

2024 - 2029

# St. Catharines Economic Development and Tourism Strategy





# Bridging Investment in the Community

Our city's foundations were not laid solely with bricks and mortar - but with bold ideas and relentless determination. It was the innovators, the dreamers, and the risk-takers who envisioned St. Catharines as more than just a collection of buildings, it was always destined to be a beacon of progress and possibility.

St. Catharines has the assets and ingenuity to drive the next generation of economic growth and prosperity.

The city of St. Catharines is evolving and adding resources to enhance its appeal to a broad range of business interests including residential and commercial developers, manufacturers, retailers and the growing number of entrepreneurs who make this municipality their location of choice. In doing so, St. Catharines retains the largest residential population in the Niagara region and is one of the top ten population hubs in Ontario.

With a geographic position between Toronto and the U.S. gateway city of Buffalo, N.Y., there is an increasingly diverse residential population, vibrant arts and entertainment offerings, and a richness of sports and recreational activities not often anticipated by potential residents or site selectors seeking strategic locations. St. Catharines will continue to appeal to businesses and residents looking for opportunity and alternatives to the congestion and expense of larger centres.

Small and medium enterprises are the foundation of our business community and the platform for job creation. Building on sector strengths and supporting innovation in its many forms is integral to the City's economic development initiatives. Investment attraction includes creating sites and situations for new businesses and helping existing companies grow their markets.

These are the broad themes of this strategy and how the City will continue to deliver prosperity and grow the municipality's assessment base. The 2024-2029 St. Catharines Economic Development and Tourism Strategy provides the policies, programs and initiatives of the department and will be implemented to ensure the City continues its vision to be a safe, innovative, sustainable and caring community today and for future generations.

**Brian York**

Director of Economic Development and Government Relations





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# Shaping the Strategy


This strategy was shaped by direction initiated in the 2017-2022 Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. It also builds on experiences that rapidly unfolded during the unimagined scope of the pandemic and the progress seen in the post-pandemic era.

Throughout this time, the Economic Development and Tourism Team (TeamSTC), partners and community members consulted, designed, and delivered on timely innovative initiatives, typically in rapid response to pandemic conditions. Thankfully, the vast majority of businesses in St. Catharines were able to pivot, innovate and show their resilience through the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

These highlights showcase many of the outstanding community successes that result from the collaboration and efforts of the private sector, not-for-profit organizations, TeamSTC, Council and support from so many others. The collective approach delivers meaningful results for job retention and creation, building an investment-ready community and diversifying the municipal assessment base for the benefit of all residents.



TeamSTC  
Key Highlights and Successes

 JAN. 2017	 SPRING 2018	 SPRING 2018	 JUNE 2018	 JUNE 2019	 APRIL 2020	 JUNE 2020	 NOV. 2020	 DEC. 2020	 AUG. 2021
Established the <b>Niagara Ale Trail</b>	Updated the <b>Community Profile, Downtown Profile and Grocery Brochure</b>	Refreshed <b>investinSTC.ca</b>	Released <b>“Anything Together – A Downtown Story”</b> video	Promoted the <b>Digital Main Street grant program</b>	Launched <b>pickupSTC.ca</b> as a response to COVID-19 lockdowns	Implemented the <b>“STC Framework for Recovery: Our Path Forward”</b>	Hosted the first <b>“Let It Glow – A Celebration of Light”</b> event	Relaunched pickupSTC.ca as <b>loveSTC.ca</b>	Leveraged <b>My Main Street</b> program
 JAN. 2022	 JULY 2022	 DEC. 2022	 JAN. 2023	 FEB. 2023	 SEPT. 2023	 JAN 2024	 MARCH 2024	 APRIL 2024	 JUNE 2024
Established the <b>Design District</b>	Updated the <b>Digital Main Street program</b>	Launched <b>filmSTC.ca</b>	<b>Municipal Accommodation Tax</b> implemented	Council adoption of the <b>Seasonal Temporary Commercial Patio Program</b>	A new <b>lighting canopy</b> installed downtown St. Catharines	City of St. Catharines awarded \$25.7 million through the <b>CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund</b>	Increased funding for <b>Starter Company Plus</b> and <b>Summer Company</b>	Council approves <b>joint-DMO</b> with the Town of Lincoln	Council approves the incorporation of the <b>Municipal Development Corporation</b>



Events and Activities  
Regional, National and International Significance



Introduced “**Celebration of Nations**” an annual gathering of Indigenous Arts and Culture to provide a platform to honour the heritage, cultures, and outstanding achievements of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples within Canada.

