



A Cultural City

Discussion Paper

ASI

The Planning Partnership + Nethery Planning

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An Introduction to “Our Niagara Falls Plan”

The City of Niagara Falls is creating a new Official Plan - “Our Niagara Falls Plan,” a long-term vision to 2051 that guides us through a future of unprecedented growth while providing a high-quality living experience for our residents and our visitors from around the world.

The Official Plan is a high-level, visionary document that guides and shapes the future of a community identifying where, and under what circumstances, specific types of land uses can be located. The Provincial *Planning Act* requires that all local public works projects, official plans, zoning by-laws, related amendments, and all future development must conform to an approved Official Plan.

Our Niagara Falls Plan is going to define a vision for the City to 2051 - how we are going to create a complete community

Our Niagara Falls Plan will serve a broad range of community and municipal objectives. In addition to establishing appropriate land uses, it also establishes the goals, objectives and policies related to all of the essential components of making and sustaining a complete community. It sets policy requirements on how to create attractive and livable communities with a variety of housing and employment opportunities. It specifies means to protect, conserve, and enhance the city’s cultural and natural heritage and agricultural land base. It identifies locations for new growth to make the most efficient use of land and infrastructure. It outlines the structure around parks and open space, and how to

acquire and grow such spaces. It directs how to move people and goods in and around a city. It details how to plan and provide for community needs such as schools, recreation centres and libraries.

It provides all of this in a way to ensure that Provincial and Regional policy is implemented, as required by law. To this end the Official Plan must conform to the Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Niagara Escarpment Plan, and the Niagara Region Official Plan, and “consistency” with the Provincial Policy Statement. This is done while also providing the critical local context and input, to ensure implementation happens in the manner Niagara Falls intends it to occur, to address the unique needs of our community.

1.1 A Little Bit About Niagara Falls

Niagara Falls is an international landmark and destination for visitors, residents, businesses and employees alike. It is a high growth municipality, forecasted to take on the largest share of growth in Niagara Region over the next 25 years. Identified as one of Southern Ontario's 29 large and fast growing municipalities in the draft 2024 Provincial Planning Statement, Niagara Falls Council has pledged to build 8,000 new homes by 2031. It hosts two international crossings, the Rainbow and Whirlpool Bridges, with the major Queenston-Lewiston Bridge just north of the city limits—together, responsible for 3.6 million vehicle crossings in 2023.¹ It hosts a significant concentration of hydro-electrical generation facilities. The Niagara Parks Commission is a major partner agency in Niagara Falls, founded in 1885 and overseeing over 16 square kilometres of parkland and lands along the Niagara Parkway connecting Niagara-on-the-Lake with Fort Erie. Niagara Parks Commission facilities welcomed just under 3.0 million visitors from April 2022 through March 2023.²

Transportation Access. Niagara Falls is bisected by the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) freeway connecting Buffalo and the Niagara Region to the Golden Horseshoe, including Toronto. Highway 420 crosses through Niagara Falls to connect the QEW to the Rainbow Bridge border crossing. Intercity and international rail service is provided by Via Rail and Amtrak, with more frequent commuter rail and bus connections to Hamilton and Toronto via Metrolinx/GO Transit. In 2023, Niagara Falls Transit's fleet

was transferred to Niagara Region Transit, who also support paratransit service and connections between the cities of Niagara Region.

Landmarks and Attractions. In addition to the Falls themselves, Niagara Falls is a tourist destination, with multiple hotels, convention space, observation towers, multiple theme parks and resorts, and entertainment destinations across the City, including the bustling Clifton Hill area. The Niagara Parks Commission operates with a mandate to manage and develop the many public spaces along the Niagara River shoreline, including entertainment and recreational facilities. A short trip along the Niagara River Parkway brings guests past the Flower Clock, Botanical Gardens, Butterfly Conservatory, Niagara Glen, the former Toronto Power Generating Station, Spanish Aero Car, and Queen Victoria Park. The river itself is a feature, with the Iron Scow shipwreck and International Control Weir part of the falls environment. Away from the falls are the Gale Centre, Firemen's Park, The Exchange, and an emerging culinary scene. It is easy for local landmarks to be overlooked, which are as core and foundational to creating a sense of place as the all-day buzz of the tourist areas. The city is home to a branch of the Niagara Health Hospital network (Greater Niagara Hospital). The new South Niagara Hospital is being constructed with a targeted in-service date of 2029, creating an opportunity for a new purpose for the existing hospital lands.

¹ As reported by the Bridge and Tunnel Operators Association and [South Niagara Chambers of Commerce](#)

² [Niagara Parks 2022/2023 Annual Report](#)

Commercial and Recreation Amenities.

Niagara Falls is serviced with a full range of local shopping amenities. Niagara Square is a former indoor mall that fully completed a transition into a power centre format in 2020. It is located at the southwest corner of the McLeod Road interchange and the QEW. A similar cluster of large format commercial uses can be found in the middle of the urban area, at the intersections of Morrison Street and Dorchester Road. Other commercial nodes can be found along Lundy's Lane such as the Canada One Outlets, in the Stamford neighbourhood, and the historic Downtown Niagara Falls, north of the main tourist area. Local-level commercial blocks are found throughout the city.

A recent cultural development is the opening of The Exchange, a 10,000-square-foot indoor/outdoor multipurpose event space with gallery and working studio facilities. schedule farmers market and supper market events, bring a variety of interest to this new community space.

The Niagara Falls History Museum, Battle Ground Hotel Museum, and Willoughby Historical Museum cater to those interested in documents pasts and historic preservation.

Niagara Falls has the Gale Centre (four-pad arena), Willoughby Memorial Arena, and the MacBain Community Centre with an indoor pool, gym, and multi-purpose rooms.

There are four locations of the Niagara Falls Public Library.

The City is in Growth Mode. According to the 2021 Census of Canada, the population of Niagara Falls was 94,415, with 44,600 having reported being in the labour market. The City's current Official Plan was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs on October 6, 1993. The 1993 Plan was written to guide growth to the year 2011 and a population of 83,000. The planning horizon was extended in 2014 (three years beyond the original target) to guide growth to the year 2031, with an anticipated population of 106,800 and 53,640 jobs. At 7.2% population growth between 2016 and 2021, Niagara Falls is on pace to exceed that 2031 population forecast. The city has completed a number of urban boundary expansions since 1993, with three new expansion areas added through the 2022 Niagara Official Plan. Niagara Falls is a growing and expanding community.

The Legislative and Policy Framework around Planning has Changed. Another major change since 1993 is the complete overhaul of the Provincial and Regional Planning Policy framework. There are new documents at both levels, whose directions need to be reflected in local policy. From an administrative perspective, the current Official Plan has been amended over 160 times over the past 30 years. The various edits have created an Official Plan with some internal conflicts and inconsistencies, duplications, some confusion in intent of policies—and, overall, an outdated planning vision that is in need of replacement.

1.2 Intent of the Discussion Papers and the Path to Our Niagara Falls Plan

To initiate the process of creating Our Niagara Falls Plan, the project team has prepared six “Discussion Papers”. These papers are about starting a conversation with the community about what the city will look like in 2051, what jobs will be here, how do we move in and around that community, how do we integrate nature and resiliency, how do we effectively manage growth and climate adaptation, and what infrastructure, features or amenities are needed for the community.

Community input is essential to delivering the Our Niagara Falls Plan. The Discussion Papers are intended to guide a conversation that will ultimately form the basis for policy.

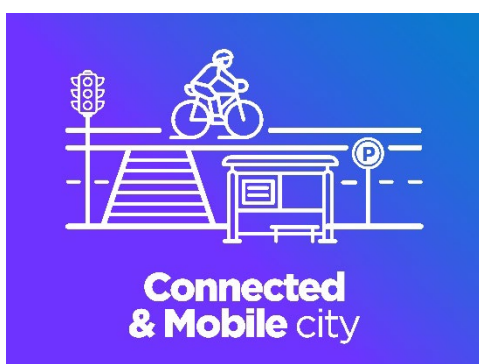
The Discussion Papers have structured several contemporary issues in land use planning in Ontario into digestible sources of information in six thematic areas:



1. **A Growing City.** Niagara Region’s 2051 Land Needs Assessment forecasts Niagara Falls to add the greatest number of new housing units in the Region, even more than St. Catharines and its large assignment of apartment dwellings. Further infrastructure master planning work can look at growth beyond the 2051 planning horizon, opening a door for even longer-term planning. This means a considerable outlay of infrastructure and soft services will be required to support the building of complete communities connected through a resilient, layered mobility network. The new Official Plan must also ensure the infrastructure is available (planned or existing) to accommodate this growth, and will either accommodate or be ready to accommodate the outcomes of the City’s range of ongoing growth management projects and planning, the housing pledge to 2031, urban boundary expansions, affordable housing goal, and volume of development applications.



2. **An Attractive City.** Niagara Falls is a gateway to our country and a destination in its own right. Growth will need to build upon this foundation—more accurately, it will raise the bar for excellence in design and architecture, even in a world where exterior design elements cannot be completely regulated through Site Plan Control. This is achieved by comprehensively identifying landmark locations where priority design treatment is expected, while leveraging further placemaking opportunities through planning for a complete community that contributes to health and civic pride.



3. **A Connected and Mobile City.** Communities are grappling with how and where goods and people move through them. In addition to needing to serve the vehicle demands, the transportation system of a city is also a public good. This means it contributes to the overall

quality of life for residents, contribution to the economic well-being for businesses, and supports tourists and visitors to the area. Key to this is designing a transportation system that is premised on the principles of safety, equity, accessibility, and mobility for all users and modes. Our Niagara Falls Plan will aim to address these questions and be complemented with street design policies and guidelines.



4. **A Green and Resilient City.** The effects of climate change are becoming known. Cities can and need to do more to prepare for and incorporate these new systems and patterns into growth and development. Whether that is through right-sized infrastructure, a comprehensive natural heritage system, low impact design techniques, sensitively designed community facilities, or increased expectations from private development, Our Niagara Plan should build upon City and Regional studies to incorporate the best elements in a manner that readies the community for adaptation to climate change. It must also consider the fiscal and economic implications of policies related to building a green and resilient city.



5. **An International City.** Our Niagara Falls Plan will incorporate design policies and community improvement principles and a framework for intensification that will maximize the opportunities for creating landmarks and physical presence at major locations to support the many places of entry to the city. Our Niagara Falls Plan needs to leverage its location, multiple attractions, and quality of life to continue encouraging tourism, new economic development, and a range of jobs to support overall well-being.



6. **A Cultural City.** Our Niagara Falls Plan will incorporate multiple goals, objectives, and policies to continue to build upon Niagara Falls' recent growth

in diversifying cultural options. This is more than just the Falls area itself and must incorporate the entire city, providing the places and spaces necessary for an enriching social experience. There is a strong base of significant cultural heritage resources at a local and national scale in Niagara Falls, for which Our Niagara Falls Plan can work to conserve. This also requires planning for and providing community facilities to support a growing population.

The six Discussion Papers together represent a thorough, comprehensive and interconnected approach to initiating this discussion about the future of Niagara Falls. Each Paper contributes its own piece to this project. A further paper on Planning Policy Conformity and Implementation will be prepared once current Provincial reform proposals are complete.

Project team staff are available at any time to answer questions about this project. All public input received will be summarized into a "What We Heard" engagement summary report throughout the process to prepare the new Official Plan.

1.3 Public Engagement So Far

This diagram illustrates the engagement that will be completed up to the end of June 2024. The following two pages summarize what we are hearing with respect to each one of the topics for discussion.



A Growing City

- The aim should be on growth that is orderly, cost-effective, and sustainable.
- Re-connect city's decision-making with the Official Plan.
- Planning priorities should be within the built boundaries
- Downtown should not be just for visitors - try to get people living in this area
- Plenty of room for growth south of McCleod near Garner South; Grassy Brook and Hospital site
- Tourist commercial across from residential – incompatible. Transition and buffer are important.
- Niagara Falls does not need densification: lots of space. Large number of rental units available, many houses for sale
- Should do more with what we have instead of taking over more green space.
- Need better facilities for residents, including those with addictions (e.g. shelters, long term treatment facilities)

“This city has potential to become a true beacon of education, natural beauty, job opportunities, and more. Niagara University seems like a good start, but one win after a mountain of disappointments means nothing if it leaves locals in the dust.”

