

# SCDA STRATEGIC PLAN

2020 - 2023



DO MORE IN THE CORE

**DOWN**  
**TOWN**

ST. CATHARINES

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# Message from SCDA

Our goal for this new strategic plan will help to lay the foundation for the next 50 years in downtown - a future that is better than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on downtowns and main streets across the world. It has shown us how incredibly innovative and resilient we are as a community but it has also exposed the areas where we need and must do better.

St. Catharines Downtown Association through our new strategic plan has created a vision for downtown that can be achieved if we all work together.

We are committed to creating a downtown that is inclusive, diverse, collaborative, supportive, innovative and accountable.



**Create a  
downtown where  
people tell us  
they can't wait to  
come back to.**

# The Process

The Thornton Group was retained to guide and facilitate the Strategic Planning process for the St. Catharines Downtown Association. Facilitation followed a three (3) part process of research, meetings, stakeholder engagement and design factors.

The strategic planning process was to include a full strategic plan, including a pictured vision, mission and set of core values. A list of clear goals were established including the goals themselves, objectives, tactics, steps, timelines and champions. The goal of the strategic plan was to not only provide a robust strategic plan, but to keep the goals concise and actionable in a way that execution would be focused and easily referenced.

Succession of the Executive Director position included assisting with the screening, interviewing and recruitment of this key role. Tisha Polocko's years of contribution and legacy were recognized and appreciated; and Rachel Braithwaite assumed the role with extensive experience including leading the Barton Street BIA in Hamilton. The recruitment process added time to the strategic planning process but proved well worth the efforts and no additional fees were incurred.

A number of meetings took place with the Board of Directors, Board Chair, Tisha and Rachel together, and the staff.

Select member engagement interviews, and a formal survey were scheduled to ensure all voices were heard and people had the opportunity to contribute to the future success of the Downtown Association.

This plan is created for the Downtown Association in partnership and guidance with The City of St. Catharines. We would like to acknowledge and thank all the Directors, staff, members and stakeholders for their valued contribution to this planning process

# Vision, Mission & Values

## Vision

With the City of St. Catharines we choose to lead massive shifts to be vibrant, diverse and pedestrian first downtown, where people tell us they can't wait to come back

## Mission

Participating in programs aimed at the physical improvement and beautification of the core, as well as the promotion of the Downtown as a great place in which to shop, work, dine, play, meet, live and explore.

A Nod to the Past - A Booming Present and Bright, Strong Future

Do more downtown where you'll discover eclectic shopping, diverse dining, vibrant entertainment and services to meet every need.

## Values

**Engaged, Committed, Invested, Collaborative**

Our individual success is connected with the success of the entire downtown and to achieve success we each must be invested and engaged with each other.

**Inspiring, Risk Taking, Innovative, Imaginative, Passionate, Creativity**

Never settle for the status quo or complacency – we are willing to take risks, be innovative, proactive and imaginative as leaders to ensure real and lasting change.

**Respect, Inclusive, Open minded, Support, Integrity, Diversity, Unique**

Embrace the unique and diverse experiences, perspectives and ideas of all and treat each other with respect and dignity.

**Accountable, open minded**

We hold ourselves accountable to our members and partners for our decisions and results.

# The Experience

## Strategic Goal #1

### BEAUTIFICATION

- Work with the city to create a seasonal horticultural plan with opportunities for partnerships and sponsorships.
  - Maintenance, cleanliness standards created
  - Work with the city's Culture Committee, Public Art Advisory Committee, NAC to replace generic bike racks with 'designer' bike racks, expand public art installations .
  - Signage and plaques to recognize built heritage, indigenous, LGBTQ+ and black community
- 

### PROGRAMMING

- Strategy to connect with other communities, BIA's (local, regional, national, international) to build partnerships
  - Year-round experiences and events – research, innovate, tie to City plans
  - Strengthen community venue partnerships, PAC, Brock, Niagara College
  - Connections and collaborations with Ice Dogs, River Lions, Canada Games, Marilyn Walker School, Grape and Wine to bring diverse experiences to the streets
- 

### ENGAGING OUR VISITORS & MEMBERS

- Easy to use and share survey and feedback tools, tech tools
  - Improve data collection and utilization
  - Case study other cities, Cleveland, Pittsburg, Indianapolis
  - Ambassador program, block captain, unified approach Summer 2021 Rachel
  - Visitor access – walkability, create and promote bike routes Fall
  - Increase awareness of parking (maps)
- 