Hosted the **FIBA U18 Americas Championship** which welcomed international athletes from eight teams that represented countries across North and South America.

Celebrated 70 years of the **Niagara Grape and Wine Festival**, Canada’s oldest and largest wine and culinary festival.

Re-launch of **Cicada Music and Arts Festival**, showcasing Canadian musical talent, alongside local art, makers, food and beverage vendors.



Celebrated 135 years of the **Royal Canadian Henley Regatta**, one of the most prestigious rowing competitions in North America.

Return of the **Emancipation Day** picnic in the park, first time since 2003.

Co-hosted the **Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games**, the largest domestic multisport event for young athletes. More than 5,000 participants from all 13 provinces and territories competed in 18 sports.

15 years of the **In the Soil Arts Festival** bringing Niagara and visiting artists together, from a range of disciplines, to provide unique audience experiences.

Selected as the host community for the **2025 Minto Cup**, the National Junior A Lacrosse Championship of Canada.

Hosted the **2024 World Rowing Championships**. This event, known as a Mega Worlds, welcomed more than 1,100 athletes from 60 nations.



Business and Investment Highlights



JAN. 2020

**Accenture**, the leading global professional services company opens a 68,000 square foot intelligent operations centre in downtown St. Catharines.



SEPT. 2021

**57 Carlisle Square** construction begins in downtown St. Catharines. The 18-storey residential tower includes ground floor commercial space topped by 17 storeys with 228 residential units.



DEC. 2022

**Algoma Central Corporation** named one of Hamilton-Niagara's Top Employers for 2023. This distinction was repeated for 2024.



FEB. 2023

**General Motors** announces plans to manufacture drive units for electric vehicles in St. Catharines. The project will enlist 500 new workers at the GM plant which currently employs 1,100 workers.



FEB. 2022

**Profile Products LLC Quick Plug CA Inc.** receives \$3.2 million from the Province of Ontario to centralize its North American product facility in St. Catharines and create 30 jobs.



AUG. 2022

**13th Street Winery** awarded the top winery in Ontario and #2 winery in Canada at the National Wine Awards.



AUG. 2023

**FBT INC.** the government of Canada announces its investment of nearly \$4 million to increase productivity and create jobs for domestic production of EV, energy and semiconductor-related parts.



JAN. 2024

**Housing Accelerator Fund** provides \$25.7 million to St. Catharines to fast track the building of almost 700 homes and more than 12,000 homes over the next decade.



AUG. 2024

**Ontario Shipyards Inc.**, the biggest repair and construction company on the Great Lakes, received \$10 million through the Skills Development Fund Training Stream to train and upskill workers for careers in the shipbuilding and repair sector.



## GDP, Economic Growth and External Influences

St. Catharines/Niagara's rate of GDP growth continues to outpace provincial and national trends. This confirms the progress that is evident on a daily basis. Prevailing external factors such as the prolonged high rates of inflation especially in the United States and Europe and major international conflicts can impact global financial conditions on a sustained basis which inevitably find their way to local economies and impact local progress.

## Innovation

Innovation is a priority for all municipalities - including St. Catharines. It's based on knowledge, entrepreneurship, technology, and collaboration to drive economic growth. Innovation requires bold steps, and there is a role for all levels of government including the local municipality. Federal and Provincial programs are shaped by priorities that encourage certain sector initiatives and include financial resources to help do so. TeamSTC has a demonstrated record of success in accessing such programs and funds for businesses, community organizations and the municipality itself. Creating a critical mass of activity to generate real innovative gains is critical and leveraging government resources enables a broad range of innovation-shaped activities by providing support, networking, funding, and space.

## The New Nature of Work

Technological transformation will continue to evolve the nature of work across all economic sectors and industries. For example, video conferencing is commonplace; working from home, in whole or in part is evolving as a consideration for new and existing employees. Remote working in general is possible from anywhere in the world with suitable connectivity. Technology that enables such change intersects with the fundamental economic development functions of business attraction, retention, and workforce development. The challenge for economic developers, including TeamSTC, is to enable potential gains in productivity and economic growth while mitigating the consequences of change where technological disruptions create winners and losers.