- Diversify the local economy by drawing other industries beside tourism to the city
- Don't need more industrial parks but do need co-working spaces.
- Like to see something like University Village, Seattle: a shopping destination/village rather than large format shopping
- Currently, a lot of homeless, need single person residences; more apartments for baby boomers who give up their houses, and housing for seniors - but not stacked townhouses.
- Need to bring back good, permanent, year-round jobs - seasonal jobs contributing to local homelessness.

An Attractive City

- Niagara Falls is not the showcase I remember. We have to do a lot of work to do to bring us to a standard to welcome people back.
- Want to see better quality parks, cycling trails, no space between houses, more public places.
- Growth of short-term rentals causing issues in residential areas – needs some control.
- Niagara Falls has lots of beautiful parks – no complaints or recommendations, done a good job on parks.

“I hope for a city that focuses on keeping the city clean. There is a huge issue with litter - take a look at the side of major roads, off ramps, on ramps, and even city trails.”

A Green & Resilient City

- Love the McBain Centre – need more spaces like that where communities can gather.
- Green space very important, need to think about how to build urban green space as different kinds of landscapes. (Kansas City good model for green space revitalization.)
- Prefer planted medians – woodland boulevard is a great example of a suburban street, no bike lanes, but safe, with median with trees.
- Queen Street signs, sidewalks, - walking to Queen from e.g. Victoria library - walk is not good. Need to enhance the larger context.
- Planting street trees does not make up for removing a forest.
- Niagara Falls wetlands are mainly complexes, which should appear in the Official Plan. Mapping of natural corridors is key to their protection. Ideally, should be under public ownership (e.g. the Conservation Authority).

“In 2051, my Niagara will have many public gardens for its residents to grow vegetables annually, positively impacting the lives of those in low income neighborhoods and teaching a skill that is transferrable. Teaching people how to grow their own food could be life saving to those who cannot afford fresh produce.”

“Our watershed and forests, wetlands and all remaining green areas are our assets to protect...Our Official Plan must reflect our respect, appreciation and gratefulness of being blessed with these magnificent natural features.”

- Need better language in the Official Plan about our remaining natural areas and woodlots to make environmental protection enforceable.
- Would like to see public gardens/vegetable gardens replacing some of the lawn area in parks

A Mobile & Connected City

- Niagara Falls should think about light rail transit as well as GO. The only semi-good public transportation are the WeGo buses, which almost exclusively serve Niagara Parks and the tourist districts.
- Need different measures to slow traffic, without speed bumps and stop signs.
- Investigate a new people mover system, LRT using CP rail corridor, and connect to train station.

“Niagara Falls 2011 Active Transportation Plan was to develop a robust bike lane network in the city. Looking back on this document in 2024, so few of these plans and ideas have actually been completed.”

- Traffic is bad. Roads to be expanded: Dorchester, Drummond, Thorold Stone Road - easily expanded, use their wide boulevards to create 3 lanes.
- Regional Transit system has resulted in a lot of vacant buses. Not getting value for money.
- Clifton Hill on a summer day - lots of people walking but not enough space. Need bigger, accessible, sidewalks, bike, and electric scooter rentals. (Kitchener Waterloo is doing a good job integrating cars, rentals, walking.)
- Stanley is another street that can be better planned, now a mini highway - opportunity for a better sidewalk connection.
- Lots of bike lanes that just stop. Love to see city with specific requirements for new build areas, things to make areas more pedestrian friendly, including bike paths through new builds/shopping areas.

An International City

- Niagara Falls is tourist town, but that's what makes the region unique. The city has "a community vibe" and whatever tourists use, locals will use.
- Transit issue: tourists don't have change; need better signage re: presto, no cards, cash.

"One thing Niagara Falls needs is an environment that attracts foreign visitors who want to slow down and enjoy the scenery. Bring some European style culture to Niagara Falls. NPC owns lots of land and they can designate areas for cafes and sit down space looking out over the falls or just as people walk about on the grounds. Let's make the Falls area not just a viewing opportunity but a refreshing experience."

A Cultural City

- Niagara Falls does not seem to care about history – razed historic neighbourhoods, demolish heritage-designated school to expand cemetery.
- Public buildings need to be maintained. The new Exchange location is not good and took away parking at the corner of Main and Central.

"Find out what features make us stand out from other cities around the world. Highlight the features that make the city worth traveling to. This can include unique cultural activities, historical landmarks, diversity welcoming places and cultural foods, different museums unique architecture, streets, and also attractive game zones for visitors."

"Let's spend less on fireworks and more on feeding Niagara's families. Let's make the city more fun and inviting for all with cultural events and attractions such as a state of the art children's museum, aquarium, theme park, hockey team, indigenous events, etc."

2

A Cultural City Overview

2.1 What is a Cultural City?

Niagara Falls is a destination for fun seekers of all ages and interests. Whether that is the natural beauty of the falls, the family fun of Clifton Hill, the shows and spectacles of the various resorts, or the food and fare found in rural areas, Niagara Falls has already established itself as a place for all.

This Discussion Paper has a core focus on two particular issue areas: cultural heritage resources and cultural and community facilities. Community assets that can fit under the framework of “cultural heritage resources” are archaeological resources, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscapes, as well as intangible, ephemeral, or lost heritage sites are critical parts of a place’s range of cultural experiences: “Cultural experiences happen when the physical elements of the city interact with its symbolic heritage elements and their meanings”.³

In Ontario, a regulatory and legislative framework has been developed to guide management of these resources and which can include sites such as historic buildings, engineering works and bridges, scenic roads, designed and evolved landscapes, conservation districts, and archaeological resources for example. These types of features can be found in urban and rural communities, creating a sense of place and making connections to waves of human settlement that go back thousands of years.



Niagara Falls from above (Skylon Tower).

³ (Rausell-Köster et al., 2022)

Archaeological resources, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscapes are critical parts of a cultural city. They comprise a subset of the “cultural and creative industries” that can be present in any community.⁴ Culture is more than just existing resources. It contains a number of tangible and intangible elements that contribute to a vibrant and fulfilling social experience. It can be expressed through facilities, events, work, displays, traditions, food, music—in dozens of ways and means. Cultural and creative industries can have important spatial, economic, and social benefits (enabled through urban infrastructure and livability, skills and innovation, social networks, catalyzers, support and finance, inclusive institutions, regulations and partnerships, uniqueness, digital support).

2.2 Why Culture Matters

Strategic cultural heritage projects can support the development of strong rural communities by generating project funding, employment and a sense of place that in turn adds value to a community’s tourism offerings. Culture is one of the many pieces of the puzzle that is sense of pride and place in a community.

Niagara Falls’ natural beauty, signature heritage sites and historical neighbourhoods can all be leveraged to help the City achieve key objectives discussed in other Our Niagara Falls Plan Discussion Papers. The character and charm of historical neighbourhoods and parkland, for example, are valuable assets in building an attractive city for current and new residents to enjoy, and they contribute to a sense of place that can encourage tourists to explore the city beyond the well-known tourist spots.

2.3 What and Where is Cultural Heritage in Niagara Falls

The cultural landscape of Niagara Falls is complex and closely tied to the environmental setting and natural features that define the landscape and its history as a border community and travel destination. The city has long been established as a world-class tourist destination with something for everyone: the natural beauty of the Falls and the Niagara River; the attractions at Clifton Hill; historical sites, museums, and a rich indigenous history; gambling and live entertainment at the casinos; and food and farm tours are all on offer for visitors and residents alike. To understand the complexities of the greater cultural landscape of the city, this section aims to provide an overview of historical land-use themes in the city, known heritage properties recognized under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, sites managed by the Niagara Parks Commission, nationally recognized heritage sites, potential heritage sites, and heritage tourism assets in the city.

⁴ UNESCO & World Bank, 2021



The Horseshoe Falls with historic power generating sites in the distance (Niagara Falls Tourism)

2.3.1 Summary of Historical Land Use Patterns in Niagara Falls

A summary of key historical land use patterns in Niagara Falls and types of associated heritage resources found within the City is provided below.

- **Indigenous Habitation and Settlement:** For thousands of years, the area around Niagara Falls has had a history of Indigenous habitation and settlement, with Indigenous Communities utilizing the land for farming, hunting, fishing, trade, and cultural practices. Types of heritage resources associated with this land use pattern can include waterways, waterfalls and landforms, trails/portage routes/roads, cairns and ossuaries, and archaeological sites.
- **Early European Settlement:** European explorers and settlers arrived in the region starting in the seventeenth century, establishing trading posts and farms along the Niagara River. Villages developed over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Niagara Falls' location on the American border may have influenced the architectural styles of buildings from this period. Types of heritage resources associated with this land use pattern can include Waterways and landforms; trails/portage routes/roads; bridges; historical settlement centres; main streets; and residential, commercial and civic/institutional buildings.
- **Transportation:** The Niagara region has historically been an important transportation corridor, with the

construction of canals, railways, and highways facilitating trade and travel through the area. Types of heritage resources associated with this land use pattern can include natural and built waterways, portage routes, trails/roads, bridges, and railways.

- **Underground Railroad:** Niagara Falls was an important crossing point for African Americans fleeing enslavement in the United States via the Underground Railroad in the mid-nineteenth century. Types of heritage resources associated with this land use pattern can include historical crossing points, railways and churches.
- **Power Generation:** The power of Niagara Falls was harnessed for industrial purposes in the early twentieth century, leading to the development of hydroelectric power plants and infrastructure and manufacturing industries. Types of heritage resources associated with this land use pattern can include: generating stations and complexes, power canals, transformer house, and reservoirs.
- **Military events:** Due to its strategic location on the American border, Niagara Falls has been the setting of numerous important events in Canadian military history with many sites relating to the War of 1812 and the 1837 Rebellion among others. Types of heritage resources associated with this land use pattern can include battlefield sites, cemeteries, armouries, naval sites, archaeological sites, and historic homes and museums.
- **Tourism:** The waterfalls at Niagara Falls became a popular tourist destination in the nineteenth century, leading to the development of hotels, entertainment venues, and other amenities catering to visitors. Types of heritage resources associated with this land use pattern can include rivers, waterfalls, public parks and Falls viewing areas, Falls visitor centres, nineteenth to twentieth century tourist infrastructure and hotels, observation towers, museums, tourist attractions and attraction areas.



Downtown Niagara Falls (Niagara Falls Tourism)

2.3.2 Indigenous Cultural Heritage

Canadian society is striving to rebalance the relationship with Indigenous peoples guided by statutory rights and obligations, including those established in the Canadian constitution and developing case law, principles, such as those outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and recommendations, such as those of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. To move forward with reconciliation as a nation, we need to explore every opportunity to discuss Indigenous past and present. Supporting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples' communities and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.

The area around Niagara Falls has a rich heritage of Indigenous life, culture, and community. These lands, which have been inhabited by Indigenous peoples for millennia, have witnessed in more recent times the presence of the Attawandaron, Six Nations of the Grand River of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinaabek people. In addition, many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people from across North America live and work in Niagara today. ⁵ Indigenous cultural heritage in Niagara Falls can include portage routes and archaeological sites that are tangible reminders of thousands of years of habitation and settlement, landforms, waterfalls and waterways that hold special significance, and intangible heritage such as traditional cultural practices. The Niagara Region Archaeological Management Plan (2023) includes detailed Indigenous and Colonial-era archaeological site inventories and identification of areas of archaeological potential in Niagara Falls.

