

THE OLD TOWN *DRAFT* VISION WORKSHOP

Vision Summary

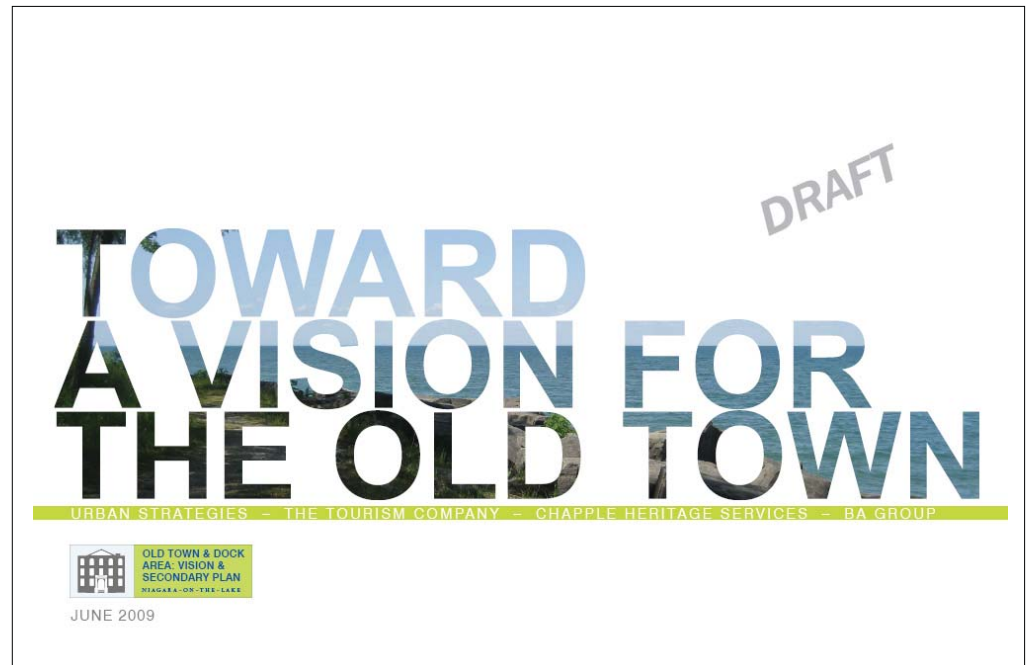
June 30, 2009

Agenda

- 6:45 – Welcome
- 7:00 – Presentation
- 7:45 – Break-out group discussion
- 8:45 – Reporting Back
- 9:00 – Wrap Up and Next Steps

Workshop: Roundtable Discussion

1. Are we on-track? Does the vision reflect an appropriate move-forward strategy?
2. What is missing? What could be augmented?
3. What could we position differently?



The Vision Statement

THE OLD TOWN: Sustaining Canada's great living heritage community

In 2030, the Old Town will be a thriving, historic, vibrant, creative community that embraces all aspects of the Old Town's history. The community will be composed of a variety of distinct, comfortable and safe neighbourhoods, commercial districts, and institutions and will be home to residents of all ages. Visitors will come to the Old Town for its variety of experiences and places, and in doing so, share the respect and pride residents have for their town. The Old Town will be about more than just tourism – the town will possess a diverse, prosperous economy that builds upon its many historic, natural and creative assets. The waterfront will be an especially wonderful place to live and visit – with places of quiet and tranquility, and places of recreation, culture and commercial activity. When facing challenges and considering new opportunities, Council will engage in an open and transparent dialogue and seek partnerships with residents, businesses and stakeholders to find solutions and to take actions to proactively direct the future of the Old Town.

Six Key Directions

- 1. RECOGNIZE HERITAGE AS THE ESSENCE OF THE OLD TOWN**
- 2. SUSTAIN THE OLD TOWN AS A HEALTHY, REMARKABLE PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE – NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE**
- 3. GROW AN AUTHENTIC, COMPETITIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY**
- 4. THINKING BEYOND TOURISM: DIVERSIFY THE LOCAL ECONOMY**
- 5. CAPTURE THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE WATERFRONT**
- 6. COMMIT TO AN ONGOING COMMUNITY DIALOGUE**

1. RECOGNIZE HERITAGE AS THE ESSENCE OF THE OLD TOWN

In 2030, residents and visitors share an inquisitive interest in the Old Town's history. Town residents, knowledgeable of the many stories that make their town so rich in history, share their knowledge with those that visit Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Old Town's heritage district, unique cultural landscapes, and Parks Canada sites are now must-see destinations for any visitor to Niagara – in fact, to really appreciate all that the town has to offer, you definitely need to stay the night.

