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 CityofStCatharines

# 2015

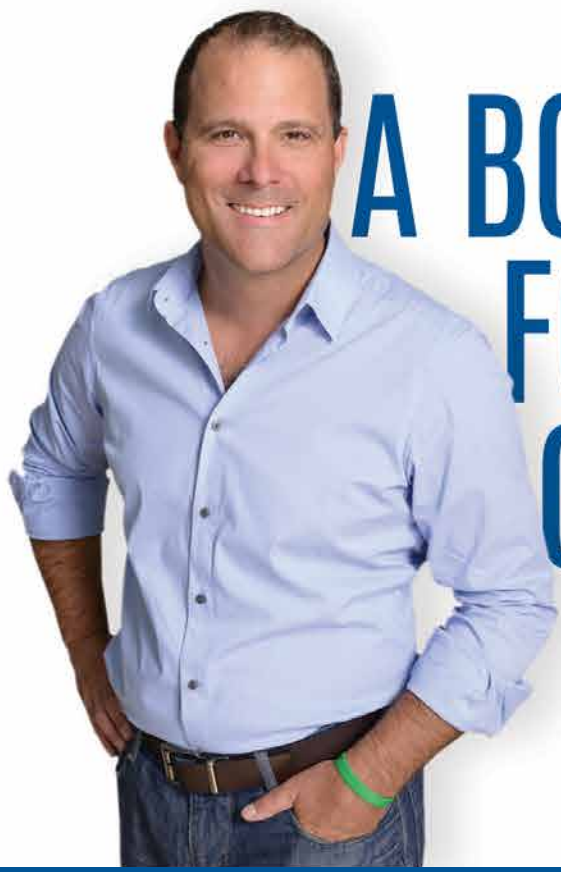
## ST. CATHARINES STRATEGIC PLAN

### SUSTAINABILITY



# 2025





# A BOLD PLAN FOR A GREAT CITY

## OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE IS: for St. Catharines to be the most dynamic, innovative, sustainable, and livable city in North America.

The world is getting smaller. The cities that are thriving and competing in the global economy are designing plans that harness innovation, sustainability and culture to attract the brightest of minds and economic investment. We are in a global fight for talent and private sector investment. The conventional ways to compete are no longer an option.

To compete today and tomorrow we need bold and unconventional approaches to build a city that is future ready. We need a plan that harnesses our natural assets, one that taps into our vast human capital, which builds on our rich history of innovation and entrepreneurship. We need a plan that empowers the creative forces in our community to be the next generation of opportunity.

We can be a leading North American city – and this strategic plan sets the course for St. Catharines to become the most dynamic, innovative, sustainable, and livable city in North America. It's a bold vision – and I believe it's within us to achieve.

St. Catharines is on the verge of something great. The St. Catharines 2015 – 2025 Strategic Plan charts the course for a city that has the foundation in place to build up a city that not only competes in North America – but takes the lead.

This plan builds on the leadership of previous councils to support and build a new state of the art St. Catharines hospital, the Meridian Centre, the FirstOntario Performing

Arts Centre and through innovative partnerships that led to the relocation of Brock University's Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts into downtown St. Catharines. These publicly-funded assets need to be the catalyst for private sector investments that will drive the prosperity of our great city.

**“We need to believe that we can be a leading North American city.”**

This plan has been designed to be measured and monitored as we progress towards our vision to become a leading city in North

America. Over the next 10 years – building on our strengths and harnessing the potential of this plan – we will emerge as one of the leading cities in North America. We will become a beacon for global investment, for innovation, for sustainability, and for cultural diversity and leading edge creativity.

There was a time when St. Catharines was a leader in Ontario, in Canada and indeed in North America. It was a time that created immense opportunity for families and for businesses. This plan is the collective vision of Council and City staff. We believe our city will lead again. This plan will create a sustainable community that will keep young people in our city, that will see families enjoy the highest quality of life, and for older adults to enjoy their retirement years with their family and friends.

**This is our strategic plan.  
It is a bold plan for a great city.**

**Walter Sendzik, Mayor of St. Catharines**

### Our **MISSION:**

Together with our community and guided by our strategic goals, we will provide quality municipal services that enhance our **social** fabric, **environmental** sustainability, and **cultural** vitality; contributing to **economic** prosperity in our community.