⁵ Niagara Parks Commission, 2022

“Reconciliation must become a way of life. It will take many years to repair damaged trust and relationships in Aboriginal communities and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Reconciliation not only requires apologies, reparations, the relearning of Canada’s national history, and public commemoration, but also needs real social, political, and economic change. Ongoing public education and dialogue are essential to reconciliation. Governments, churches, educational institutions, and Canadians from all walks of life are responsible for taking action on reconciliation in concrete ways, working collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples. Reconciliation begins with each and every one of us” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 185).

Indigenous cultural heritage can be protected and enhanced through the development of updated policies in Our Niagara Falls Plan to manage archaeological resources within the City, as well as policies to promote and enhance cultural initiatives and programming. In addition, providing updated policies for Indigenous engagement will facilitate the appropriate protection of Indigenous cultural heritage resources.

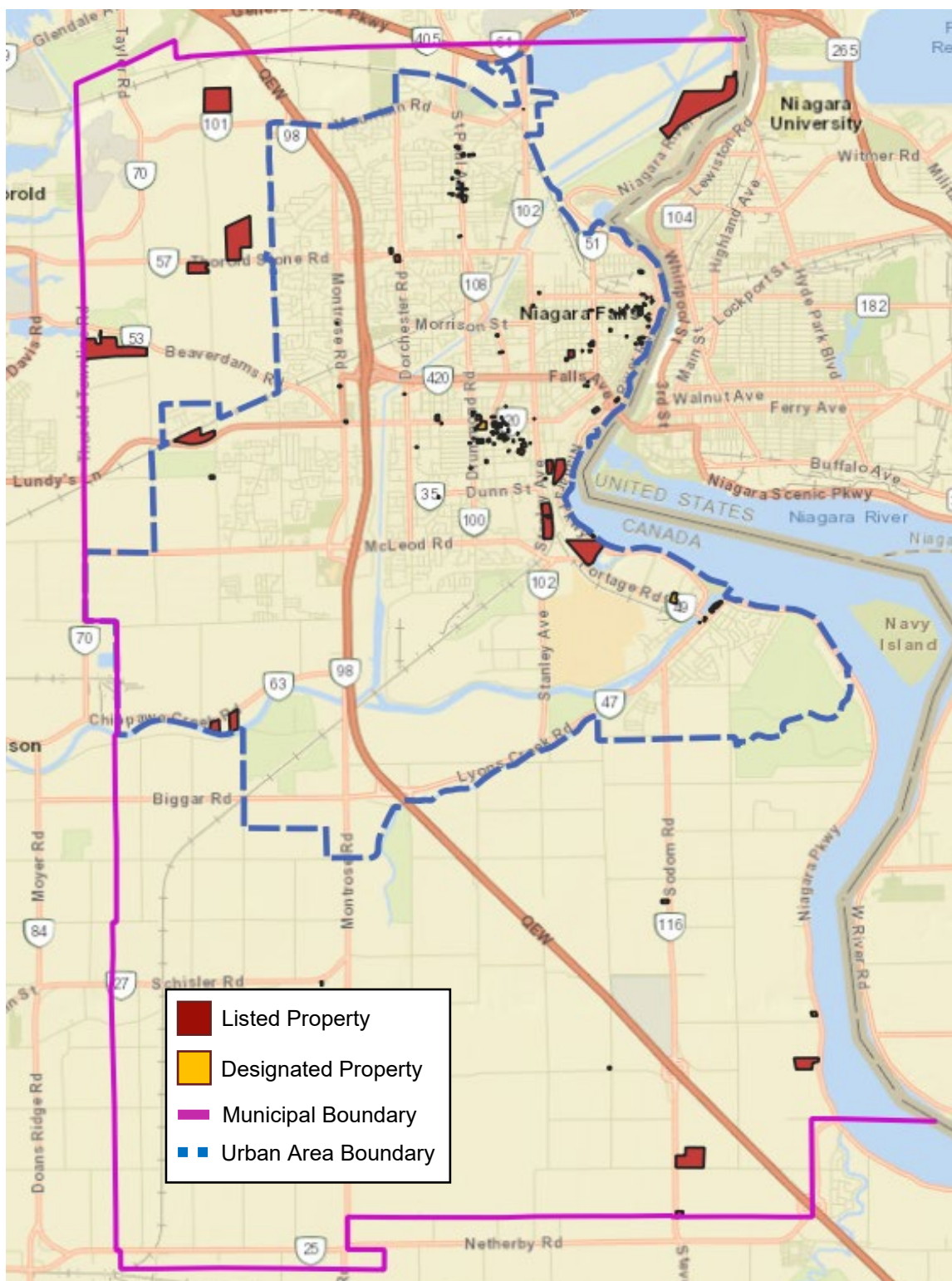
The Niagara Region Archaeological Management Plan represents a comprehensive approach to the conservation of archaeological resources and is based on best practice work throughout Ontario. The major components of the plan include detailed Indigenous and Colonial-era archaeological site inventories and archaeological potential modelling, Official Plan policies to be implemented through Regional and local municipal land use planning processes to ensure archaeological assessments in advance of land development, and a contingency plan for the protection of archaeological resources in urgent situations, such as the unexpected discovery of archaeological remains during construction. The management plan’s identification of areas of archaeological potential within the Region has been incorporated into the 2022 Niagara Official Plan (Schedule K).

It is anticipated that Our Niagara Falls Plan will incorporate the Niagara Region Official Plan policies as they relate to planning and management of archaeological resources.

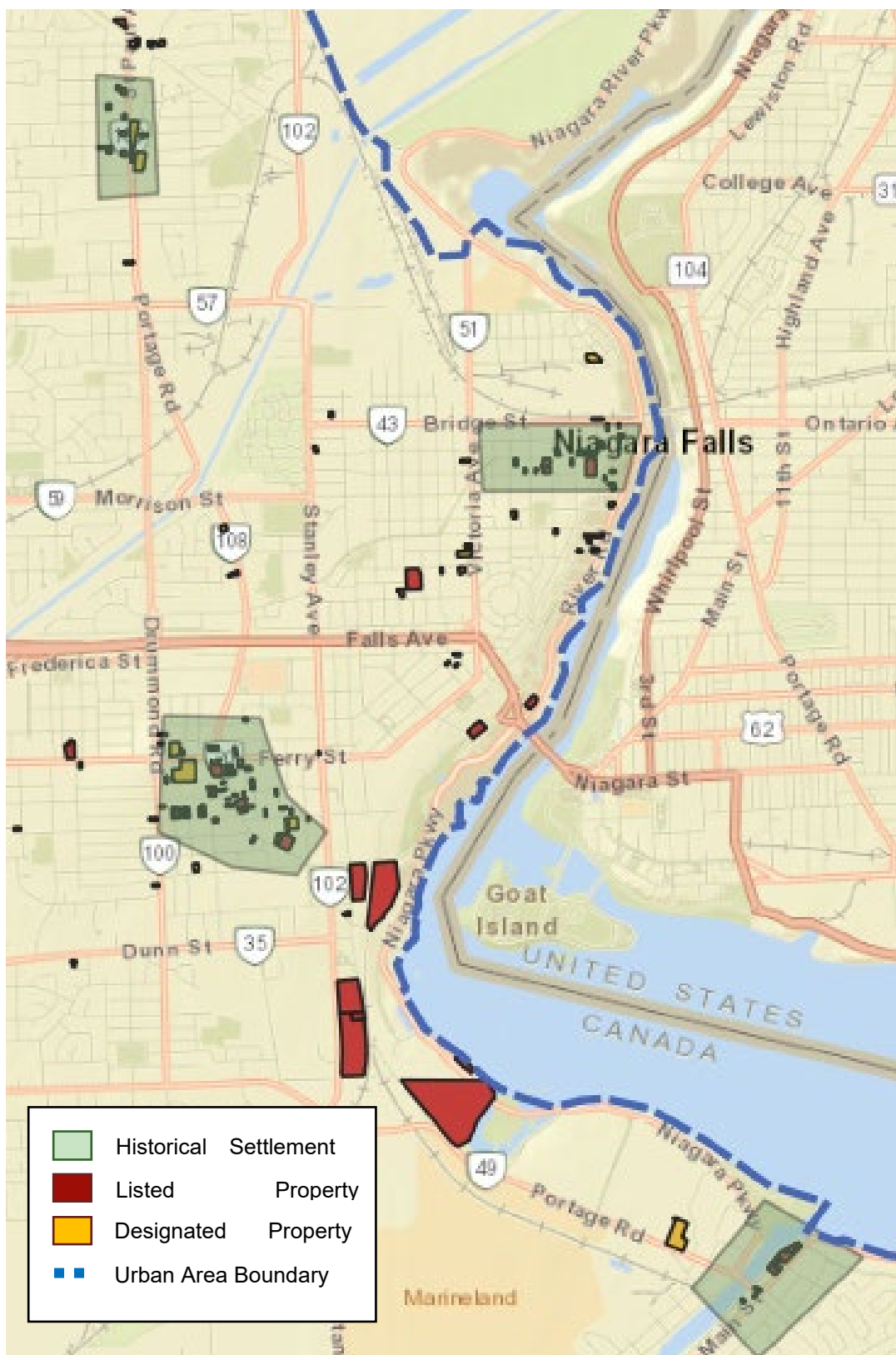


2.3.3 Designated and Listed Heritage Properties and Cultural Heritage Landscapes

Within the City of Niagara Falls, there are 39 properties designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* and an additional 127 properties listed on the municipal register. Designated properties have a heritage designation by-law registered on title. Listed properties are non-designated properties that are included on the municipal heritage register. The listed and designated properties are generally reflective of nineteenth and early twentieth-century built forms or property types located around historical settlement areas and the shoreline of the Niagara River. Residential properties on smaller town plots are the most common property type among these known heritage resources with some larger farm properties toward the outskirts of the City. These properties are generally associated with a prominent local figure or family. The historical settlements of Stamford, Clifton, Drummondville, and Chippawa contain property types associated with eighteenth/nineteenth-century villages including commercial main streets, civic, religious, and institutional buildings. Clifton and Drummondville which were larger settlements, have a higher concentration of public and commercial buildings included in their listed and designated properties. Near the shoreline of the Niagara River, outside of the Clifton area, the listed properties are generally institutional/religious in origin, including educational institutions and a church, or hydroelectric power generating stations on the river.