## Demographic Change

The COVID-19 and the rise of remote work prompted tens of thousands of Canadians to exit larger, more expensive cities for greater personal space, lifestyle amenities at a lower cost of living. St. Catharines/Niagara benefitted from this trend with net new migration fueled primarily by GTA residents making this community their destination of choice. International immigrants also contribute to the changing demographic profile. The growing population provides opportunity to leverage new talent and available workforce while managing the expectations and challenges of adequate housing stock to accommodate the growing population.

## Workforce Dynamics

The need for contemporary skills, ongoing training and workforce availability are among the most significant issues facing the economy. For the first time in the country's history, Canada is seeing more people reaching the age of retirement than entering the workforce. This gives urgency to programs and initiatives that support youth and newcomers through training and reskilling in addition to increasing workforce participation from equity-deserving groups (women, BIPOC, 2SLGBTQI+ and more) is vital to grow and sustain a welcoming and progressive economy for all.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In today's economy there exists unequal employment engagement with the emerging opportunities from which equity-deserving communities are excluded. It is essential to give greater urgency to fostering economic growth that promotes participation from equity-deserving groups through engaging programs that can leverage the benefits of a more diverse talent pool.

## Climate Change

St. Catharines City Council unanimously declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and approved the municipality's first Climate Adaptation Plan in 2021. Climate change is the biggest challenge facing our world and mitigating the impact is a priority for all governments. There has been a significant movement in recent years to address the urgency of the issue through initiatives that move towards greater sustainability, clean technology development, energy efficient buildings, net zero emission targets and alternative energy sources. A focus on these initiatives can boost economic growth and development while helping to mitigate the devastating impact of climate change.





# Priority Economic Sectors

Priority sectors have been identified by the critical mass of similar and complementary businesses in the local community. They typically produce and exchange goods and services, talent, and technology. Their presence serves to attract further investment, innovation, and personnel.

The thrust of the work TeamSTC engages in will be strategic economic development efforts to continue to attract new businesses and increasingly focus on encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship from the sectors that are already actively contributing the most for jobs and economic output through robust business retention and expansion work. The priority sectors include Agriculture, Food and Beverage; Creative Industries; Healthcare; Manufacturing; Professional Services and Tourism.



Agriculture, Food and Beverage

The food and beverage segment offers substantial promise for St. Catharines, especially if well equipped incubation and acceleration spaces are available and if the linkages with tourism, culinary, cultural and the creative industries can be fostered. Specialty and artisanal foods, craft brewing, micro-distilling and hard cider production are taking hold. Post-secondary programs at Brock University and Niagara College are vital assets in growing these niche markets.



Henry of Pelham Family Estate Winery

Healthcare

Highlighted by a state-of-the-art hospital – the Marotta Family Hospital, as well as recent investments by Brock University, Niagara College and McMaster University, the healthcare sector is among the fastest growing industries in St. Catharines today. A critical mass of healthcare assets are coming together in the city, through the Niagara Health System, Brock University's Cairns Family Health and Biosciences Research Complex, Brock's incubation spaces, and McMaster University's medical campus.



Marotta Family Hospital

Creative Industries

The city has a strong, digitally oriented talent pool boasting approximately 1,200 jobs in the creative sector, including: computer design, and related services, advertising and public relations, motion pictures and video, design services and software publishing. The opportunities available in the Film and TV production sector will fuel the growth of this industry in St. Catharines and across the Niagara region.