# MOVING ST. CATHARINES FORWARD

When I was hired as Chief Administrative Officer, I told Council the three most important things at the City of St. Catharines are: Council engagement, citizen engagement and employee engagement.

Strategic planning is an important tool which sets priorities, focuses energy and resources, strengthens our operations, and ensures that we are working toward common goals. As well, it allows us to assess and adjust our direction in response to a constantly changing environment.

This Strategic Plan also allows us to bring all three forms of engagement to the forefront. It establishes a vision of what Council hopes to achieve and helps to formulate staff work plans and budget priorities. It enhances our accountability and transparency.

We are pleased to share our team's priorities with our community to ensure we continue to move forward in a positive direction.

As a thriving, innovative and diverse community, it is important that we, as a City, plan for the future and reassess our long-term goals to ensure we are meeting or exceeding expectations as we strive to provide exemplary programs and services.

The City of St. Catharines' staff is dedicated to the needs of our residents. Council's Strategic Plan will help staff and our advisory committees to better understand the long-term objectives and with their assistance, together we can achieve much.

**Moving forward, we will continue to work together to build a sustainable future for our city and our residents.**

**Dan Carnegie**  
Chief Administrative Officer, City of St. Catharines



David Haywood



Mike Britton



Sandie Bellows



Jennie Stevens



Sal Sorrento



Bill Phillips



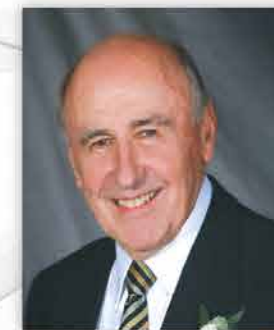
Matt Harris



Mark Elliott



Carlos Garcia



Joe Kushner



Mat Siscoe



Bruce Williamson

## ST. CATHARINES CITY COUNCILLORS





# ST. CATHARINES IS NO STRANGER TO HARD WORK AND INNOVATION.

From the pioneers whose footpaths laid the foundation for today's road system to the men and women who helped produce the vehicles that would travel these same streets, first at McKinnon Dash and later at General Motors, St. Catharines citizens are builders.

We are visionaries who built the Welland Canal – not once but four times – giving St. Catharines the opportunity to welcome the world to its doorstep. When it established the first commercial electric railway in 1879, St. Catharines was once again in the international spotlight.

These pursuits lived in harmony with St. Catharines' agricultural strengths, the bountiful harvests from which earned the city the name "Garden City," a moniker that continues today.

The hard work and innovation of our citizens built a city that was a hub of commercial and industrial activity, and made it the heart of the Niagara peninsula.

But just as important as these accomplishments, St. Catharines created a community people wanted to call home. Underground Railroad conductor Harriett Tubman led escaped slaves to freedom in St. Catharines, while others were attracted to the opportunities the City held for the ambitious and hard working.

It is this St. Catharines that we must remember as we plan our future – the industrious city that provided a better life for its citizens. While we may have lost our way in more recent times, St. Catharines' long-history as builders and innovators will serve us well as we move towards our future.

The spirit of the St. Catharines citizens who built this community still exists today. And by working together we can harness that spirit to build a community that is prosperous, strong and innovative, and is truly our home.



## OUR HERITAGE



HONORABLE WILLIAM  
HAMILTON MERRITT





# READY FOR THE FUTURE

A stronghold of manufacturing for over a century, St. Catharines industrial landscape is changing. While traditional manufacturing remains an important part of the St. Catharines economy, there is substantial growth in knowledge-based and creative industries and the City is making investments to support this growth.

The city has quickly emerged as a digital media hub, with key partners in this sector being Innovate Niagara and the Generator at One, which are laying the groundwork for new projects in St. Catharines and acting as an incubator for new, emerging businesses.

St. Catharines is a leader in the health and wellness sector, which is poised for future growth. With a network of public and private organizations, research resources and academic institutions – St. Catharines is positioned to play a central role. The city is home to Brock University's \$112-million Cairns Family Health and Bioscience Research Complex which includes Biolinc, a bioscience incubator that is on the leading edge. This research complex is complemented by a new \$900-million state-of-the-art regional health care complex and cancer centre, as well as the McMaster Niagara Family Health Centre, Clinical Training Unit, McMaster University's Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine at Brock University, and Quest Community Health Centre.

