. As well, a development team drawn from all relevant departments should be established; and,
- Prepare a Business Plan: The City should develop a business plan which:
 - o specifies projects which the City will undertake;
 - o provides a budget for project costs;
 - o identifies sources of funds to pay for the projects; and,
 - o sets out a timetable.



8.1.2 Public and Government Agencies

The second group of stakeholders that can play an important role in the rejuvenation of the Downtown area are other public and government agencies. In particular, because of the location of specific facilities and departments of post-secondary institutions (Brock University and Niagara College), the Downtown would bring significant numbers of additional people during the academic year. Institutions of this type are also in a position to make much longer-term commitments to buildings than private sector organizations. Student residences can also be a good source of additional population in the Downtown area.

- *Source of Development:* Niagara Region and the Provincial and Federal governments can also be a source of stable long-term employment. The Provincial Ministry of Transportation in the MTO building is a prime example. All levels of government should therefore be enlisted in support of the Plan. The designation of St. Catharines as an Urban Growth Centre adds greater weight to the argument to locate public offices in the Downtown.
- *Source of Funding:* The second role that other public agencies and governments can play is as a financial sponsor for the plan. To this end, the City should aggressively pursue financial support for the public infrastructure components of the plan. In doing so, a number of points will need to be emphasized:
 - o One-time and recurring economic impact of the capital investment;
 - o Direct short- and long-term employment created;
 - o Scale of likely private sector investment stimulated by investment in public infrastructure;
 - o Demonstrating the support of the objectives of sustainable development and the Province's *Places to Grow* policies provided by investments in the downtown; and,
 - o Clear indication of the City's own contribution.

The City is already utilizing funding programs or initiatives from other levels of government. These include:

- Industry Canada-CISP Community Investment Support Program to market St. Catharines internationally;
- Ministry of Economic Development and Trade-Communities in Transition Fund-various funding programs to support the development of new industry clusters;
- Ministry of Research and Innovation-various funds (the proposal attached in the Appendix would be geared towards this ministry);
- Ontario Media Development Corporation-interactive arts funds; and,
- Ministry of Culture.

The City recently received a \$200,000 grant for the Interactive Media Arts Cluster through funding from the Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC) which is the Ontario Ministry of Culture's catalyst agency for cultural media cluster development.

Obtaining funding support from other levels of government will be an ongoing requirement for the City. It should therefore aim to constantly improve its skill in this area. A key component in that regard will be to enlist support from all elements of the community, especially from key members of the business, the arts communities, as well as other important organizations in the City and the region. The City should consider giving greater weight to these stakeholders by appointing a number of high-profile individuals to act as champions for the Downtown. It is suggested that they be drawn from a range of backgrounds, including business, education, the arts, the real estate and development industry. A member of Council could also be included.



8.1.3 Promoting Awareness with the Public and Governmental Agencies

A number of steps can be taken to promote awareness and support from the public and governmental agencies. The knowledge, experience, and ideas of local residents, merchants, industries, and patrons of the Downtown and surrounding area is essential to determine specifics on how to enhance the quality of place of the Downtown. To engage public participation and promote public awareness, the following actions should be taken:

- Create a website to hold information and drawings for public viewing and comments;
- Engage public discussion and debate through articles in local newspapers;
- Hold a public open house;
- Distribute brochures at the Downtown Library, City Hall, and Farmers' Market;
- Engage the local arts community in discussions regarding community art space and housing needs; and,
- Engage local industries to pinpoint issues and opportunities for growth in the Downtown.

Support from governmental and other public agencies is also essential in gaining support for the Creative Cluster Master Plan. The proposed Master Plan should be circulated to stakeholder agencies, the Regional, and the Provincial governments and they should be invited to provide their comments.

8.1.4 Private Sector

While investments by the City and other public entities will play a key role, the largest share of investment will come from private sector. The most important component will be construction of new office, retail and residential projects. Reinvestment in existing buildings will also be a significant element, especially retail space. Finally, the private sector will be making an indirect investment through the expenditures of the additional people working and living Downtown together with new shoppers and tourists.