Municipally listed and designated properties in the City of Niagara Falls



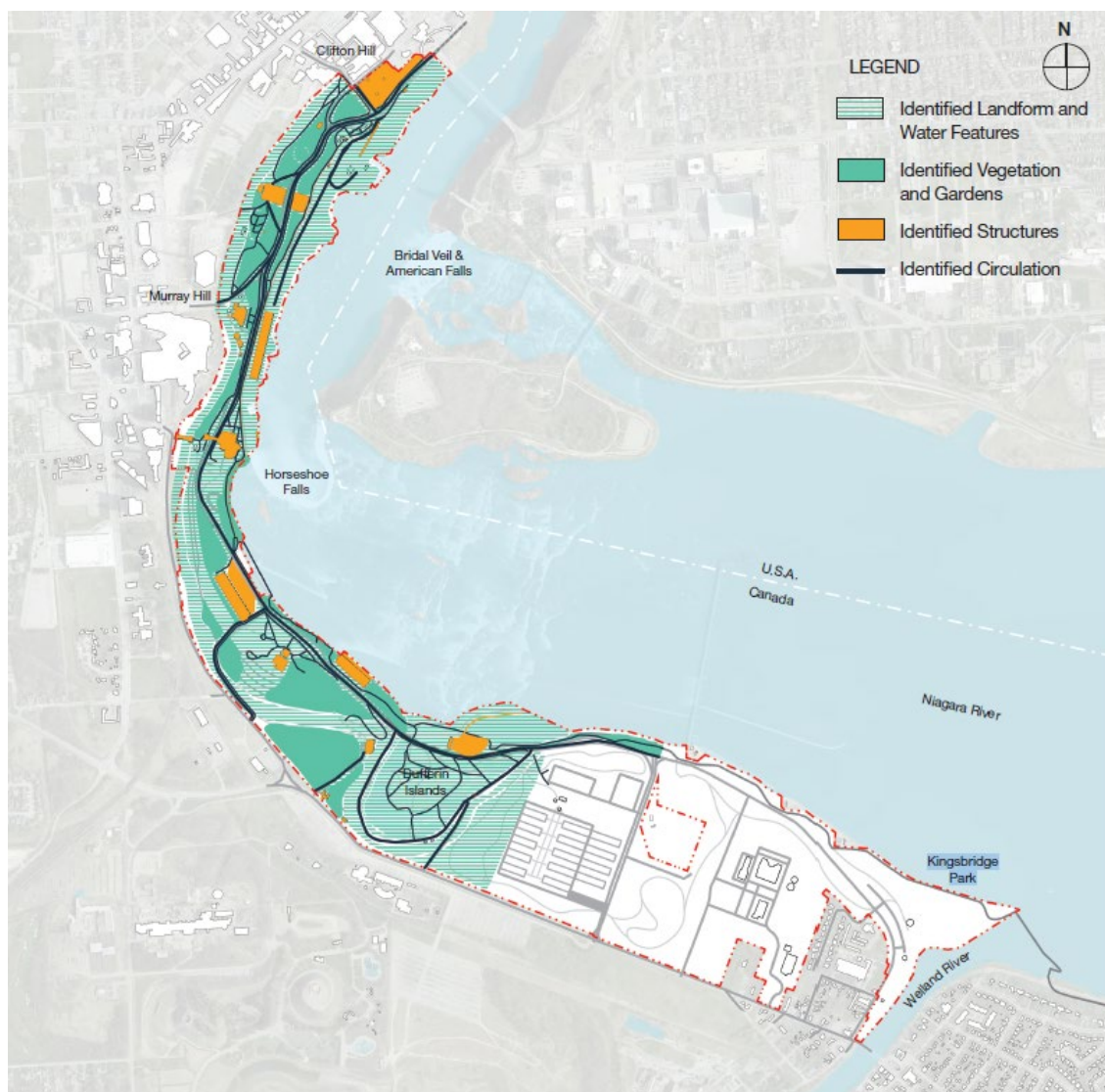
Heritage properties in historical settlement areas. Note: limits of historical settlement areas are shown as approximations for illustrative purposes.

The Niagara Parks Commission is subject to *Ontario Heritage Act* processes and procedures under Part III of the Act, which includes requirements for heritage impact assessments to be prepared and approved by the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. The Niagara Parks Commission manages the Queen Victoria Park Cultural Heritage Landscape which runs along the Niagara River shoreline from the Rainbow Bridge to Upper Rapids Road. The cultural heritage landscape has been identified as a Provincial Heritage Property of Provincial Significance. The Queen Victoria Park Concept Master Plan identifies a variety of heritage features within the cultural heritage landscape, including landforms and water features, structures, circulation routes, vegetation and gardens, and significant views. The cultural heritage landscape is inclusive of a number of recognized heritage resources including some municipally listed properties and an additional three Provincial Heritage Property of Provincial Significance sites: the Toronto Power Generating Station complex, the Ontario Power Generating Station complex, and the Canadian Niagara Power Generating Station complex. The Toronto Power Generating Station Complex has also been designated as a National Historic Site and is currently undergoing a \$200 million restoration for redevelopment as a luxury hotel, restaurant, and entertainment venue overlooking the Niagara River above the Horseshoe Falls.⁶ One Provincial Heritage Property of Provincial Significance is located outside the Queen Victoria Park Cultural Heritage Landscape at Thompson Point, which overlooks the Whirlpool Rapids

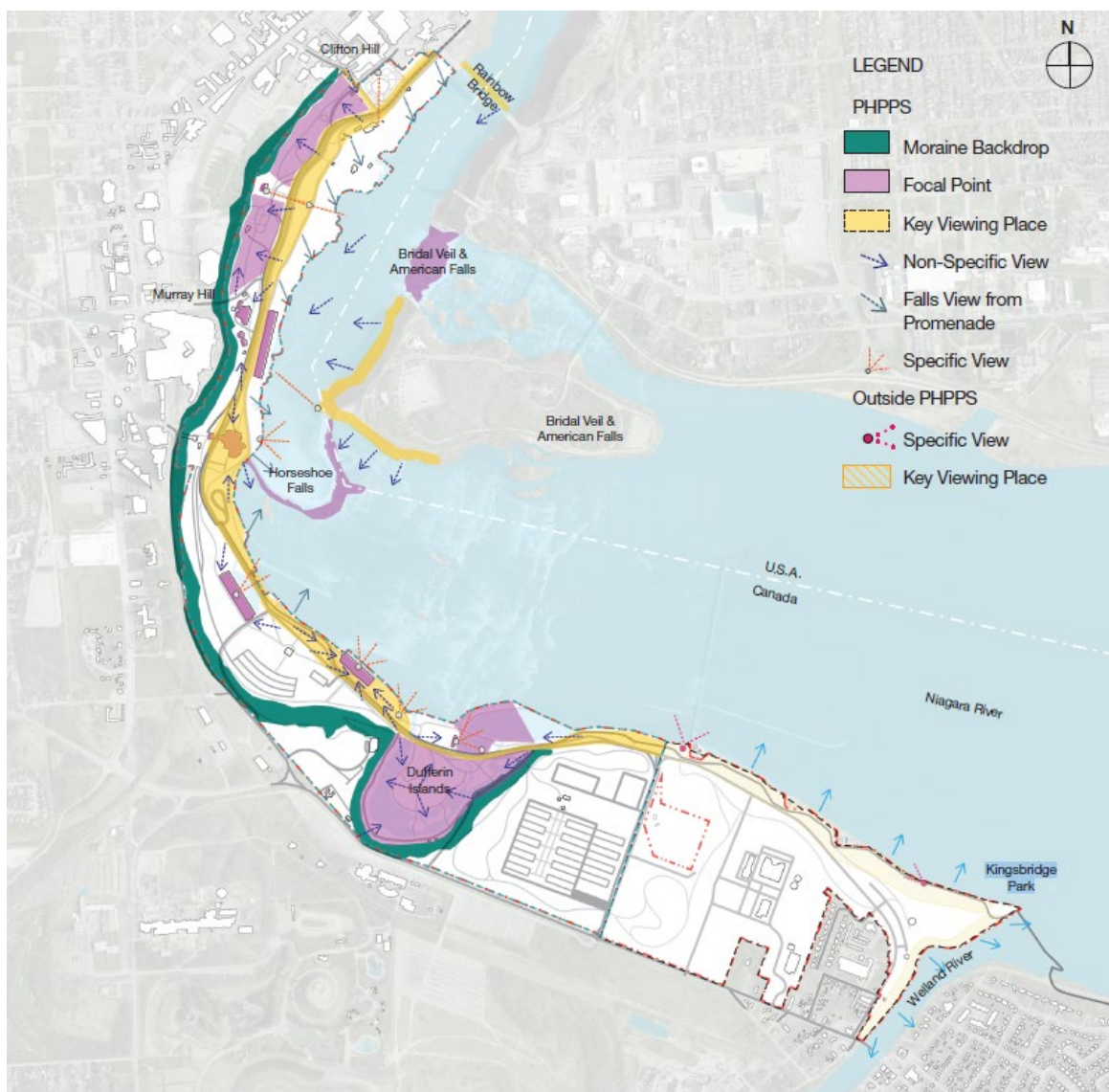


Queen Victoria Park (Niagara Falls Tourism)

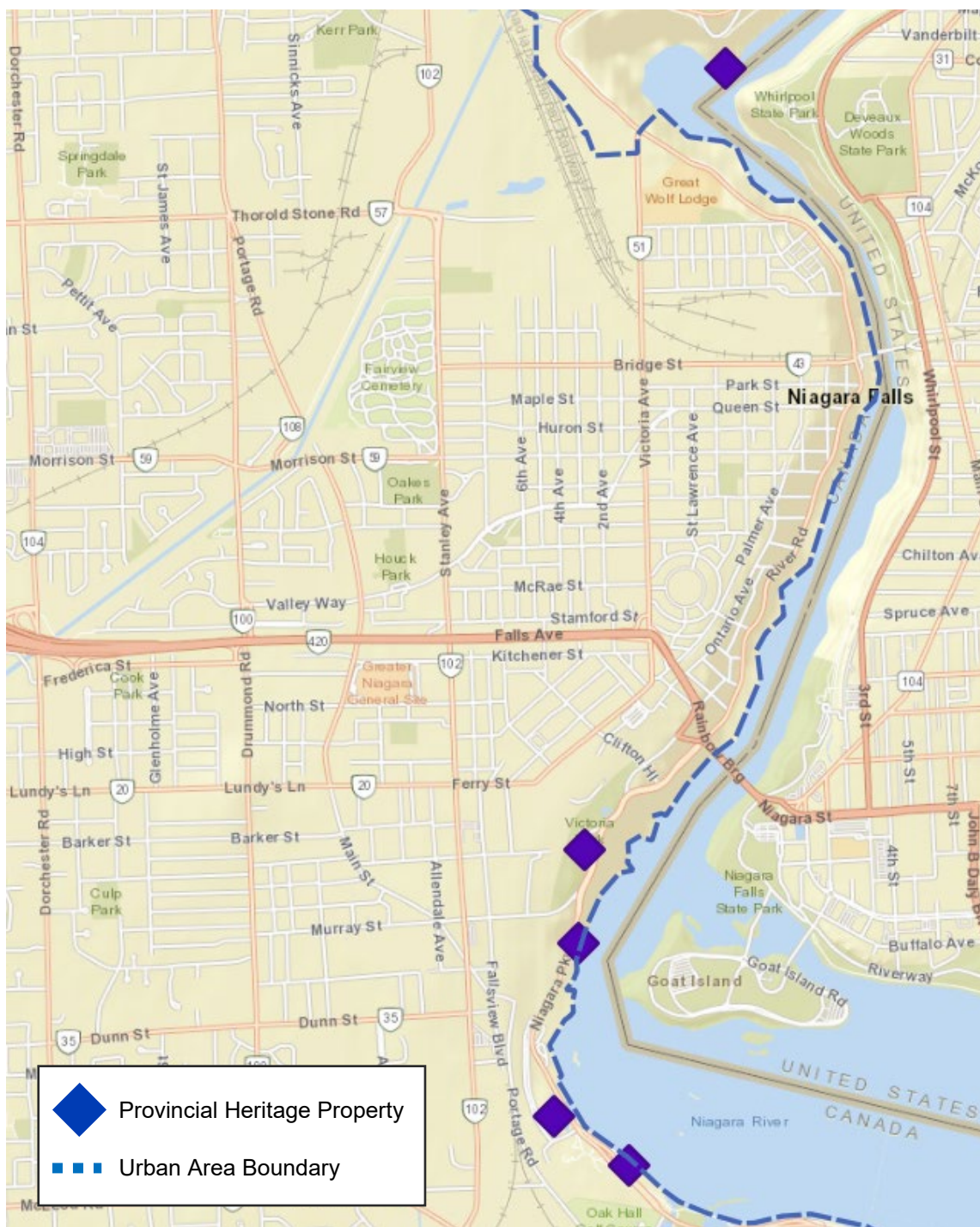
⁶ More on this project can be found on the [Niagara Parks Commission's project webpage](#), and is discussed in the project Discussion Paper, "An International City."