But there is more to building a community than businesses. St. Catharines also needs to be a place people want to live. Recognizing this, the City has made important investments in the community to improve quality of life, revitalize our City's core, encourage additional private investment, and support the arts and culture sector.

St. Catharines is home to a number of sports facilities, such as the world-renowned Henley Rowing Course, the new 48,000 sq. ft. St. Catharines Kiwanis Aquatics Centre, and the Meridian Centre spectator facility, which is home to our OHL team, the Niagara IceDogs.

Downtown St. Catharines is the new home of Brock University's Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, which will be complemented by the City's new FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, putting local, national and international talent on centre stage. When combined these items represent the building blocks of a downtown renaissance which will transform our core into the vibrant heart of our city.

**AS A COMMUNITY WE HAVE BUILT  
THE FOUNDATION WHERE PEOPLE WANT  
TO LIVE AND WORK. NOW WE MUST  
SET THE COURSE FOR THE FUTURE.**



# OUR CITY, OUR FUTURE



St. Catharines is an ever-evolving community full of vibrant neighbourhoods rich in culture and heritage. It's a place where people want to live, work, visit and play.

Revitalization, infrastructure investment, and building more walkable communities will continue to be priorities for our city's future. But we must look beyond the traditional focus, demonstrate our leadership and embrace change.

Strategic planning is about looking forward and establishing a vision to be achieved or enhanced by attaining specific goals and supporting objectives over a period of time.

To ensure we are on the right path to a bright and prosperous future, it is important Council set the stage, establish priorities and ensure our Garden City continues to grow. We need to capture new possibilities, support community development and continue to move forward in a positive direction.

In this Strategic Plan, Council has identified a clear vision for the future state of the community and the organization, along with a mission statement to guide progress through four key sustainability pillars.

City Council and City staff are committed to setting achievable goals and objectives that will ensure a bright and prosperous future.

## TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS, WE MUST BE UNITED IN OUR APPROACH.







# SUSTAINABILITY

## SUSTAINABILITY GOES BEYOND BEING AN ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACH.

True sustainability is an economic, social, environmental and cultural approach that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

**This multi-dimensional approach, which forms the basis of Tending the Garden City – the City of St. Catharines Sustainability Strategy – is based on the four pillars of sustainability:**



**ECONOMIC**



**SOCIAL**



**ENVIRONMENTAL**



**CULTURAL**

Sustainability is not an end state – instead it is an ongoing process that allows the City to make continuous improvements and shift its approach to how it plans, prepares for long-term challenges and establishes goals.