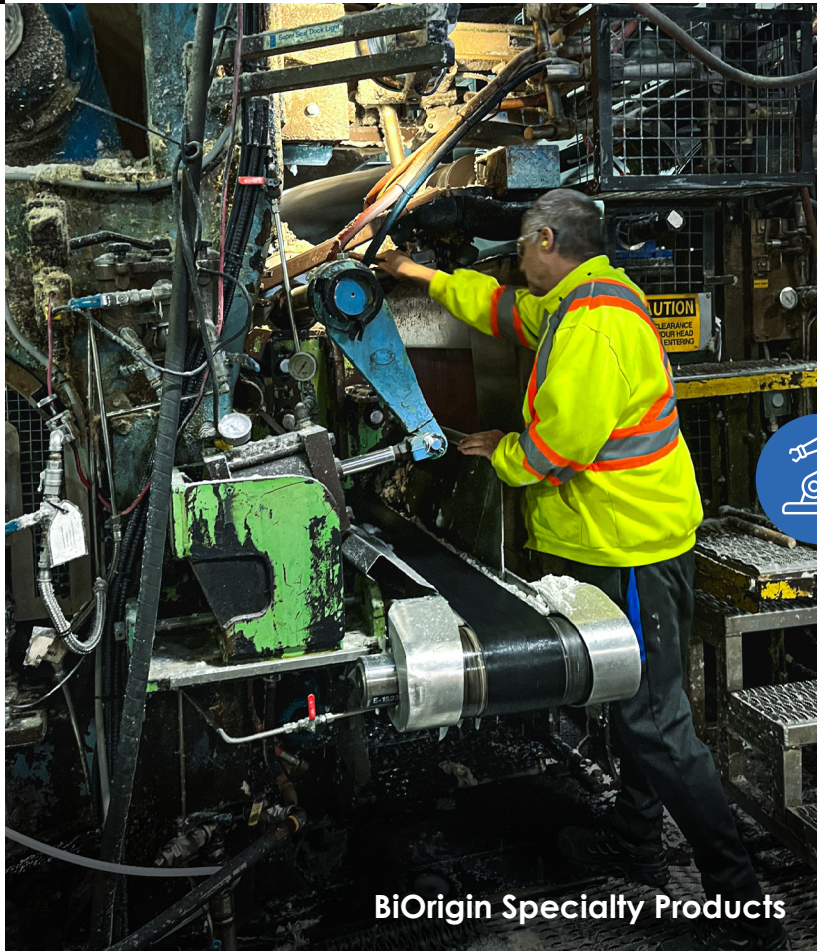
Well established post-secondary institutions to support the industry include Brock University and Niagara College and organizations such as Innovate Niagara, Brock LINC and SONAMI (the Southern Ontario Network for Advanced Manufacturing and Innovation) are key resources to grow the sector.



Filming of Madame CJ Walker in Downtown St. Catharines

Manufacturing

The long tradition of manufacturing in St. Catharines provides a workforce that is attractive to firms seeking specialized and innovative products and solutions. 306 manufacturing businesses call St. Catharines home which makes it a priority for TeamSTC to retain and expand these existing firms. There is a continued need to evaluate the changing market environment and how partnerships and associations will need to be leveraged to maintain and grow this sector.



BiOrigin Specialty Products



# Priority Economic Sectors

## Professional Services

St. Catharines is attracting highly skilled professionals working in fields ranging from engineering, finance, and scientific services. As professionals in these fields may not require face-to-face personal interaction with their clients, they can find more affordable locations to work from that offer lifestyle advantages. While there are many examples of firms and independent professionals that have chosen St. Catharines as their home, there are great opportunities for regional and satellite operations for GTA-based companies.



Lakeside Park Carousel



## Tourism

Travel is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world and despite continued global uncertainties, increases in global travel revenue have exceeded GDP growth in recent years. The outlook for this industry is for above average growth which compels St. Catharines to capitalize on its assets to do so. The urban connection to wine country and a burgeoning sports tourism effort are two of the ways TeamSTC will foster and grow the tourism sector.



For greater detail on St. Catharines Priority Economic Sectors visit [www.investinSTC.ca](http://www.investinSTC.ca)





# Strategic Priorities

TeamSTC identified five priorities to deliver in this 2024 - 2029 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

**Priority 1:** Strategic Economic Diversification

**Priority 2:** Talent Driven Growth

**Priority 3:** Quality of Place

**Priority 4:** Destination Development

**Priority 5:** Storytelling - Celebrating our Successes



Priority 1:

# Strategic Economic Diversification

To help the local economy expand and evolve, TeamSTC must continue to work in a manner that generates business growth, economic stability and provides a variety of supports for local businesses. TeamSTC will continue to engage in a broad community collaboration effort.