Types of Cultural Heritage Resources within the Queen Victoria Park Cultural Heritage Landscape (Niagara Parks Commission)



Identified cultural heritage views within the Queen Victoria Park Cultural Heritage Landscape (Niagara Parks Commission)



Provincial Heritage Properties in Niagara Falls

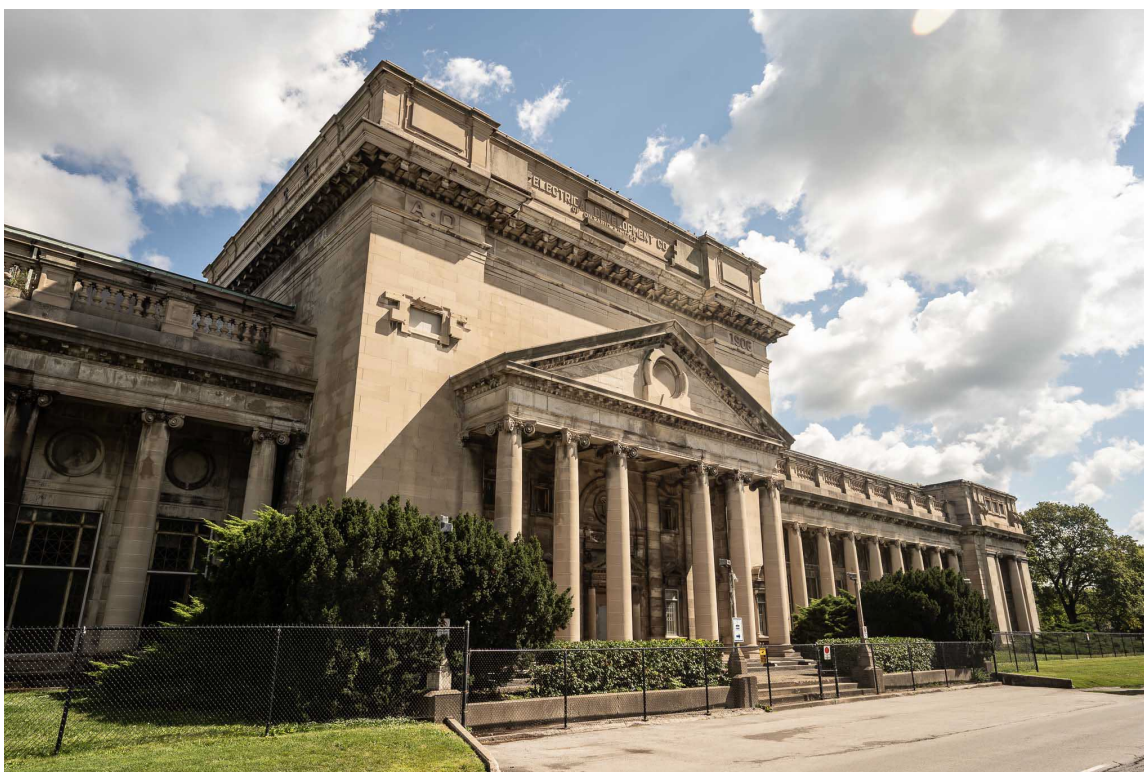
2.3.4 Nationally Recognized Cultural Heritage Sites

There are six nationally recognized heritage sites within the City of Niagara Falls. The first is the VIA Rail/Canadian National Railways Station on Bridge Street, which is designated under the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act for its architectural features as well as its associations with cross-border travel supporting the area's agricultural and tourism industries.

There are five sites that are recognized as National Historic Sites of Canada. The Nathaniel Dett Chapel is recognized for its associations with the Underground Railroad and the early establishment of Niagara Fall's Black community. The Lundy's Lane Battlefield and Navy Island are recognized as significant military sites. The Toronto Power Generating Station and portions of the Queenston-Chippawa Hydro-Electric Development, including the power canal, are recognized for their historical associations with hydro-electric power generation in the area.



Nationally recognized cultural heritage sites



The Toronto Power Generating Station (Niagara Parks).

2.3.5 Potential Cultural Heritage Sites

The City of Niagara Falls contains a diversity of potential cultural heritage resources that are not formally identified or recognized, many of which reflect one or more of the historical land use patterns discussed in 2.3.1. These include historical settlements, historical railway routes, indigenous trails/early roads, and engineering works such as bridges over the Niagara River and potential remnants of the first Welland Canal. One type of potential cultural heritage resource to highlight is structures built in the mid-twentieth century that reflect the growing importance of tourism in the City. These include the Tower Hotel (the former Konica Minolta Tower) and the Skylon Tower, both iconic tourist observation towers along the city's skyline that were built in the 1960s.

The City of Niagara Falls' Official Plan also lists the following sites, many of which are discussed above, as "Future Cultural Heritage Study Areas"

- Stamford
- Elgin
- Clifton
- Drummondville
- Village of Chippawa
- Lundy's Lane Battlefield (municipally owned sites plus related publicly owned properties):
- Lundy's Lane/Ferry Street (from Beechwood Road to Victoria Avenue)

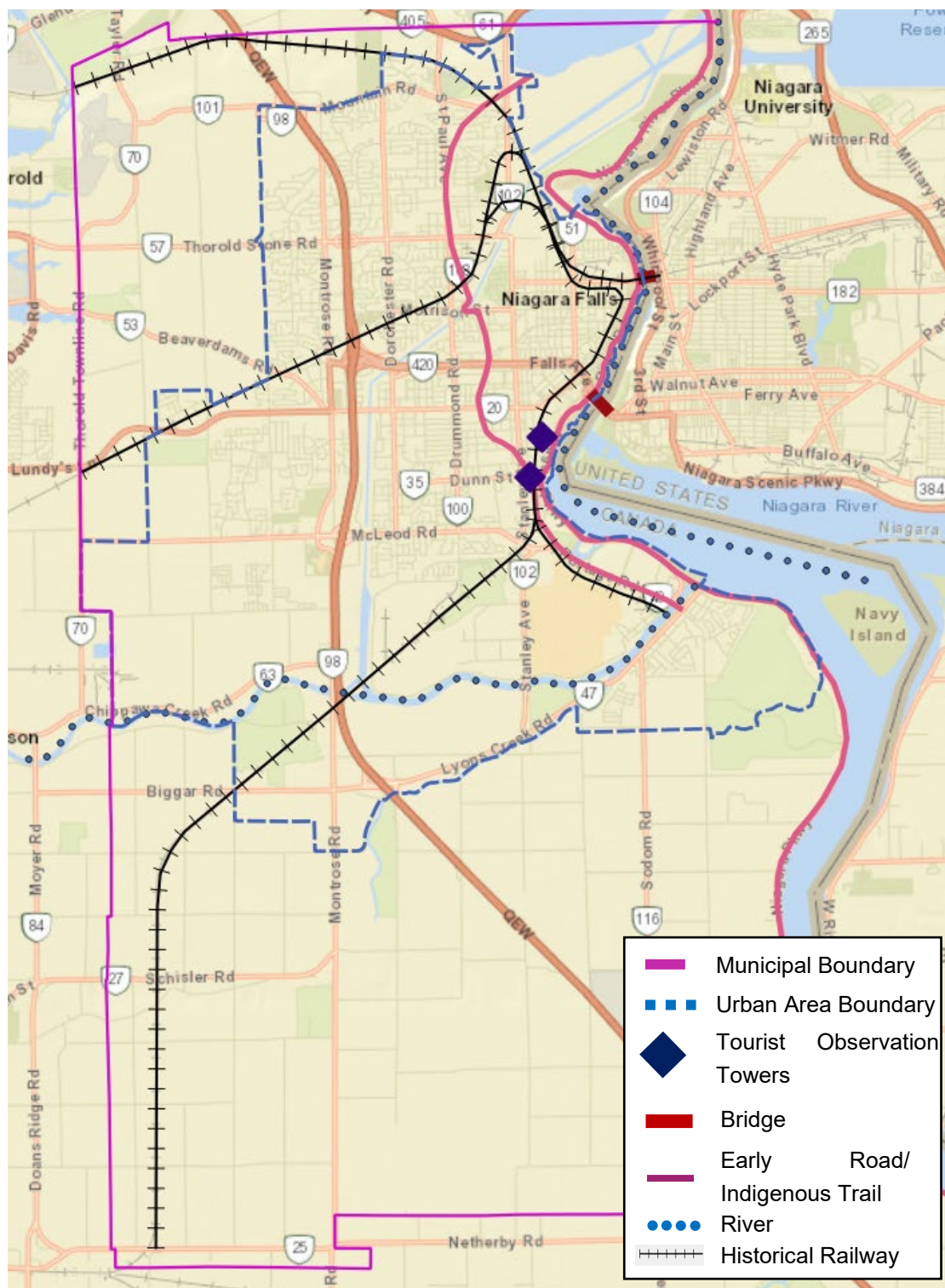
- Portage Road (from Chippawa to the Hydro Reservoir)
- First Welland Canal/Welland River (both sides of the river within the current municipal boundary)
- Power Canal
- Willoughby's Marsh/Ussher's Creek

- Niagara Parkway: Zimmerman Estate; Niagara Glen; Victoria Park/Oak Hall; Navy Island Chippawa Battlefield.

There are also areas of the City with archaeological potential that may contain a plethora of archaeological resources that are yet to be discovered. A community's heritage can also be intangible, rendered through traditions, storytelling, oral history and other cultural expressions.



The Skylon Tower overlooking the falls (Niagara Falls Tourism)

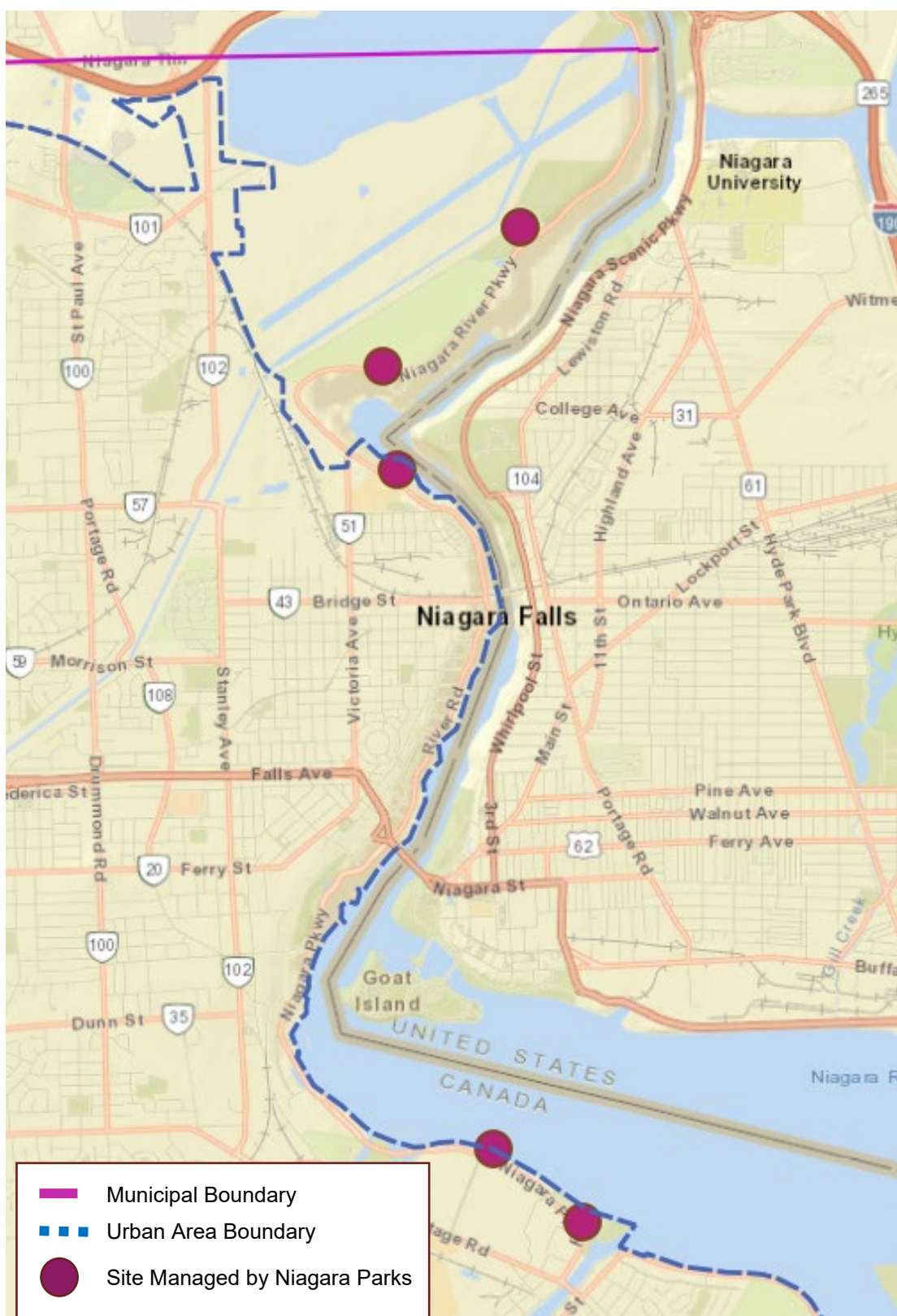


Approximate location of additional potential cultural heritage resources in Niagara Falls

Potential Cultural Heritage Resources Managed by the Niagara Parks Commission

The Niagara Parks Commission also manages the following sites along the Niagara River with potential heritage value, and which are not listed or designated:

- *Kingsbridge Park*
- *Pedestrian bridge in Chippawa*
- *Whirlpool Aero Car cable car ride over Niagara Falls*
- *Botanical Gardens Niagara*
- *Whirlpool Golf Course*
- *Niagara Parkway (the Parkway is partially within the Queen Victoria Park Cultural Heritage Landscape but the Niagara Parks Commission also manages portions of the Parkway outside the cultural heritage landscape.)*



Potential Cultural Heritage Resources Managed by the Niagara Parks Commission



Botanical Gardens Niagara (Niagara Parks).