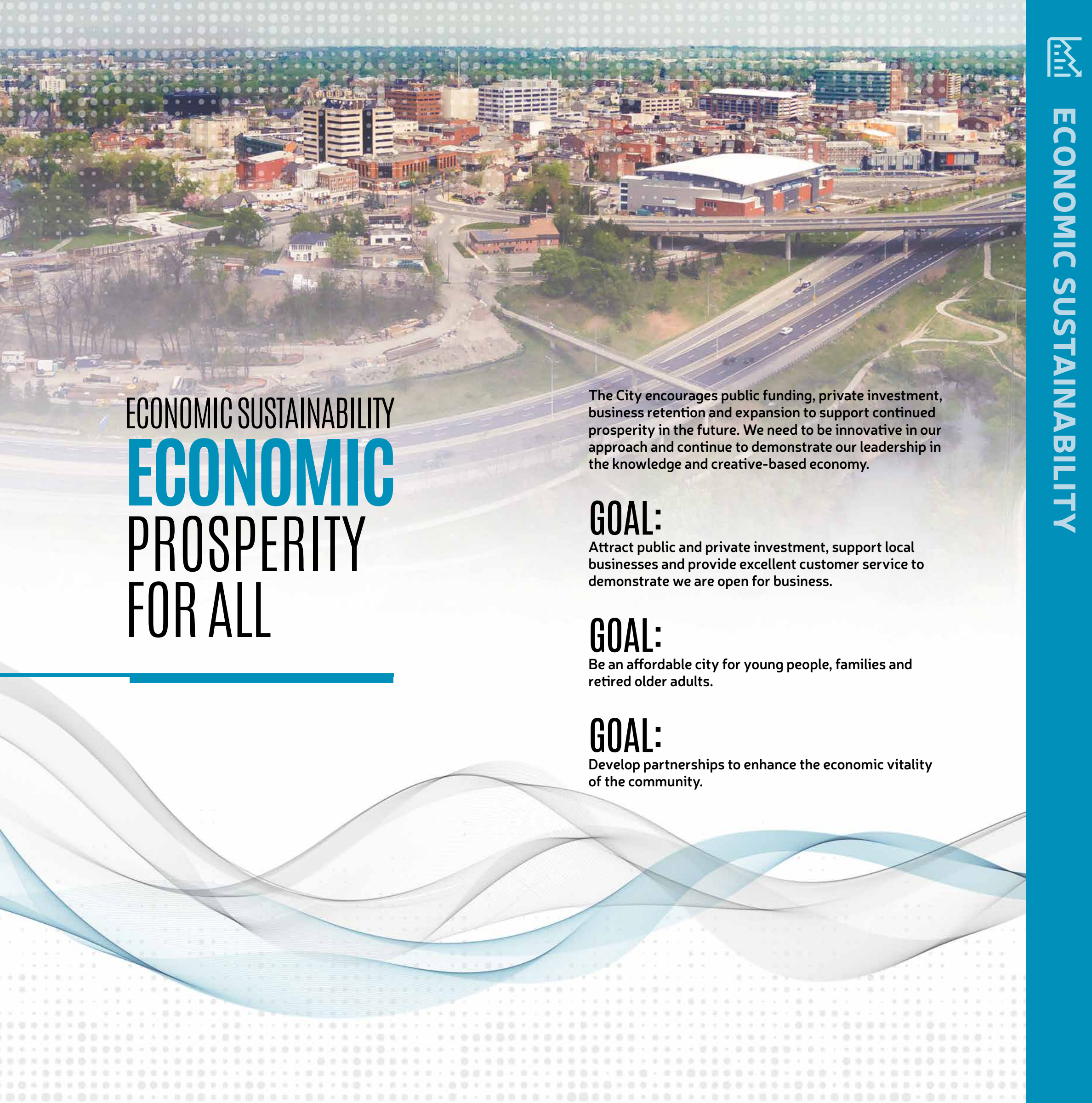
The Strategic Plan 2015-2025 reflects the City's commitment to sustainability in all forms by identifying 11 strategic goals with more than 40 action items in the areas of economic, social, environmental and cultural sustainability. Together these represent not only a plan, but a commitment to create a better future for our citizens, visitors and businesses.

## THE WAY FORWARD

**To achieve our vision for St. Catharines to become the most dynamic, innovative, sustainable and livable city in North America, we must build upon the goals set out in the Strategic Plan.**

**For each goal, a number of specific action items have been identified. These action items will assist and ensure Council and City staff work together to move the city forward. Together we can achieve great things.**





ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY  
**ECONOMIC**  
PROSPERITY  
FOR ALL

The City encourages public funding, private investment, business retention and expansion to support continued prosperity in the future. We need to be innovative in our approach and continue to demonstrate our leadership in the knowledge and creative-based economy.

**GOAL:**

Attract public and private investment, support local businesses and provide excellent customer service to demonstrate we are open for business.

**GOAL:**

Be an affordable city for young people, families and retired older adults.

**GOAL:**

Develop partnerships to enhance the economic vitality of the community.





**GOAL:** Attract public and private investment, support local businesses and provide excellent customer service to demonstrate we are open for business.