Because of the importance of private sector investment to the overall success of the plan, the City should consider a number of steps.

a) Establishing a Downtown Development Team

The team would be led by the member of staff with full-time responsibility of implementing the Master Plan. This person should be supported by members from other departments that have a regular role involving the Downtown. Other people could be added to the team as needed on a project-by-project basis.

The objective of the development team would be to provide:

- Support to the City's overall efforts to implement the Master Plan;
- Quick turnaround support to development applications and ongoing projects;
- Promotional and other information to prospective investors, developers and businesses considering locating in the downtown area; and,
- A structure to enlist members of the Downtown Revitalization Committee and other members of the public to identify a develop community-scaled tasks that could optimize the energy, ideas and



resources of private individuals or smaller community agencies.

b) Review the City's Incentive Programs

Incentives can play a key role in improving the financial viability of projects. Working through the Community Improvement Plan for the Downtown, the City should:

- Continue the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant program currently offered;
- Continue to exempt developments in the Downtown from development charges;
- Provide support for brownfield remediation including making efforts to attract matching Provincial support; and,
- To the degree that is financially feasible, consider enhancing existing incentives and adding new programs.

In doing so, consideration should be given to ensuring that the application process is straightforward and the approval process is fast. Review of successes and issues should be undertaken every five years.

c) Identify Development Opportunities and Promote to the Development Industry

The development team should work with local property owners, real estate brokerage and members of development industry to identify potential developments:

- The sites and potential projects should be described with relevant supporting data and grouped into a "portfolio" for marketing purposes;
- Consideration should be given to preparing illustrative pro-formas for some of the key potential development sites in order to demonstrate project potential. A key point to be emphasized would be the impact of the City's various incentive programs. The pro-formas should be developed with input from local builders, developers and real estate brokers. The assumptions used should

be credible. Examples of development should be included; and,

- Working with the support of the real estate development and brokerage community, the City's Downtown Development team should broadly promote the development potential of the Downtown.

d) Consider Potential Role of City for Key Site Assemblies

On an exceptional basis, the City should consider playing a role as a catalyst in order to get key projects started. This role could take the form of acting as a facilitator in order to get parties together. In more rare situations, the City should consider acquiring strategically important parcels in order to achieve important objectives of the downtown plan. Such acquisitions could be by way of expropriation in special cases.

e) Progress Monitoring

Monitoring progress will be important to the successful implementation of the plan. A report should be made semi-annually. The report should publicize successes and make recommendations for changes to the plan as dictated by evolving market conditions and results.

8.2 Short and Long Term Planning Objectives for the Creative Cluster

This study is timely in that the City of St. Catharines is currently undertaking a comprehensive Official Plan Review. With that in mind, a number of the recommendations can be phased accordingly.

Short-term Objectives

- Appropriately designate employment and residential intensification an infill areas identified in the Master Plan. The City had undertaken an inventory analysis as part of their *Official Plan Review Issues Report*. Utilize the findings of this report as rationale for determining appropriate densities;
- The Region of Niagara is currently undertaking a Growth Management Study. Determine the forecasted population for St. Catharines, and determine an appropriate population target specifically for the Downtown;
- Develop a revised secondary plan to permit mixed-use and live-work in the land use designations;
- Simplify the land use designations in line with the Official Plan review;
- Revise the Industrial and Mixed Industrial-Commercial designations so that future professional services/office uses will be directed away from suburban locales, and towards the Downtown. Revise the permitted uses of the Downtown land use designations to reflect the office uses permitted by the Industrial and Mixed Industrial-Commercial designations; and,
- Establish requisite policy and guidelines mentioned in Section 8.1 to provide an environment that is flexible to entice investment, and to allow for the prescribed developments when the market can support them.