### SAFETY / PERCEPTION

- Work closely with police and service providers to get supports that are needed

# Innovation & Change

## Strategic Goal #2

### EDUCATE PEOPLE TO WHAT WE OFFER

- Build stronger relationships with Innovate Niagara, Chambers of Commerce, OBIA I
  - Expand beyond region to grow connections and partnerships
  - Provide education opportunities for board and staff with TED talks, urban planning, International Downtown Assoc. (IDA), and research
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### EXPAND INFLUENCE & REACH

- Tell the story – experiential, progressive, history
  - Create marketing and social media strategy to help attract visitors and businesses from outside St. Catharines
  - Look at how to market across larger regions
- 

### GROW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT AT ALL LEVELS

- City: Establish quarterly meetings with Mayor, Councillors and senior staff
  - City: Align with city's innovation and change initiatives
  - City: Stronger implementation of Property Standards
  - Better connections and relationships with community service organizations
  - City: Streetscapes – farmer's market
  - Region: NRPS, housing, garbage
  - Other: Provincial and Canada
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### GROW RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

- Follow Tisha's work by working on community organization partnership to help those who are vulnerable in the city
- Relationship building with Quest, Community Care, Positive Living, CMHA, John Howard, Pathstone, YMCA, churches, Silver Spire, Library, Bear Clan, etc.
- Advocate for increased blended housing and appropriate development of
- underutilized buildings and vacancies

# Courageous Leadership & Engagement

## Strategic Goal #3

### ADVOCATE FOR MEMBERSHIP

- Invest back into people and businesses in the city
  - Incorporate everyone's voice, collect and broadcast
  - Address safety concerns and available resources
- 

### REMIND PEOPLE OF SENSE OF WHAT WE 'ARE, HAVE BEEN AND CAN BE'

- Inclusion with Marketing Strategy
  - Consistency in messaging
  - Look to the past to find courage for future change
  - Our legacy – set up for the better, 'Oldest Downtown in Niagara'
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### COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- Board agendas and minutes
  - One on one communications
  - Welcoming committees
  - Communications boards – share knowledge and energy
  - Door knocking, hand delivery, grass roots ambassadors and volunteers
  - Timely responses for inquiries
  - Increase collaboration among members – member round tables, networking events
  - Productive committees (include city and communities)
  - Engaging communities
  - Attraction and retention of mixed storefronts
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### GRANTS AND SOURCE FUNDING

- Sponsorships
- Available grants
- Internships

# Member Survey Results

A survey was sent out to the entire members, as well as in person meetings with members to ask 2 questions. Below are some selected responses

## 1. WHAT ARE 3 THINGS WE SHOULD FOCUS ON?

- More development around blended housing – redevelop underutilized buildings and create mixed housing
- Address homelessness, improve/increase supports, increase police presence
- Promoting arts culture, Grape and Wine
- Downtown restaurant scene
- Residential units, grocery, markets, ethnic etc
- Vacancies – tax incentive to deter/inspire
- Driving people and families downtown – excited to see what is happening
- More unified look (revitalization not in stages) – mix of old school, medium school and new school
- Parking, business friendlier cooperation from the City and attracting new businesses
- Help to restore old Buildings and preserve its character.
- Welcoming environment...clean it up so people want to visit, live and shop dt.
- Making all people, residents & tourists, feel safer in the downtown core.
- Managing and providing services to the homeless people on the street.
- Unconventional Engagement: keep people informed & excited about downtown initiatives through social media, economic development, & community education

## 2. WHAT DO WE WANT DOWNTOWN ST. CATHARINES TO BE KNOWN FOR?

- A safe place to come and enjoy a night out, with a wide range of options for dining and entertainment
- Our black & indigenous history, a welcoming/inclusive experience and lifestyle, great places/services to eat/shop/etc.
- We want Downtown St.Catharines to be known for our cultural interaction, access & livability.
- The Heart of the Garden City: A beautiful oasis within the city that celebrates people, nature and the arts.
- Progressive thinking - Both socially and with adopting innovation.
- The fun, vibrant, inclusive & soulful entertainment centre of the Niagara Region. One with an amazing food & beverage scene and a healthy scene for commerce.
- Safety of people and more policing
- Fun and safe place to go with family and friends
- Diversity, beautiful architecture. People come down for an experience and to shop

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to Neil Thornton, The Thornton Group, for guiding the SCDA through the strategic planning process.

Thank you to Tisha Polocko, for her years of service to the SCDA.

Thank you to Rachel Braithwaite for bringing new, bold, fresh ideas to the SCDA.

Thank you to the SCDA Board of Management and our committee for your time, dedication and support.

**Thank you to our  
members for taking the  
time to be a part of the  
process and supporting  
our team.**

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