2.3.6 Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Niagara Falls

Tourism in Niagara Falls has been historically centered around the following themes:

- The Falls: Tourist have been coming to see the Falls and other natural features along the Niagara River since the early nineteenth century and it is around these features that most of the existing tourist sites developed. Many of the most popular tourist sites and attractions in Niagara Falls today got their start in the 1800s Queen Victoria Park, opened in 1888, continues to provide public access to tourists looking to view the Falls. The Queen Victoria Park cultural heritage landscape includes the shoreline from Rainbow Bridge to Upper Rapids Road and is inclusive of the Niagara River and the Falls.⁷ Tourist sites and attractions centred around the Falls and the Niagara River include: the Falls, Niagara Whirlpool, Queen Victoria Park, Journey Behind the Falls, Table Rock Centre, and Niagara's Fury. The former Konica Minolta Tower (now the Tower Hotel), the Skylon Tower, and the Falls Incline Railway are all examples of infrastructure developed during a period of tourism intensification in the mid-twentieth century to provide views of or access to the Falls and associated attractions.
- Military / Battleground Tourism: Battleground tourism was also a major

⁷ City of Niagara Falls & Carl Bray and Associates, 2005; DTAH, 2018

draw for tourists following the famous battles of Lundy's Lane and Chippawa in the war of 1812. While much of the tourist infrastructure built up around Lundy's Lane in the 1800s has since disappeared, the site remains a popular tourist destination and tourists can visit a restored period tavern that now serves as the Battleground Hotel Museum. Lundy's Lane is recognized as a National Historic Site of Canada.⁸ Tourist sites and attractions associated with military/battleground tourism include Lundy's Lane Battlefield and museum, Chippawa battlefield, and the military museum.

- **Attractions and Curiosities:** The Clifton Hill attraction area is lined with novelty attractions and museums of curiosities. While most of these attractions date from the mid to late twentieth century, the tradition of curiosity museums began in the 1820s. Niagara Falls was host to Canada's first museum, which was housed in several locations including 5651 Niagara River Parkway (listed) which now houses Bird Kingdom.⁹ These types of attractions are generally concentrated along Clifton Hill and the surrounding area.
- **Hospitality and Hotels:** As a function of the roaring tourist trade, the hospitality industry also boomed in the areas surrounding the Falls and Clifton Hill beginning with a few large tourist hotels and smaller inns in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following the Second World War, "motor-hotels" or motels were constructed in large numbers to support the tourists visiting the city, many of which still exist on Ferry Street, Stanley Avenue and numerous side streets near the Falls and Clifton Hill. Unique mid-twentieth century eateries that have become nostalgic tourist destinations include the Flying Saucer Restaurant on Lundy's Lane. The Tower Hotel (the former Konica Minolta Tower), the Skylon Tower, and the incline railway were also added around this time. Today the area directly surrounding the falls is occupied by large chain hotels, some smaller high-end boutique operations, and the large Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino entertainment complexes, which average 30,000 visitors per day.¹⁰ Bed and breakfast accommodations are prevalent along River Road and the Niagara Parkway.

⁸ City of Niagara Falls & Carl Bray and Associates, 2005; The Exchange Niagara Falls, n.d.-a

⁹ City of Niagara Falls & Carl Bray and Associates, 2005; The Exchange Niagara Falls, n.d.-b

3

Key Topics for Discussion

3.1 Protecting Heritage Resources under the *Ontario Heritage Act* and other Mechanisms Enabled Under the Planning Act

Why it's Important

Heritage resources are part of the City's cultural DNA and play an important role in maintaining a strong sense of place, quality of life, successful tourism sector and vibrant cultural economy. Conservation of these resources is also critically important in a broader context of recognizing that Indigenous peoples and First Nations were present in southern Ontario 13,000 years and the importance of engaging with the goals and calls to action made in 2015 as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Stewardship of cultural heritage resources and features such as archaeological resources and artefacts, landscapes of special cultural significance, and including stories and traditions of people past and present, create opportunities to enrich our understanding of the peoples and themes that have shaped this country. This needs to be a continuing and ongoing practice.

Cultural heritage resources can also support placemaking and the creation of a unique character. Heritage resources can also stimulate and support tourism, bolstering the local economy while promoting cultural exchange. Well-managed heritage sites can attract investment to the surrounding area, helping to revitalize neighborhoods and spur further economic development. Heritage conservation also fosters environmental sustainability by repurposing existing structures and reducing the need for new construction.

The City has a diverse range of cultural heritage resources, ranging from known and potential archaeological resources related to millennia of Indigenous occupation and experience of the area, and the more recent Colonial past; the parkland and famous natural features found along the Niagara River; historical battlefields; and historical roads and railways lines; to engineering works like canals, bridges and hydroelectricity infrastructure; nineteenth-century settlement centres with residential neighbourhoods and commercial main streets; and mid-twentieth century tourist attractions. Some of these are formally recognized or protected, while others are not.

Generally, archaeological resources, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscapes are governed by regulatory procedures and requirements to ensure their conservation or protection (e.g., protection or recognition under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, review as part of applications made under the Planning Act, and/or addressed in an Official Plan). It is necessary to ensure that heritage policies in Our Niagara Falls Plan are updated and augmented to address current and future policy and development contexts.

The *Planning Act* establishes that the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest is a provincial interest. Municipalities shall have regard for this provincial interest when making decisions under the *Planning Act*, and an Official Plan is the primary vehicle for setting this policy direction.



Things to Think About

1. Existing municipal Official Plan policies for built heritage and cultural heritage landscapes need to be reviewed and updated to ensure conformity with:
 - *Ontario Heritage Act* (amendments that came into force on January 1, 2023)
 - 2020 Provincial Policy Statement
 - Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
 - Niagara Region Official Plan (2022)
2. Ensure an appropriate policy basis is created for identification and protection of cultural heritage resources in areas planned for intensification/strategic growth areas, secondary plan areas, and otherwise generally across the city, including guidance for development adjacent to existing resources throughout Niagara Falls.
3. The draft 2024 Provincial Policy Statement, if approved as written (April 2024), could impact the City's new Official Plan policies for built heritage resources, archaeological resources and cultural heritage landscapes. As work on Our Niagara Falls Plan progresses, prospective changes to provincial policy statements and definitions relating to cultural heritage should be monitored to identify where there may be prospective compliance issues that require updates.
4. With changes to the *Ontario Heritage Act* having come into force on January 1, 2023, and new time limits on listing on Municipal Heritage Registers, it will be important to assess approaches for updating existing policy language that address criteria for designation and/or future study. The changes to the *Ontario Heritage Act* include a higher threshold for properties to meet criteria for designation under Part IV and V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and to the threshold required for a potential Heritage Conservation District to meet criteria for designation under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
 - In consideration of the new time limits on listing properties, alternative approaches to protecting potential heritage properties should be explored for areas with concentrations of potential heritage resources, such as the historical settlements of Stamford, Drummondville, Chippawa, Elgin and Clifton. These areas are listed in the current Official Plan for possible future study. Approaches to protecting them may include a program for Part IV designations, Part V designation as a Heritage Conservation District or secondary planning.
 - The City may also want to consider developing policy language that

would recognize informal heritage inventories maintained by the municipality that may be used to monitor and track cultural heritage sites that will expire from the Municipal Heritage Register if not designated within two years of listing.

5. Existing municipal or regional procedures for engagement with Indigenous communities and articulating those requirements or objectives in updated policies. The City is developing protocols for Indigenous consultation and engagement and these should be referenced as the Our Niagara Falls Plan policies are developed.
6. It will be important to update policies for managing the archaeological resources within the city. It is anticipated that Our Niagara Falls Plan will incorporate the Niagara Region Official Plan policies as they relate to planning and management of archaeological resources.
7. The current Official Plan does not set out goals and objectives for cultural heritage conservation in the city. These should be considered to better articulate the City's aspirations to protect and enhance heritage and to encourage public

awareness and appreciation of heritage resources and the value of protecting these resources to both residents and visitors. Other City documents, such as the Community Improvement Plans, also include heritage- and design-oriented goals that might be helpful guides or starting points for a broader civic discussion.

8. Currently, the City offers a Designated Property Grant Program for the restoration, alteration and preservation of designated heritage properties. The Community Improvement Plans for Downtown, Drummondville, Lundy's Lane, the Niagara Gateway Economic Zone and Brownfields all provide for a range of financial incentives that would apply to heritage properties. The expansion of financial incentives for owners of designated heritage properties throughout the city should be considered to support the conservation and sensitive development of designated heritage properties.
9. Explore whether there is a need or interest to develop specific policies related to potential remnants of the first Welland Canal.

3.2 Promoting and Enhancing Heritage Experiences

Why it's Important

Across Niagara Falls, there are a range of heritage assets owned by the municipality or operated by other levels of government. The city also contains heritage assets that may not be appropriate for designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, but which nonetheless are important aspects of the municipality's historically rooted or currently evolving sense of place. Both types of assets may benefit from enhancement, promotion, and/or consideration as part of other land-use planning initiatives.

Enhancement and stewardship of archaeological resources, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscapes can also be supported by corollary or alternative processes that shape the lands surrounding these resources. Such processes may include context-specific urban design solutions, natural heritage protections, parks and open space programming, and land-use planning mechanisms such as zoning and/or secondary or tertiary planning.

There are different ways cultural heritage is managed, with regulatory procedures and requirements tailored as applicable to ensure their conservation or protection. As examples:

- Protection or recognition under the *Ontario Heritage Act*
- Review as part of applications made under the *Planning Act*, and/or addressed in an official plan or zoning by-law
- Corollary or alternative approaches such as context-specific urban design solutions, natural heritage protections, parks and open space programming, and land-use planning mechanisms such as zoning



Things to Think About

1. The City could explore policy measures to promote a sense of place while accommodating increased density, maintaining affordability, and delivering higher levels of housing. The development of urban design guidelines for historical neighbourhoods or areas can help to ensure that infill is appropriately scaled and designed to maintain the character of the area, including the sensitive treatment of significant views. This is discussed in further detail in the Attractive City Discussion Paper. The City has some experience with urban design guidelines in the Downtown, Historic Drummondville and Lundy's Lane Community Improvement areas, the results of which should be better understood as part of considering whether this is, or can be, an appropriate tool for broader or refined application. In some instances, an area may not be appropriate for protection as a heritage conservation district or individual property designation, however,

it may be important to use enabling mechanisms under the Planning Act to promote and steward character-defining features. Where are these places and what mechanisms may be appropriate for implementation? The engagement program for Our Niagara Falls Plan should endeavour to solicit feedback from the public on areas that may be appropriate for this kind of approach.

