



July 11, 2023

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa and Council
Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake
1593 Four Mile Creek Road
PO Box 100
Virgil, Ontario
L0S 1T0

Re: 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan

Dear Lord Mayor and Council:

Earlier this year we wrote to you expressing our hope that the strategic planning process would, for the upcoming term, include a focus on heritage. We noted that the previous Council's strategic priorities gave a degree of prominence to heritage (i.e., the first objective of the first pillar "Preserve Unique Community Elements"). Further, we called out the importance placed on planning in Pillar Two ("Deliver Smart Balanced Growth"), recognizing the inevitability of growth but not in an unconstrained, non-compatible manner.

The current strategic planning process is well underway, and has included engagement with Council, staff and residents. Further input is expected from select stakeholders before the draft plan is presented to Council at the end of this month.

In reviewing materials available to date, (e.g., the staff report from May 18th, and the accompanying slide deck), we were disappointed to see how little attention appears to be given to heritage, culture and/or development issues. The four proposed Pillars (slide 17) contain not a single reference to heritage (as opposed to top billing in the previous Council's plan). This, despite the slide deck section on "Future: Potential New Priorities & Goals" including: heritage (slide 15) and development guidelines (slide 14). The SWOT analysis (slide 5) also includes "heritage" and "physical and cultural assets" as strengths and points out "diminishing natural & heritage assets" as a threat.

Input from residents, through the online and in-person feedback sessions, raises similar concerns. In Victoria Steele's June 13th presentation to Council, a summary of "What's missing?"—in the strategic plan—included protection of heritage and more funding for arts and culture. We believe these are fundamental, broad-based desires of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, not the wish list of a loud, change-resistant minority.

I also wanted to take the opportunity to remind Council of the planning, heritage and related questions we put to all of you during the election. We were encouraged by your responses which demonstrated:

- Unanimous agreement to investigate expanding the heritage district; and
- Unanimous interest in reviewing (and in almost all cases, expanding) the use of contextual zoning/architecture.

We believe these initiatives and a broader commitment to heritage are aligned with the preferences of most NOTLers.

As always, we look forward to working with Council over this coming term and encourage you to make use of resources, such as The Niagara Foundation, to help you achieve your objectives. The Niagara Foundation would welcome the opportunity to participate in the final stakeholder input to the strategic plan.

Thank you for your consideration

Yours very truly,

The Niagara Foundation



Lyle Hall
Chair