Strengthening and ensuring the long-term health of the Old Town as a living heritage community was not easy, but 20 years ago Council in partnership with the community made a concerted effort to put in-place the necessary policy to protect heritage assets of irreplaceable value. The Town was also successful at building new partnerships and strengthening old ones, and through these partnerships successfully launched new programming such as the Ambassador Program, which was instrumental in raising the awareness of the importance of heritage conservation. Although past efforts have continued to evolve, it was the bold action some 20 years ago to prioritize the conservation of the Old Town's assets that enabled the town to continue to evolve as a healthy and vibrant place today.

STRATEGIES

Celebrate, manage, and conserve the integrity of the Old Town's built, natural and cultural landscape heritage.

Policy Actions

- 1) The Old Town Secondary Plan scope should provide policy guidance on: the expansion of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District; estate lot policy; opportunities/mechanisms to better protect significant heritage properties; an Old Town Urban Design and Streetscape Strategy; and, conserving cultural heritage landscapes.

Collaboration

- 2) Develop an Old Town Heritage Ambassador Program
- 3) Advance the partnership between the Town and Parks Canada, including exploring opportunities to establish year-round activities.

Other Tools

- 4) Heritage Interpretative Program
- 5) Heritage Property Tax Rebate program
- 6) Seek partnerships with the Ministry of Canadian Heritage

2. SUSTAIN THE OLD TOWN AS A HEALTHY, REMARKABLE PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE – NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

In 2030, Niagara-on-the-Lake, led by initiatives in the Old Town, is a sustainable community. People walk, bike and take public transit to meet daily needs. The town's natural heritage system is robust, and is a critical reason why Niagara-on-the-Lake remains a healthy place to live. All in all, the Old Town is as remarkable a place to grow-up, start a business, and retire as it has ever been.

Getting here was a purposeful process. 20 years ago, the Town facilitated a community-wide discussion to craft a Vision for the Old Town, but realizing that it needed more concrete strategies to guide day-to-day decision-making to achieve the Vision, the Town prepared a comprehensive Old Town Secondary Plan. Knowing that the Town has on its plate a complexity of issues too difficult to juggle at once, the Plan brought coherence to the Town's efforts.

STRATEGIES

Build on the Old Town's agricultural setting, heritage character and the unique neighbourhood patterns to reduce dependency on non-renewable energy sources, build a more resilient economy, and reduce its ecological footprint.

- Sustaining the character and ambiance of neighbourhoods.
- Promoting the walking and cycling experience.
- Protecting and enhancing the natural heritage system.
- Sustaining and fostering the network of public and privately owned open spaces.
- Strengthening and diversifying the commercial offering.

Policy Actions

- 1) The Old Town Secondary Plan scope should provide policy guidance on:
 - making a more sustainable place;
 - appropriate infill and compact forms of development;
 - enhancing opportunities for walking and cycling;
 - managing parking;
 - enhancing the Old Town's natural heritage system;
 - the framework for an Old Town Open Space Master Plan;
 - strengthening the retail offering;
 - expanding the range of available housing types; and
 - improving the public realm, urban design and community amenities.

Collaboration

- 2) Continue the dialogue among businesses and building owners.
- 3) Work collaboratively with the Region to further healthy and sustainable community initiatives.
- 4) Participate in efforts to restore One Mile Creek and Two Mile Creek.

Other Tools

- 5) Expand the range of sustainable transportation alternatives.
- 6) Undertake an Old Town Merchandizing Strategy.
- 7) Explore the Main Street Ontario Program's potential to fund initiatives to strengthen the Old Town's commercial districts.
- 8) Encourage cycling and walking in Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- 9) Establish Old Town Discovery Walks.
- 10) Promote new partnership models such as a Queen Street Business Improvement Association (BIA).