2. Concurrently, some features that relate to a community's heritage or culture can be promoted and celebrated through events, festivals, branding and signage, public art installations, artistic outputs, storytelling, or interpretive programming for example. These kinds of strategies can help enhance and safeguard those aspects of a community's cultural heritage that are more ephemeral, contemporary, less tangible, and evolving; culturally important stories or oral traditions, communities of people that shaped a place but who are no longer physically present, or lost heritage

sites. The contributions of First Nations people in the area are being commemorated with public art memorials, such as the Landscape of Nations Memorial at Queenston Heights Park (in Niagara-on-the-Lake). There is also a rich history of First Nations storytelling related to the Falls that is currently being reclaimed.¹¹ The military New Year's Levee at the Niagara Military Museum is another example of a tradition that is linked to the City's cultural heritage themes. Our Niagara Falls Plan should consider whether goals or objectives should address promotion and expansion of these types of events or initiatives.

3. Given that the municipality features a range of property owners from other levels of government and that intersect with cultural assets (e.g., Ontario Power Generation, the Niagara Parks Commission, Parks Canada, Metrolinx), policies should be developed that address points of collaboration and interest to strengthen and enhance the partnerships and agreements that have brought about success in Niagara Falls.

- The Queen Victoria Park Cultural Heritage Landscape is identified as open space in the current Official Plan. The City should consider identifying the park as a cultural heritage landscape in Our Niagara Falls Plan in order to improve the planning process with regards to properties adjacent to the cultural heritage landscape.

- The City should consider policies to recognize and enhance physical and visual connection points between City lands and Niagara Parks Commission lands with heritage sensitivities. Examples include Fraser Hill Road, the lower portion of Clifton Hill, the parapet wall along the Promenade within Queen Victoria Park, and views from the arrival point at the Incline Railway
- The City should consider strengthening the recognition of the Niagara Parkway as a scenic road to encourage the consideration and enhancement of its processional character.
- The treed moraine along the western edge of Queen Victoria Park Cultural Heritage Landscape . is an important interface between the cultural heritage landscape. and the rest of the city. The City should consider policies that recognize the importance of collaboration between the Niagara Parks Commission and the City on this sensitive natural and cultural heritage feature.

4. It will be important to understand municipal ownership of lands with sensitive heritage resources, such as Lundy's Lane Battlefield, and address policies that guide municipal approach for managing its own heritage resources and/or procedures for protection as part of disposition.

5. The stewardship and enhancement of heritage resources can also help the City fulfil broader objectives, beyond heritage

¹¹ (Johnson, 2024)

conservation, to be a welcoming and attractive city. The Attractive City Discussion Paper discusses the importance of overall urban design policies in achieving this. As these policies are developed, intersections and opportunities with heritage should be carefully considered.

6. The identification and promotion of heritage resources can also support the diversification of tourism offerings within the city. Several themes identified in the International City Discussion Paper align with potential heritage resources that

may not be traditionally identified as heritage. The pop culture and nostalgia tourism theme is reflected in structures built in the mid-twentieth century, such as the Skylon Tower and the Flying Saucer Restaurant. The promotion and interpretation of groupings of such heritage resources can contribute to the development of new tourist markets.

Official Plans like Our Niagara Falls Plan are best equipped to support culture by creating the policy basis to secure the spaces and places necessary for culture to happen—providing for a huge list of facilities such as parks, public art, museums, schools, community centres, shops, restaurants

The 2022 Recreation, Culture & Parks Plan sets a number of initiatives in this area, including other master plans and budget considerations for Council’s consideration

More on creating great places is found in the Attractive City Discussion Paper

3.3 Planning for Public Service Facilities

Why it's Important

It is important to encourage and facilitate the coordinated development, maintenance, and expansion of public service facilities to meet the needs of residents, regardless of age, physical ability and financial means. Locating public service facilities in mixed use neighbourhood nodes, where transit is available or planned, or in proximity to higher density residential communities, supports the vitality of those communities, contributes to quality of life/quality of place and facilitates access by all residents. Public service facilities are an important component of creating complete communities, by serving social, health, educational, recreational, cultural needs of local residents.

Not everyone can drive or has access to a vehicle. Age, disability, choice, or affordability can all keep people from owning and operating a vehicle. Ensuring everyone has a safe, convenient, accessible way to get to where they need to go is an equity matter; everyone deserves access to health care, services, employment, and education. Clustering diverse land uses in neighbourhoods and communities will assist with ensuring the availability, accessibility, and convenience of destinations and facilities within walking distance.

Public service facilities also represent a development opportunity themselves. They are a resource and potential solution for any number of development challenges, including options to address housing needs. Co-location of facilities can unlock economies of scale to expand offerings and share costs. Existing facilities represent a potential opportunity to address community needs, should their use be under review or changed.

The Haber Community Centre, Burlington's Public Library - Alton Branch and Dr. Frank J. Hayden Secondary School is Burlington's largest community construction project made possible through a unique, three-way partnership among the City of Burlington, the Halton District School Board and Burlington Public Library.

The fully accessible building features eight competition-sized gyms, three outdoor fields, a three-storey public secondary school and an integrated public library.



Things to Think About

1. The City could explore creative approaches to the development of facilities and delivery of services, with the City participating in the co-design and co-delivery of services with other government agencies, the private sector, and/or non-profit organizations. Planning for public service facilities should also consider the ease of access by active transportation and transit, the creation of mixed use neighbourhood nodes, proximity to concentrations of residents, equitable access, and the contribution new facilities will make to the success and vitality of the city.
2. The Our Niagara Falls Plan is a good opportunity to strengthen the policy framework to ensure a high-quality public realm, easy access to public service facilities and an attractive and welcoming community. Community planning and design can incorporate consideration of a wide range of elements which together contribute to a high quality of life. Potential elements that may be considered for a strengthened policy framework may include:
 - Upgrading and maintaining municipal services, active transportation facilities, public utilities, and social and recreational facilities so that they meet or exceed minimum standards and are inclusive and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.
 - Preserving, restoring, or adaptively re-using older buildings and buildings of cultural heritage value or interest.
 - Addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, such as through building retrofits for energy efficiency, renewable and district energy systems, water conservation and low impact development strategies.
 - Revitalizing existing communities, including through mixed use infill development and redevelopment, streetscaping, beautification projects, façade improvement, and the promotion of tourism activities.
3. The availability and access to public services and amenities (recreation, health care, long-term care, education, retail and commercial) for residents of all incomes, ages, and abilities is also important for maintaining a high quality of life and a sense of community and belonging, which is so valued in the city. For this reason, it is important to promote the design of communities around pedestrian activity with a substantial number of destinations within walking distance. The ease of access to these services and amenities is based on both their design and location. Our Niagara Falls Plan should direct new services and amenities to Downtown, key nodes (however defined) and other community hubs where they are easily accessible to a large percentage of residents by a range of transportation modes. Well located public services and amenities will further support the vitality of the community and the efficient use of infrastructure.
4. Further to the above, new public service facilities, including hospitals and schools, should be located in areas that are easily

accessible by active transportation and transit, where that service is available. The South Niagara Hospital is located west of the QEW and north of Biggar

Road. Transit will need to be expanded to support mobility options and enhance access to the hospital.

3.4 The Role of Programming in Enhancing Culture

Why it's Important

Some features that relate to a community's heritage or culture can be promoted and celebrated through events, festivals, branding and signage, public art installations, artistic outputs, storytelling, or interpretative programming for example.

Things to Think About

1. The *Planning Act* and official plans are not really equipped to establish events or traditions. They certainly can acknowledge the significance of local cultural institutions—but where land use planning policy can shine is in creating the places, spaces, and municipal corporate supports to enable culture in all its forms:
 - Placemaking that supports culture (e.g., event spaces, encouraging installations, establishing guidelines or support for tactical urbanism and temporary explorations of culture).
 - Creating the space for culture (e.g., establishing use permissions and development guidelines around planning for municipal facilities such as community centres and museums for both public agencies and private partners) and means to support such spaces (e.g., integration of non-market housing, integration with other agencies, creating hubs for social services or community infrastructure).
 - Providing municipal support and direction for cultural events, programming and spaces, building upon the early success of The Exchange and helping to implement the 2022 Recreation, Culture & Parks Plan.
 - Supporting community partners to deliver programming that activates these spaces or their own development projects.

4

Policy Review

Each Discussion Paper provides narrative on key components of legislation and policy governing that Paper's subject matter. Cultural heritage and culture programming is governed by multiple non-municipal, public agency policies and practices respecting cultural heritage planning, assessment, mitigation, and conservation issues. Many key items affecting local operations are discussed below, although other documents may become relevant as part of writing Our Niagara Falls Plan.

4.1 Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

POLICY REFERENCE: [Section 2.6 \(Cultural Heritage and Archaeology\)](#); [Section 1.7 \(Long-Term Economic Prosperity\)](#)

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The 2020 Provincial Policy Statement sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. The Provincial Policy Statement is issued under the authority of Section 3 of the *Planning Act*. Section 3 of the *Planning Act* requires that decisions affecting planning matters "shall be consistent with" policy statements issued under the *Act*. Comments, submissions or advice that affect a planning matter that are provided by the Council of a municipality, a local board, a planning board, a minister or ministry, board, commission or agency of the government "shall be consistent with" the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement.



The Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, directs that significant archaeological resources, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved.¹² The 2020 Provincial Policy Statement also specifically directs that Indigenous communities shall be engaged as part of procedures to identify, manage, and protect built heritage resources, cultural landscapes, and archaeological resources.¹³ The Provincial Policy Statement recommends that municipalities

¹² Policies 2.6.1 and 2.6.2; glossary definitions

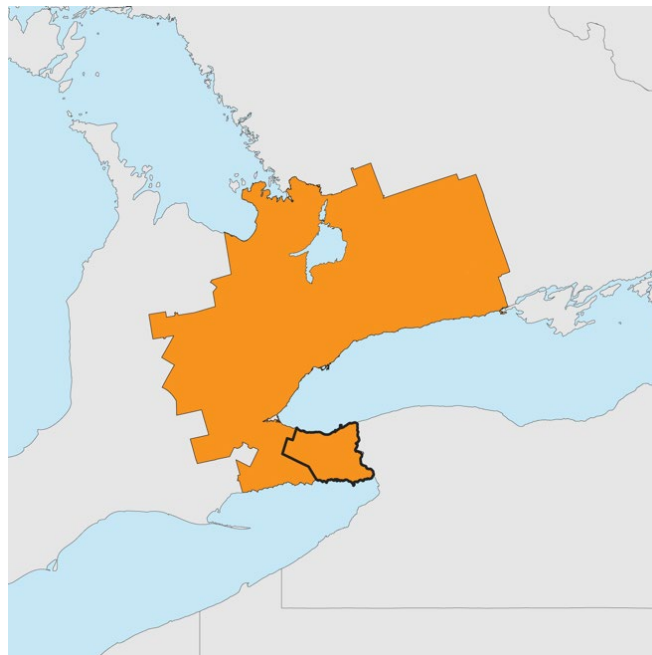
¹³ Policy. 2.6.4

promote use of archaeological management plans and cultural plans.¹⁴ The Provincial Policy Statement also recognizes that stewardship and promotion of a municipality's cultural assets supports long-term economic prosperity.¹⁵

4.2 A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2019)

POLICY REFERENCE: 4.2.7 (Cultural Heritage Resources)

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019 (Growth Plan), builds on the Provincial Policy Statement to establish a unique planning framework for the Greater Golden Horseshoe that supports the achievement of complete communities, a thriving economy, a clean and healthy environment, and social equity. It provides detailed policy direction across a range of issue areas, with an overarching principal being to support the achievement of complete communities that are designed to support healthy and active living and meet people's needs for daily living throughout an entire lifetime. It does this by promoting intensification improving the integration of land use planning with investments in infrastructure and public service facilities and providing for different approaches to manage growth that recognize the diversity of communities subject to this Plan. Comments, submissions or advice that affect a planning matter that are provided by the Council of a municipality, a local board, a planning board, a minister or ministry, board, commission or agency of the government "shall conform to" this Provincial policy document.