Long-term Objectives

- Establish a strategy to retain Brock University and Niagara College graduates to stay in St. Catharines as a place of employment and residence. This will help increase the talent pool, or “Talent Index” in St. Catharines. (This refers to Richard Florida’s measure of the local talent pool, counting the proportion of the population over 18 years of age with a bachelor’s degree or higher.)
- Attracting the diverse population of University and College graduates, and fostering a culturally open and diverse environment will create a multicultural sense of place, and add to the Downtown’s “Mosaic Index”. (Richard Florida uses the Mosaic Index to show the proportion of the total population that is foreign born.)
- Create incentives to attract into the Downtown not only high density major employers, but also smaller scale start-up firms and entrepreneurs who have the potential to grow into high density major employers.
- Attract more high-tech industries into the Downtown, and continue to shape St. Catharines as the Region’s high-tech centre. Brock University and Niagara College Computer Science departments, and other regional research and educational institutions are good starting points. This would contribute to the Downtown’s “Tech-pole Index”. (Richard Florida uses the Tech-pole Index to compare the region’s share of national employment in high-tech technology industries to the region’s overall share of national employment.)

Short and Long Term Creative Cluster Projects

Projects / Public Initiatives	Short Term 1 – 4 years	Medium Term 5 – 15 years	Long Term 11 – 25 years	Comments
SFPA + NCFA	●			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Master Plan provides for a range of site opportunities for the SFPA/NCFA. The current City/Brook site, program and feasibility study will identify a preferred site This project has the potential to catalyze main street commercial revitalization along St. Paul St. It will establish the arts community in the Downtown as the basis for a Creative Cluster.
Interactive Media Cluster		●		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cluster's immediate location is 1 St. Paul Street Need for facilities expansion will be determined over time and can occur in many locations in the Master Plan.
Carlisle Parking Garage Redevelopment	●	●		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Carlisle Garage's poor repair determines this as the short term need and increased parking is an immediate need. A mixed-use / parking complex could be a major Downtown catalyst for change.
Lower Level Lot Mixed-use / Parking Redevelopment	●	●		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project is a key component of the Master Plan to link St. Paul to the Lower Level If constructed first, would provide replacement parking during the Carlisle redevelopment. Parking developments would be evaluated after the completion of the initial project.
Major Vertical Access at 132-136 St. Paul St.	●			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to build the first access is immediate, as demolition of the building is planned in the near future.
Niagara Regional Police Headquarters	●			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retaining the Regional Police in Niagara's only Urban Growth Centre is key to success of the Downtown.
Wine Route and Wine Embassy		●		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Wine Route re-orientation would likely follow demonstrated success of the larger projects and streetscape improvements.
Private Development		●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private development will be encouraged immediately, but will depend on the market and demonstration of other initiatives.
Streetscape Improvements	●			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the attractiveness and sense of safety in the Downtown is a key criteria for new businesses to come Downtown
Ongoing Policy Review	●	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City is in the process of an Official Plan Review and other studies to align Downtown development with new Provincial Growth Policy.
Downtown Marketing and Branding Strategy	●			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize the Master Plan to identify preferred development areas, illustrate their potential and publicize the City's public realm and infrastructure commitments
Downtown Development Team and Business Plan	●			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint key people from all relevant City Departments to facilitate Downtown projects. Use budget projections to guide initiatives.



Fig 50: View of the existing Downtown

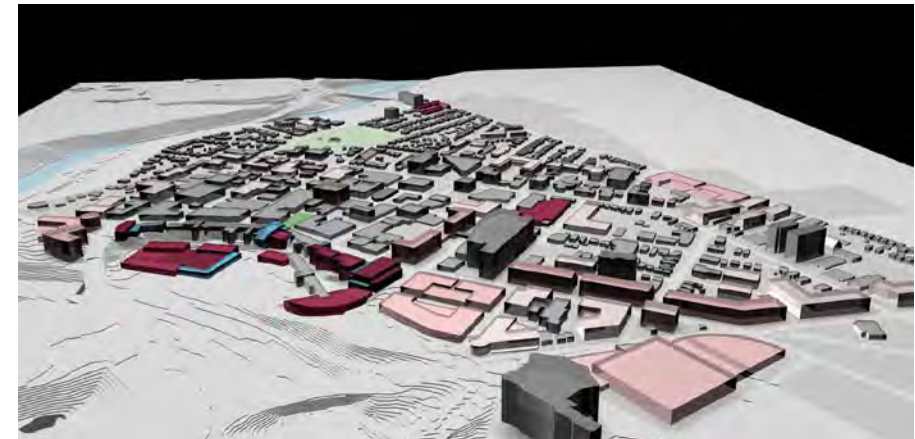


Fig 51: View of the Downtown Creative Cluster Master Plan with phased development

9.0 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Creative Cluster Master Plan was to explore how the potential impacts and synergies of a unique set of public and private investments could combine to revitalize Downtown St. Catharines. The project's primary goal was to position these initiatives within an overall framework of long term intensification and growth that supports and utilizes recent Provincial planning and growth management policies. Furthermore, the combination of these initiatives in the context of focused growth and revitalization positioned the Master Plan as more than an intensification study, but an opportunity to lay the foundation for a Downtown Creative Cluster to develop.