**ACTIONS:**

- Develop an integrated Economic Development Strategy to incubate, retain and attract businesses complete with annual reporting to Council and metrics to demonstrate impact and success.
- Prioritize redevelopment initiatives consistent with provincial planning legislation and the City's Official Plan to intensify mixed-use residential developments and ultimately enhance the property tax base and support job creation.
- Focus on the redevelopment of the commercial core of Port Dalhousie, the General Motors and Hotel Dieu sites on Ontario Street, and the former General Hospital site on Queenston Street, setting target dates for redevelopment for each project with quarterly updates to Council.
- Develop a funding formula for the Community Improvement Program, brownfield improvement programs and other development enhancement programs that support the goal of community redevelopment with the ability for the City to manage financial impacts of the funding program on an annual basis.
- Identify and quantify the City's technology requirements for the next four years for long-term cost savings, and to improve service delivery and enhance customer service.

**GOAL:** Be an affordable city for young people, families and retired older adults.

**ACTIONS:**

- Update financial controls and debt management strategy to better manage escalating costs of City operations and services.
- Establish program performance management and reporting systems that demonstrate value for service.
- Institute a core service review process.
- Optimize capital infrastructure through effective asset management and sustainable investment.
- Implement multi-year budgeting to improve long-term financial planning.
- Work towards achieving a budgetary tax rate increase at or below the rate of inflation by 2018.

**GOAL:** Develop partnerships to enhance the economic vitality of the community.

**ACTIONS:**

- Work with the Niagara Region to complete an integrated Transportation Master Plan by 2017.
- In partnership with the Niagara Region and local municipalities secure daily, year-round GO Train commuter service.
- In partnership with St. Catharines Transit Commission and the cities of Niagara Falls and Welland develop a regionally-integrated transit system.
- Work with Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Falls city councils to transfer operations of the Niagara District Airport to the Niagara Region.

 **ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY  
RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS**





# SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY A DYNAMIC COMMUNITY FOR EVERYONE

A prosperous St. Catharines requires a strong sense of community pride. To achieve this goal, the focus must be on improving the quality of life, enhancing accessibility, and the inclusion of all residents, newcomers and students.

## **GOAL:**

Strive for the highest quality of life for all citizens.

## **GOAL:**

Connect people, places and neighbourhoods.

## **GOAL:**

Provide excellent customer service and communication with citizens.







## SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

### RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

**GOAL:** Strive for the highest quality of life for all citizens.

#### ACTIONS:

- Prioritize and implement recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan with a focus on balancing recreation services for all ages, demographics and abilities.
- Establish an annual St. Catharines Quality of Life report to measure and monitor impacts on bettering the lives of those living in our community.
- Implement the objectives of *A City for All Ages*, the City's older adult plan, to build age-friendly community programs and services.
- Expand implementation of the St. Catharines Accessibility Plan.
- Design annual youth and older adults forums to include benchmarks and metrics on how to continuously improve the city.

**GOAL:** Connect people, places and neighbourhoods.

#### ACTIONS:

- To be a city that embraces connectivity between people, places and neighbourhoods.
- Establish a complete neighbourhood matrix to ensure that the redevelopment of properties enhance the livability of neighbourhoods.
- Accelerate the implementation of active transportation networks that link people with parks, trails and waterfronts and support the development of complete streets.
- Work with the City's Town and Gown Committee to identify ways to create an environment that encourages inclusion, and increases student engagement and participation from Brock University and Niagara College.
- Work together with local organizations and other levels of government to support the successful settlement and integration of newcomers, celebrate our diversity, and create a welcoming and inclusive community.
- Establish a civic square in Downtown St. Catharines.
- Launch free Wi-Fi connection zones in Downtown St. Catharines.
- Utilize open data to improve livability in the city.

**GOAL:** Provide excellent customer service and communication with citizens.

#### ACTIONS:

- Develop and implement a plan using innovative new technologies to enhance two-way communications between residents and the City.
- Identify opportunities to expand the Citizens First initiative and conduct performance reviews to ensure continuous improvement of customer service.
- Re-image city hall to demonstrate it is warm and welcoming to residents and visitors alike.





ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY

# GREENING THE GARDEN CITY

We must ensure the necessary environmental protections are in place, invest in our green infrastructure, conserve and preserve our natural resources, and prepare for climate change. We must be mindful of the legacy we leave future generations.

## GOAL:

Lead in the protection of our environment for future generations.

## GOAL:

Be prepared for the impacts of climate change.





## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

### RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

**GOAL:** Lead in the protection of our environment for future generations.

#### ACTIONS:

- Establish a plan to integrate green energy and sustainable technologies in municipal infrastructure and program delivery.
- Continue to achieve tree canopy targets as identified in the Urban Forestry Management Plan.
- Increase protection of our water resources by working with partners to reduce pollution and ensure long-term sustainability.
- Maintain and enhance the health and accessibility of our waterfront through the Waterfront Trail system, municipal beaches, rivers and creeks, the Welland Canal and old canal systems by working with Niagara Region, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and other community partners on improvement projects.
- Support partnerships to expand the community gardens network across the city.

**GOAL:** Be prepared for the impacts of climate change.

#### ACTIONS:

- Review and update all municipal operations to minimize and prepare for the impacts of climate change including winter control procedures and flooding.
- Promote water conservation and protection of local water sources by working with the Niagara Region.







CULTURAL  
SUSTAINABILITY **INSPIRING**  
THE COMMUNITY  
THROUGH CULTURE

St. Catharines is committed to supporting the creative sector. Our community will continue to celebrate our local talent and encourage growth in arts and culture, which will help to attract new investment and retain young professionals.

**GOAL:**

Embrace our diversity and celebrate our heritage and history.

**GOAL:**

Be a leader in cultural sustainability through increased support for the creative sector.

**GOAL:**

Support cultural festivals and events that build civic pride, encourage local engagement and attract people to the community.







 **CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS**

**GOAL:** Embrace our diversity and celebrate our heritage and history.

**ACTIONS:**

- Prioritize and implement recommendations from the City's Culture Plan.
- Support the city's cultural and built heritage by completing a heritage building catalogue in partnership with the St. Catharines Heritage Advisory Committee.
- Explore potential opportunities for City-owned heritage properties to provide incubation space for arts and culture enterprises, and to build creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and community.

**GOAL:** Lead in cultural sustainability through increased support for the creative sector.

**ACTIONS:**

- Leverage relationships with Brock University's Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts, Rodman Hall, the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre and the Niagara Artists Centre to sustain Downtown St. Catharines as a leading centre for creativity and culture.
- Review planning guidelines and regulations to encourage live/work spaces in the downtown core.
- Support interactive digital media, cultural infrastructure and capacity-building in the arts sector to encourage job creation, support cultural tourism and engage residents in cultural experiences.
- Complete implementation and update the Creative Cluster Master Plan.

**GOAL:** Support cultural festivals and events that build civic pride, encourage local engagement and attract people to the community.

**ACTIONS:**

- Allocate funding and encourage strategies that will help to increase funding opportunities through community-led initiatives such as crowdfunding.





# ALIGNING OBJECTIVES

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH

The following plans and strategies were considered as part of the process to develop the Strategic Plan 2015 - 2025:

- **Corporate Priority Strategy**
- **Corporate Work Plan**
- **Garden City Plan (Official Plan)**
- **Tending the Garden City (Sustainability Strategy)**
- **Asset Management Strategy**
- **Continuous Improvement Strategy**
- **Creative Culture Master Plan**
- **Urban Forestry Management Plan**
- **Recreation Master Plan**
- **Culture Plan**
- **Older Adult Plan**
- **2013-2015 Accessibility Plan**

A number of the key actions identified in the Strategic Plan are part of ongoing projects, continuous improvement goals, or are incorporated in the City's corporate priorities or corporate work plan.

This demonstrates that Council and City staff are aligned in their strategic direction. With Council's endorsement of the Strategic Plan, staff can ensure resources are being spent on initiatives and projects that have been identified as priorities.

## MONITORING PROGRESS

To ensure the Strategic Plan continues to be incorporated with the City's short and long-term planning – regular progress reports will be presented to Council and available to the public through the City's website. It is part of the City's concerted effort to provide more performance reviews and progress reports to demonstrate that the community will continue to receive quality programs and services.

## SUCCESS

Our success moving forward is dependent on the support of our residents, community partners, educational institutions and businesses. Each day we must set goals, identify challenges and together, find solutions to make this great city, even greater.

Through this coordinated approach, the City of St. Catharines can strive to be the most dynamic, innovative, sustainable, and livable city in North America. Together we can build a sustainable future right here, in St. Catharines.