Initiatives include providing the innovation community with the support to enable businesses and institutions to provide their insights and research to improve competitiveness in all facets of the economy. To achieve this, four objectives have been identified to guide the actions for Strategic Economic Diversification.



Objectives	Actions
<b>Community Partner Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support business through a formal retention and expansion program that will connect businesses to the most suitable programs and resources.</li><li>• Deliver direct-to-business consultation services that will support growth and sector/cluster development.</li><li>• Collaborate with the Niagara Industrial Association and its members to identify and exchange supply chain opportunities to assist in growth and investment attraction.</li><li>• Engage with elected and non-elected representatives at all levels of government to mobilize support for the City's objectives and strategic goals.</li><li>• Participate in the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO); Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to advance advocacy for local business and the community at large.</li><li>• Promote and advocate for progressive programs such as Digital Main Street and My Main Street to local businesses and continue to refer prospects to the St. Catharines Enterprise Centre as a place for advice and support for new ventures or expanding operations.</li><li>• Continue providing expedited development services to help business effectively navigate the review and approval process.</li><li>• Collaborate with like-minded organizations through board seats and partnerships including but not limited to; Innovate Niagara, Venture Niagara, Tourism Partnership of Niagara, Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, Tourism Industry Association of Canada and the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival.</li></ul>



# Strategic Priorities

Objectives	Actions
Utilize Sector Strength to Grow St. Catharines Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create sector specific profiles to be published on the investinSTC website and updated annually.</li><li>• Develop value proposition for priority sectors in St. Catharines.</li><li>• Update the hotel feasibility study for downtown St. Catharines.</li><li>• Compile a digital business directory to be updated semi-annually.</li><li>• Complete a commercial market analysis of downtown and other commercial nodes as required.</li><li>• Update the film process by implementing a Filming By-Law, refreshing the film policy, and streamlining the application process.</li><li>• Complete a retail study focused on a grocery store in the downtown area.</li><li>• Continue to position STC/Niagara as a leader in the blue economy supporting a growing marine sector.</li><li>• Create and communicate a strong narrative around the significance of the Canal Corridor.</li><li>• Strengthen networks through the healthcare sector to build a critical mass through partnerships in the Hamilton-Niagara-Buffalo corridor.</li></ul>
Leverage Priority Sectors, Post Secondary Institutions and Research Institutions to Harness Innovation Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify and promote supply chain opportunities (specifically within the manufacturing sector).</li><li>• Identify funding opportunities aligned with Council's strategic priorities and projects.</li><li>• Increase the number of business start-ups.</li><li>• Investigate programs and partnerships that compliment St Catharines Enterprise Centre programs.</li><li>• Market St. Catharines as the destination of choice for film and television production in Niagara.</li><li>• Support initiatives and resources provided by Brock LINC and the Validation, Prototyping and Manufacturing Institute (VPMI) through communication and sector facilitation.</li></ul>

Objectives	Actions
Play an Integral Role in the Innovation Ecosystem to Support Growth and Increase Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a more formal referral process for the business community that engages the Economic Development Department to provide relevant resources.</li><li>• Participate in Niagara Economic Development's annual investment attraction initiatives.</li><li>• Facilitate sector-based meetings bringing key partners together to collaborate.</li><li>• Connect entrepreneurs to funding and business support programs.</li><li>• Provide research opportunities for incubator spaces aligned with priority sectors (include space, training, resources, etc.).</li><li>• Identify and support opportunities to increase social and green procurement practices.</li></ul>



Priority 2:

# Talent Driven Growth

To succeed as a talent-driven economy and to ensure that priority sector businesses thrive, St. Catharines must place significant importance on the workforce to attract, retain, develop and deploy people in a way that maximizes their potential and fills the gaps in the economy.

With the understanding that workforce is one of the fundamental issues facing all industries, TeamSTC will continue to:

- Leverage partnerships with Workforce Collective, post-secondary institutions such as Brock University and Niagara College to identify gaps and opportunities for all, including newcomers, to align with success planning.
- Engage with Team Niagara, a partnership of all local area municipalities in the region, to collaborate on initiatives and events to increase the talent pool within Niagara.

Cities need to have a large, skilled labour pool to be competitive and to generate continued investment and growth. The goals aligned with the priority of talent driven growth address the top issue faced by St. Catharines businesses which is hiring and retaining skilled workers.