The Growth Plan recognizes that cultural heritage assets are important contributors to a community's sense of identity, tourism industry, and can attract investment based on cultural amenities. The Growth Plan directs that archaeological resources, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscapes be conserved in strategic growth areas and that municipal policy direction be informed by collaboration with stakeholders, as well as First Nations and Metis communities.¹⁶

¹⁴ Policy 2.6.5

¹⁵ Policy 1.7.1(e)

¹⁶ Section 4.2.7

4.3 Ontario Heritage Act (2023)

The *Ontario Heritage Act* is the primary piece of legislation that governs the designation, conservation, and management of cultural heritage resources in Ontario. Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* enables and regulates the protection of individual properties of cultural heritage value or interest by a municipality. Part V enables and regulates the designation of heritage conservation districts by a municipality. Part VI regulates the conservation of resources of archaeological value. Part III enables the application of standards and guidelines for the identification and management of provincial heritage properties owned by the Province or by a prescribed public body. The Niagara Parks Commission is a prescribed public body.

In 2022, the Province of Ontario introduced significant amendments to the *Ontario Heritage Act* through Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*. These amendments went into force on January 1, 2023, resulting in new and different requirements particularly as it relates to including non-designated property on Municipal Heritage Registers, and designating property under Part IV and V of the Act.

4.4 Draft 2024 Provincial Planning Statement

On April 10, 2024, the Government of Ontario released the proposed Provincial Planning Statement 2024 (proposed PPS 2024). The proposed PPS 2024 would be a single, province-wide policy framework along with implementing legislative changes, which combines the PPS 2020 and Growth Plan into one consolidated policy. The changes proposed in the PPS 2024 represent fundamental changes in how growth planning is carried out in the province. At the time of writing this Discussion Paper, the public consultation stage had just closed (May 12, 2024). A number of elements of the proposed Provincial Planning Statement 2024 will be discussed in each of the six Discussion Papers.

- The current Provincial Policy Statement states that “Significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved.”¹⁷ The proposed Provincial Planning Statement 2024 has changed this policy to: “Protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved.”¹⁸ The in-force policy enables the conservation of those properties that have been determined to be significant cultural heritage resources that may or may not be designated under Part IV or V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The proposed change would enable the conservation of only those properties that satisfy the definition for Protected Heritage Property. “Protected Heritage Property” is defined in the Provincial Planning Statement as, “property designated under Parts IV, V or VI of the *Ontario Heritage Act*; property subject to a heritage conservation easement under Parts II or IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*; property identified by the Province and prescribed public bodies as provincial heritage property under the Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties; property protected under federal legislation,

¹⁷ Section 2.6.1

¹⁸ Section 4.6.1

and UNESCO World Heritage Sites.”¹⁹ This proposed change represents a narrowing of the types of heritage resources that can be required to be conserved. Should this change come into effect, City Official Plan policies would require review and probable updating or amendment to comply with the proposed Provincial Planning Statement. Certain policies in the existing Official Plan would no longer apply to non-designated cultural heritage resources, leaving listed properties without protection. Additional policies and changes to the definitions of certain terms should be considered to address this.

4.5 Region of Niagara Official Plan (2022)

The Niagara Region Official Plan (2022) states that cultural heritage resources are irreplaceable and must be conserved. The plan recognizes the economic and social benefits of conserving heritage resources and identifies the conservation of these resources as a key Regional Interest²⁰. The Official Plan outlines specific policies and procedures for the preservation of cultural heritage resources at the municipal and Regional level. These policies pertain to the designation and listing of heritage properties, cultural mapping, heritage impact assessments, and support for the Niagara Parks Commission in their role identifying and conserving cultural heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes along the Niagara River Corridor²¹.

The Official Plan further states archaeological sites are highly fragile and non-renewable and recognizes the importance of preserving archaeological resources and commemorating significant discoveries. The plan allocates responsibility for the management of archaeological data and mapping to the Region and outlines specific policies and procedures for these processes including the preparation and maintenance of a Regional Archaeological Management Plan, which includes mapping of areas of archaeological potential and existing sites and policies pertaining to archaeological assessments²².

4.6 City of Niagara Falls Official Plan

The City of Niagara Falls Official Plan (1993, consolidated 2024) outlines specific policies for the preservation of cultural heritage resources in the City of Niagara Falls. These policies pertain to the appointment of a Municipal Heritage Committee, the maintenance of a heritage register, property designation, Heritage Conservation Districts, and Cultural Heritage Landscapes and the management of City-owned heritage properties and buildings. The plan further outlines policies and procedures for the management of archaeological resources including requirements for archaeological assessments, protection of resources in-situ, designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and the development of further Plans and Guidelines to guide management of these resources²³. The range of definitions that the plan provides for heritage terms is relatively comprehensive, though notably it does not define “adjacent lands” relative to cultural heritage.

¹⁹ Section 6.0

²⁰ Section 6.5

²¹ Section 6.5.1

²² Section 6.4

²³ Part 3, Section 4

4.7 City of Niagara Falls Community Improvement Plans

The City of Niagara Falls has approved five Community Improvement Plans that provide guidelines and financial incentives towards physical, economic and environmental improvements within the Plan area. Of those, three include urban design guidelines which help to ensure that new development respects and responds to the historical built form.

- The Downtown Niagara Falls Community Improvement Plan (2004) covers enhancements and incentives for the historic Downtown Niagara Falls, centred along Queen Street. The Urban Design Guidelines (2007) recognize that heritage buildings are a key asset to downtown and provides detailed guidance on conserving the existing built form and guidelines to ensure that new development respects and responds to the area's heritage character. The Plan includes the following financial incentives that owners of heritage properties are eligible to apply for: Commercial Building and Facade Improvement Grant - To promote the restoration and improvement of the facades of commercial and mixed-use buildings and promote the maintenance and physical improvement of existing buildings and properties.

Revitalization Grant - To provide financial incentive to help offset the increased property taxes that result from the rehabilitation of downtown residential and commercial properties.

Residential Loan - To provide a 0% interest loan to promote the: conversion of non-residential buildings to residential use; upgrade of existing residential buildings to meet Building Code, Fire Code and Property Standards By-law; and construction of residential units on vacant properties.
- The Historic Drummondville Community Improvement Plan (2007) encourages redevelopment and private sector investment in the creation of new residential units and the rehabilitation of commercial buildings along the corridors anchoring the Drummondville community. It is positioned between Lundy's Lane and the Fallsview tourist districts. Objectives in the Urban Design Guidelines (2006) include reinforcing the predominantly low- to mid-rise main street retail area, expanding and improving the quality and comfort of the public realm (streetscape and open space network), promote higher order transit and service uses, and encouraging redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized sites. The Plan includes the following financial incentives that owners of heritage properties are eligible to apply for: Commercial Building and Facade Improvement Grant - To promote the restoration and improvement of the facades of commercial and mixed use buildings, and promote the maintenance and physical improvement of existing buildings and properties.

Revitalization Grant - To provide a financial incentive to help offset the increased property taxes that result from the rehabilitation of residential and commercial properties.

Residential Loan - To provide a 0% interest loan to promote the: conversion of non-residential buildings to residential use; upgrade of existing residential buildings to meet Building Code, Fire Code and Property Standards By-law; and construction of residential units on vacant properties.

- The Lundy's Lane Community Improvement Plan (2019) encourages redevelopment and private sector investment in the creation of new residential units and the rehabilitation of commercial buildings. The companion urban design guidelines (2017) encourage mixed-use development and a range of residential development within the area, enhancing the pedestrian experience along the corridor and encouraging pedestrian-scaled built form and additional connectivity, addressing gateways and public areas through appropriate built form, and providing for

sensitive transition of new built form within the existing corridor and to adjacent residential uses. The Plan includes the following financial incentives that owners of heritage properties are eligible to apply for: Commercial Facade, Landscaping and Property Improvement Grant - To promote building rehabilitation and facade improvement of existing commercial and mixed use (commercial/residential) buildings.

Adaptive Reuse & Motel Revitalization Grant Program - To provide a financial incentive in the form of a grant to promote the conversion of existing vacant spaces or existing uses to new, more viable commercial uses.

Tax Increment Based Grant - To provide a financial incentive to help offset the increased property taxes that result from the rehabilitating, redeveloping or developing buildings and properties.

Monitoring of the various Community Improvements Plans suggests they are in need of modernization, which is an opportunity to incorporate the vision that will be developed through the Our Niagara Falls Plan process into these important placemaking tools.

4.8 Niagara Falls Culture Plan (2014)

The Niagara Falls Culture Plan was developed to guide the City's future investments in facilities, programs and activities related to and in support of the arts and cultural heritage. Recommendations pertaining to heritage sites in the City include:

- Identification of a heritage precinct in the area of the historical village of Drummondville and a cultural precinct around Queen Street and Victoria Avenue, in the area of the historical village of Clifton.
- Entrance gateways to the City that promote art, culture and heritage, and reflect historical-related themes based on their district.
- Interpretation initiatives to preserve and enhance Lundy's Lane Battlefield.
- Cultural initiatives to support the long-term revitalization of Queen Street.

4.9 Recreation, Culture and Parks Plan (2021)

The City of Niagara Falls Recreation, Culture and Parks Plan was approved by Council in 2022. It contains eight objectives to address the recreation, culture and parks needs of Niagara Falls residents, implemented through a number of initiatives to 2031. It pertains to recreational facilities, arts and cultural facilities, parks and open spaces, and programs and services offered through the recreation, culture, and parks system (and supporting those initiatives outside of the City system).

The eight objectives are:

- Bring the Community Together through Recreation, Culture and Parks
- Reflect Authentic Cultural Experiences and Local History
- Build and Revitalize Facilities to Reinvigorate Established Neighbourhoods
- Connect People and Places to the Outdoors
- Embrace Natural Beauty and Sustainability within our Public Open Spaces
- Contribute to Complete and Vibrant Communities
- Improve Access to Facilities and Services Across Niagara Falls
- Set the Recreation, Culture and Parks System Up for Success

Under contributing to complete and vibrant communities, the Plan identifies a number of initiatives to enrich the cultural life of the City. This includes formalizing a Public Art Policy, investigating means to increase the ability of independent artists to be engaged in public art installations,

establishing an outdoor festival and event space to support events at a City-wide scale (while integrating smaller spaces for small events into an overall program).

The Plan also identifies the importance of recreation, culture and parks services in supporting a range of community-building goals. More on these recommendations can be reviewed in the discussion paper on the Attractive City.

Goal Two (Reflect Authentic Cultural Experiences and Local History) is intended to celebrate local history while examining it with a critical lens and acknowledging that new culture is always being created. This section of the plan aims to support the tourism infrastructure of Niagara Falls while balancing the needs of the local community and grassroots organizations. The fourth of five initiatives in this section, RCP2 -4, recommends that the City continue its tradition of incorporating heritage into the design of new and existing parks through the designation of cultural heritage landscapes and structures through the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the use of interpretive signage, and conserving and integrating historical features in parkland design.

5

Next Steps

The six Discussion Papers have been prepared as a basis for starting the process of public engagement and engaging stakeholder feedback on the path forward for Our Niagara Falls Plan. These papers are not intended to answer any questions—quite the opposite. The hope and goal for these papers is to stimulate discussion and generate ideas to consider when preparing the new Official Plan.

The project team will be preparing a “What We Heard” engagement summary report that captured the feedback received and discussion generated by this report.

The next product in this exercise is the Policy Options Report. Research generated by the project team plus the above public feedback will inform a deeper discussion on several issue areas that an official plan generally governs. The project team will be back later this year to engage on these questions and obtain more ideas to shape Our Niagara Falls Plan itself.