3. GROW AN AUTHENTIC, COMPETITIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY

In 2030, a compelling offering of tourism and cultural experiences is the cornerstone of Niagara-on-the-Lake's economy just as it had been since the late 1800s, when the Queen's Royal Hotel and Chautauqua Hotel were built to accommodate summer tourists. People come to Niagara-on-the-Lake to experience the Old Town - to shop and eat, experience the waterfront, learn about Niagara-on-the-Lake's rich history and explore the Old Town's living heritage neighbourhoods and cultural landscapes. Naturally the Shaw - now celebrating its 60th anniversary, winemaking, music, and great food continue to be the centrepieces of the Old Town's tourist draw – but the Old Town has strategically evolved to be much more than these. Working side-by-side and fostering the tourism industry are institutions and a creative workforce of artists, chefs, musicians, artisans, actors, and artistic directors that distinguish Niagara-on-the-Lake as the centre of arts and culture in Ontario.

Some 20 years ago, Council put into action a Tourism Development and Management Strategy that has since gone through many iterations. But this Strategy set a comprehensive direction to sustainably managing Niagara-on-the-Lake's tourism industry. As part of this process, tourism was understood to be a business that needed to be strategically managed to both grow while ensuring a balance with other town priorities.

STRATEGIES

To remain a competitive destination attractive to the high-end visitor, the Old Town must retain its authenticity as a living heritage community and develop a mix of experiences, to capture and encourage repeat visitation in a dynamic and evolving tourism market.

Policy Actions

- 1) Prepare a Tourism Development and Management Strategy that should: support ongoing NOTL-specific visitor research; position the Old Town as an attractive regional, national and international

destination; explore strategies for better managing the effects of tourism; and identify opportunities to strengthen the resources that support the tourism industry.

- 2) The Old Town Secondary Plan scope should provide policy guidance on: land use and design directions that foster an authentic and diverse tourism offering; mechanisms to reduce automobile travel to the Old Town and manage traffic and parking within neighbourhoods; and managing the impact of and regulating cottage rentals on residential neighbourhoods, building on the successes of owner-occupied tourism accommodations.

4. THINKING BEYOND TOURISM: DIVERSIFY THE LOCAL ECONOMY

In 2030, the Old Town's economy is healthy, diverse and growing. While tourism remains the bread and butter driving growth and prosperity, it is just one of many economic-drivers that are contributing to the town's well-being. The growth of Niagara-on-the-Lake's arts and culture economy is a good news story, and much studied case study across the continent. Very quickly arts and culture grew into a central component of the Old Town's economy, and helped the town evolve into one of the GGH's creative hubs. New major education and research programs centred on music, food, art and culture that started off as small initiatives 20 years ago are providing the town an edge in the global economy, attracting the best and the brightest to study and invest in the region.

STRATEGIES

The Town should seek opportunities to diversify the local economy across the entire town in ways that can complement the existing tourism economy.

Policy Actions

- 1) The Old Town Secondary Plan scope should provide policy guidance on:
 - fostering the growth of the agri-business, and arts and culture industries
 - supporting growth among creative industries;
 - identifying appropriate locations for significant employment uses, elsewhere in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Collaboration

- 2) Collaborate with Niagara Region, the Chamber of Commerce and arts and cultural stakeholders to establish a culinary/cultural tourism innovation cluster
- 3) Facilitate the development of a one to two week agri-business fair in the Old Town.
- 4) Shape the outcomes of Project Niagara such that they parallel the priorities, desires, and long-term objectives of the Town and its residents

Other Tools:

- 5) Explore the feasibility of establishing integrated and advanced learning programs
- 6) Explore the feasibility of establishing a School for the Performing Arts
- 7) Explore the feasibility of establishing an 'artist' in residence program.

5. CAPTURE THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE WATERFRONT

In 2030, the Old Town's waterfront is a string of great places – some to relax and find peace, others to engage with neighbours, eat, drink, laugh and enjoy the water. Most importantly, the waterfront has a sense that the right things are in the right place. While it still maintains its mystique as a place to discover, and as place of privacy, the waterfront feels connected across itself and to the rest of the Old Town.

The Dock Area remains a distinct place, respectful of its history as both a residential neighbourhood and commercial and recreational port, containing an intricate composition of sensitively integrated living, recreational and business uses complemented by a remarkable network of high quality publicly accessible spaces. The longstanding history of built and cultural landscapes is particularly evident. New buildings – their scale, architecture and materials – fit in.