Objectives	Actions
<b>Workforce Diversity – Attracting, developing and retaining highly skilled labourers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage with upper levels of government and support organizations on available programs for newcomers.</li><li>• Collaborate with partners to support newcomer programs through mentorship, training, and skills development.</li><li>• Communicate resources and supports for equity-deserving groups.</li><li>• Engage with post-secondary institutions to maximize international student retention.</li><li>• Participate with schoolboards to engage and educate youth on skilled trades careers.</li></ul>
<b>Workforce Development and Sustainability – identifying the skills needed with ongoing training to support the findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage private sector, education, and workforce leaders to collaborate and address immediate and long-term employment needs.</li><li>• Appoint a dedicated staff lead from TeamSTC to engage with partners and industry.</li><li>• Promote and support the expansion of targeted talent development initiatives.</li><li>• Provide on-going updates to businesses about federal, provincial, and local workforce programs through newsletters and targeted campaigns.</li><li>• Participate in the development of questions for the annual Niagara Employment Inventory (NEI) employer survey and grow participation to understand St. Catharines' skills needs and training gaps.</li><li>• Facilitate adaptive, future focused learning opportunities to empower life-long skills development.</li><li>• Support workforce leaders in development of a talent attraction initiative.</li></ul>



Priority 3:  
Quality of Place

TeamSTC will continue to lead and support initiatives that make St. Catharines a desirable place to live, work, play and invest through:

- On-going support, incentive plans, and expedited services.
- Engagement in large scale city building projects such as a Civic Square.
- Completion of an annual survey of office/commercial space in the downtown area.
- Development of marketing campaigns and promotions respective office space to targeted audiences and at trade shows.
- Outreach to developers and real estate investors and promoting St. Catharines investment opportunities.
- Continue to support the recruitment of general practitioners in partnership with the Niagara Region Physician Recruitment Program.

Initiatives will include elements of city building and real estate development supporting public realm improvements and enhancing the quality of life. This work will improve overall quality of place, reinvigorate neighbourhoods, support, and enable desirable amenities and experiences to create a distinctiveness that flourishes over time. Quality of place will be supported by three underlying objectives:



Objectives	Actions
<b>Placemaking – Supporting projects that enhance public realm space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support the development and facilitation of projects that enhance public realm space.</li><li>• Participate in the Community Improvement Plan review.</li><li>• Promote Community Improvement Plan programs through marketing collateral and storytelling.</li><li>• Support placemaking initiatives that align with the City's Strategic Plan and Cultural Plan.</li></ul>
<b>Workspaces – Ensuring businesses can find appropriate space for all stages of their lifecycle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Track and report on employment land and available properties.</li><li>• Conduct annual study on office vacancies considering changing practices including remote and hybrid work models.</li><li>• Complete study on commercial vacancy and trends in the downtown, Port Dalhousie and other key commercial areas.</li><li>• Investigate innovative programs to maximize use of vacant and underutilized commercial and office space.</li><li>• Implement a targeted marketing campaign to promote the availability of commercial space.</li></ul>
<b>Quality of Life – An asset to be cultivated to ensure ongoing appeal to business and residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to champion affordability, access to services, safety, education, healthcare, culture, and diversity.</li><li>• Maintain position as the regional retail destination while advocating to large shopping centres for innovative development intensification.</li><li>• Identify and promote properties for adaptive reuse.</li><li>• Market St. Catharines as the location of choice to general practitioners</li></ul>



Priority 4:

# Destination Development

St. Catharines tourism activities will achieve goals beyond attracting visitors. The city is unique and a compelling place to visit with cultural assets, sports facilities, picturesque wineries, a craft beer and cidery scene, independent eateries, historic buildings and signature events. TeamSTC will leverage all assets and continue with the following:

- Strengthen relationships with tourism advocacy organizations – Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO); Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), Sport Tourism Canada, Tourism Partnership of Niagara (TPN), Niagara Economic Development and Venture Niagara.
- Build collaborative messaging from partners that ties into product development and increased overnight stays.

Tourism generates significant revenue for the municipality including visitor spending on hotels, restaurants, and local businesses. It also serves to introduce St. Catharines to prospective residents and entrepreneurs.