The Master Plan presents a broad concept for Downtown investment and redevelopment. It identifies areas across the Downtown that present redevelopment opportunity and it provides guidance on the potential locations for specific investment initiatives that support these areas of intensification and revitalization. The underlying objective is to redefine St. Catharines Downtown as an attractive, safe, vibrant and economically viable place to live, shop, play and do business.

This document and the Master Plan concept are the result of collaboration, guidance and contributions by key members of staff as well as the Downtown Revitalization Task Force Committee and other stakeholders. Input revealed that embarking on a comprehensive plan for Downtown revitalization touches on many critical issues that may need more detailed exploration in separate, focused studies. Already, the Master Plan parallels such focused studies with the Official Plan Review; the Program, Site and Feasibility Study for the Brock University SFPA and NCFA; and, the Region's Growth Management Study.

The Master Plan should be used as a tool or benchmark to guide these initial stages of redevelopment, investment and policy changes. As stated in the Section 8.0, the City must take the lead to implement the Plan; joint involvement from the public and governmental agencies and the private sector are needed; and, that such expectations on the timing and coordination of progress and transformation are realistic. As the Downtown develops, the Master Plan should be revisited and updated to reflect the changes that will occur over time and confirm the evolving visions and priorities for the Downtown.

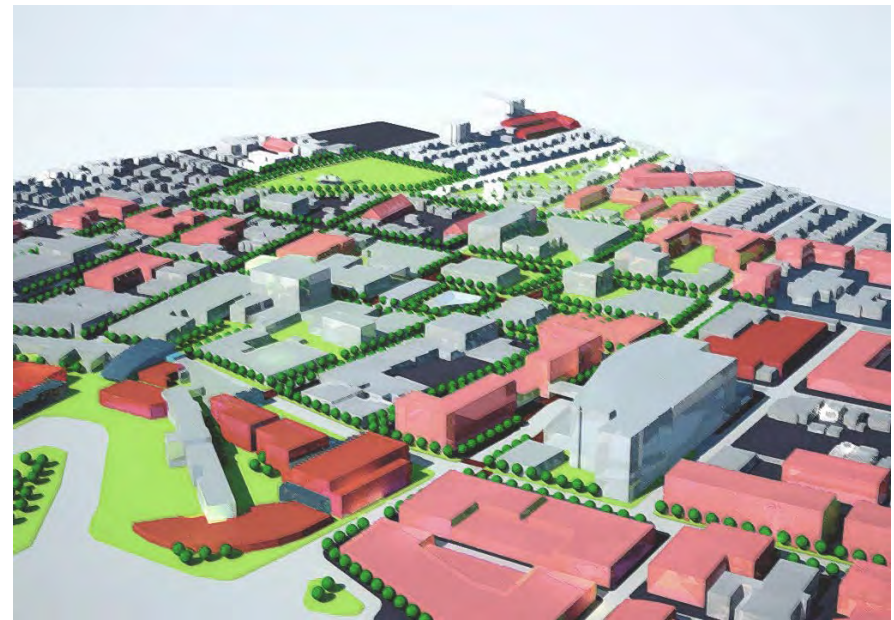


Fig 52: Schematic rendering of the Master Plan and Open Space System.



Appendix

- List of Background Documents
- St. Catharines Interactive Media Arts Cluster Grant - Economic Development and Tourism Services
- Creative Cluster Briefing Notes from the St. Catharines Culture Committee Official Plan Review Process

List of Background Reports Information

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 Property Data and Mapping:
Aerial View Downtown St. Catharines with Street Names
Property Lines, Building Footprints, Curbs and Street Addresses for Downtown St. Catharines