As a lovely place to walk and meander along and close to the water's edge, the Dock Area is a place where you can experience both inspiration and delight. Managed automobile access retains the quiet and liveable feel of the historic residential neighbourhood. Melville Street, distinguished by a robust string of street trees and generous sidewalks lined by low scale residences, hotels and businesses is understood as the main pedestrian portal to the waterfront. Ricardo Street reflects the many characters of the Dock Area linking the tranquil neighbourhood west of Melville with a more active array of shops, hotels, living uses, the sailing club and cultural attractions east of Melville.

People go to the Dock Area to be at the water's edge. It was a concerted effort by the Town to partner with private land owners to assemble a waterfront pedestrian open space system to enable public access along the water. At the centre of this open space system is the Town Dock and adjacent lands - the town's doorstep to the water – a public place for waterfront recreation including boating and sailing activities.

The waterfront has always been a place of change. But it was with the adoption of the Waterfront and Dock Area Secondary Plan 20 years ago that the Town began to proactively shape the waterfront into the many special places it is today. Truly, today Niagara-on-the-Lake is *on-the-Lake*.

STRATEGIES

As a whole, the Old Town waterfront should be a distinct and magnificent composition of places desired and cherished by neighbours, Old Town residents and visitors.

Policy Actions

- 1) The Waterfront and Dock Area Secondary Plan scope should provide policy guidance on:
 - urban structure and range of land uses;
 - performance standards for new commercial uses in the Dock Area;
 - waterfront history and heritage assets;
 - connections between waterfront places;
 - existing and new public or publicly accessible waterfront areas;
 - views to Fort Niagara and the river
 - existing and new open and public spaces;
 - strategies to conserve natural heritage systems and cultural heritage assets;
 - managing pedestrian movement traffic and parking
 - streetscape and built form guidelines;
 - Wayfinding strategies;
 - use and design parameters for municipally owned lands, Town dock as well as the sailing club dock.

Collaboration:

- 2) Continue to work with the NOTL Sailing Club to improve the image and attractiveness of their waterfront site
- 3) Continue to work with Parks Canada to enhance connections and wayfinding from the waterfront to key Parks destinations.

6. COMMIT TO AN ONGOING COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

In 2030, a culture of bold leadership and proactively managing change is a reflection of how things are done in Niagara-on-the-Lake. When difficult issues arise you often find the Town, working in partnership with the community, well ahead forging solutions and anticipating the next challenge. Town efforts to address critical issues such as how to sustainably conserve the Old Town's heritage, how to address development pressures, how to foster and diversify the tourism industry, how to appropriately up-hold Town by-laws, and how to protect the Old Town's quality of life and quality of place, have become success stories. While these challenges have not gone away, they continue to be addressed in a transparent manner with cross-generational participation.

STRATEGIES

The Town and community should continue the dialogue initiated through the Vision process.

Policy Actions

- 1) Publish and post the Old Town Vision, as endorsed by Council, in spaces accessible to the community.
- 2) Ensure sufficient Town resources to apply and up-hold standards and by-laws.

Ongoing Collaboration

- 3) Continue to engage the youth of the Old Town.
- 4) Ensure the Town is proactively involved in specific proposals and events that can attract investment and broaden the offering for the Old Town, in particular Project Niagara and the War of 1812 Bicentennial celebrations.
- 5) Draw upon the incredible resources, leadership and capability of the Old Town's community to bring forward elements of the vision and craft creative responses to challenges as they emerge.
- 6) Make it a habit to celebrate success.

Thank you for attending tonight's workshop.

We value your input and are grateful for your insight and comments. If you wish to submit comments on the draft Vision for the Old Town, you may fill out the last page (both sides) of this handbook and hand it in to a member of the consulting team or the Town staff, or if you require additional time, mail it to the Town Office. We also welcome you to contact the project team if you have questions or additional comments with regards to the study.

To learn more about this project, contact:

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SIX KEY DIRECTIONS

1. RECOGNIZE HERITAGE AS THE ESSENCE OF THE OLD TOWN

2. SUSTAIN THE OLD TOWN AS A HEALTHY, REMARKABLE PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE – NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

3. GROW AN AUTHENTIC, COMPETITIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY

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