Objectives	Actions
<b>Promotion and marketing of tourism assets in St. Catharines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a joint Tourism Strategy and destination marketing plan in conjunction with the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) partner, the Town of Lincoln.</li><li>• Support the Tourism St. Catharines Board of Management through execution of the annual business plan and budget.</li><li>• Evaluate current tourism marketing tactics to understand visitor habits.</li><li>• Curate destination experiences with a focus on culinary/food and beverage.</li><li>• Amplify product development opportunities through financial support (Municipal Accommodation Tax supported)</li><li>• Engage with the Uncork Ontario initiative by participating in programming and partnership and advocacy opportunities.</li></ul>
<b>Partnerships – Local tourism providers and a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support strategy development of Uncork Niagara (the Niagara Cluster Initiative).</li><li>• Implement the DMO framework including governance policies, a Board of Directors and multi-year business plans.</li><li>• Communicate to tourism industry partners on how to promote, expand and support destination development and experiences.</li><li>• Coordinate with regional and institution partners, along with accommodation providers to identify and inventory assets for large scale events.</li></ul>



Strategic Priorities

Objectives	Actions
Building capacity in the tourism sector - overnight stays, experiential offerings and sport tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Enhance supports for tourism focused businesses to meet changing market trends.</li><li>Update inventory of tourism assets and showcase them on TeamSTC websites and social media.</li><li>Conduct sector research and a feasibility study to support development of an eSports strategy.</li><li>Develop a Sport Tourism Strategy which includes partner participation (Niagara Economic Development, Sport Niagara, Venture Niagara, local sport user groups, accommodation providers, etc.).</li><li>Collaborate on bids/proposals for large scale signature events.</li><li>Develop St. Catharines/Niagara branded local events to attract out of town visitors by working with local sports organizations, event organizers, hospitality, and accommodation providers.</li></ul>



Lock 3 at the St. Catharines Museum & Welland Canals Centre



Priority 5:  
Storytelling -  
Celebrating  
our Successes

The importance of storytelling is rooted in capturing and conveying the unique sense of place and successes of a community or organization. St. Catharines is no stranger to hard work and innovation. The spirit of the citizens who built this community lives on today - from digging the first Welland Canal to the curtain call at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre. The community is full of entrepreneurial drivers, innovators and creators that have incredible stories to help convey the unique essence and achievement of the place we call home. It not only helps preserve the city's cultural identities but also serves as a catalyst for growth, attracting investment, fostering collaboration and inspiring future successes. Storytelling and awareness will be supported with three objectives:



Objectives	Actions
Cultivating a Strong Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify appropriate marketing mediums to communicate targeted messaging.</li><li>Collect data to measure the effectiveness of marketing tactics.</li><li>Annually assess websites, collateral publications and economic needs and update as required.</li><li>Identify track and publicize key economic indicators.</li><li>Create a marketing plan to grow the engagement of existing brands including loveSTC, investinSTC, Niagara Ale Trail, and the Design District.</li></ul>
Success Stories – Working closely with business to capture insights and boost profiles to celebrate success and help secure investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strengthen communication channels and build engagement through targeted sector content creation.</li><li>Develop and share cross-sector business stories.</li><li>Collaborate on brand awareness initiatives.</li></ul>
Celebrate the City – Promote St. Catharines' rich history, diversity, arts, cultural assets, and sporting traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Update microsites with new content quarterly (Heritage Plaques, Niagara Ale Trail, Design District, etc.)</li><li>Support and partner with events that celebrate and promote business.</li><li>Develop an annual promotion plan for start-ups, entrepreneurial successes and major investment news announcements.</li></ul>



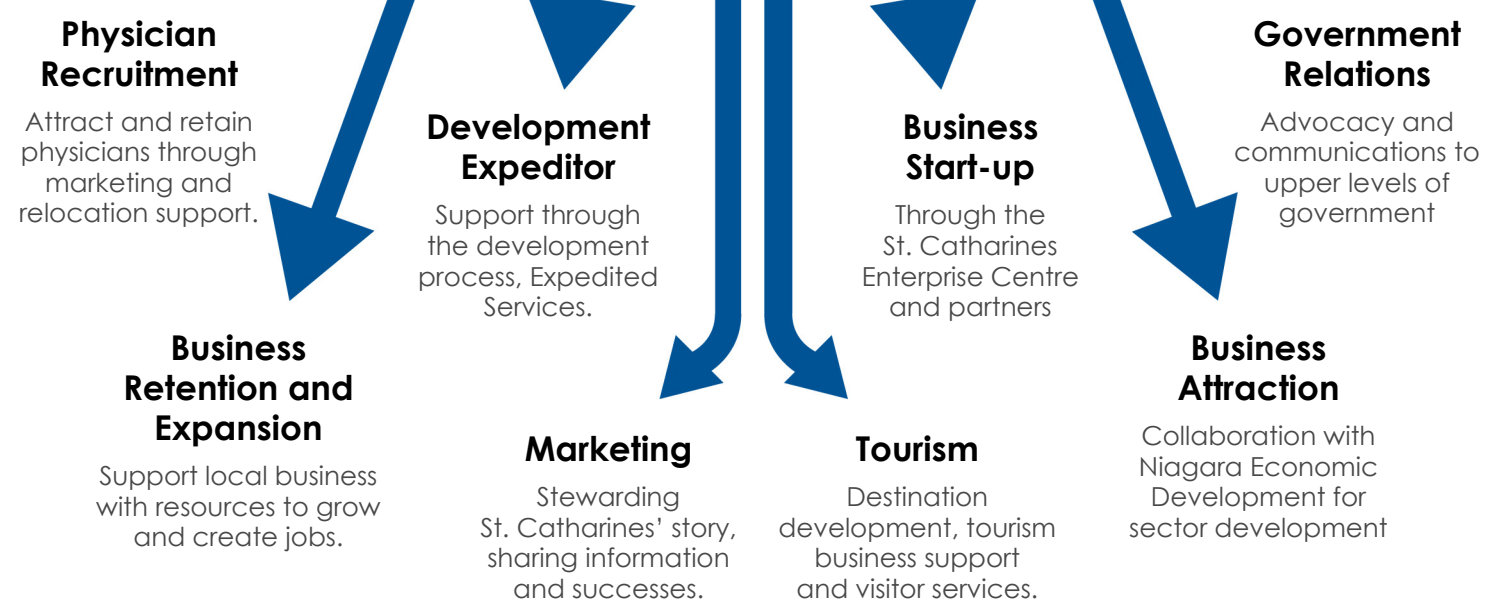


# Making it Happen

St. Catharines has developed an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy drawing on a history of success, a proven ability to navigate through the extremely difficult circumstances delivered by the COVID-19 pandemic, consulted with the community and in so doing, has put forward a compelling list of priorities and tactics to make this city a more prosperous place to live, work and play.



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM SERVICES



Within the City, TeamSTC works closely with all departments to champion a culture of organizational and customer service excellence. Regional stakeholders and other influencers are key partners to help enhance this service model.

## Making it Happen

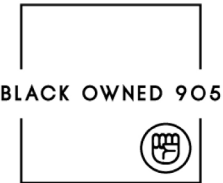
# Reference Materials

Several important reports helped to shape the direction moving forward including but not limited to:

- 2017-2022 St. Catharines Economic Development Strategy
- 2019 Niagara Region – Shape Niagara – Setting the Stage for Strategy
- 2019 Niagara Region – Towards a Made in Niagara Sport Tourism Model
- 2020 Inspire - St. Catharines Culture Plan
- 2020 Pandemic Recovery Strategy
- 20-21 FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Annual Report
- 2021 Niagara Workforce Planning Board Labour Market Update
- 2021 Climate Adaption Plan
- 2021-2041 City of St. Catharines Transportation Master Plan
- 2022 St. Catharines Community Profile
- 2022 Niagara Economic Development Immigrate to Niagara Guide Immigrate to Niagara
- 2022-2024 FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre Strategic Recovery Plan
- Niagara Region 10-Year Economic Development Strategy
- City of St. Catharines Strategic Plan: 2023 to 2027
- St. Catharines Official Plan



# Our Growing Network





2024 - 2029

# Economic Development and Tourism Strategy



**love**  **STC**  
TOURISM ST. CATHARINES

   
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@lovestc\_

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