

Part One (of Six)



CULTURAL HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake | Royal George Theatre

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The offices of mCallumSather are situated upon the on the Traditional Territories of Indigenous peoples who have been stewards of this land since time immemorial.

In Hamilton, we recognize the Traditional Territories of the Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabeg peoples, lands covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and adjacent to the Haldimand Treaty territory.

In Waterloo, we acknowledge the Haldimand Tract, which encompasses six miles on either side of the Grand River, and is the Traditional Territory of the Neutral, Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples, also covered by the Upper Canada and Haldimand Treaties.

In Toronto, we acknowledge the ancestral and Traditional Territories of the Ojibway, the Anishnabe, and in particular, the Mississaugas of the Credit, whose territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties.

Today, Ontario is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island (North America) and we recognize that we must do more to learn about the rich history of this land so that we can better understand our roles as residents, neighbours, partners and stewards of these lands and waters.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) has been prepared by mcCallumSather on behalf of the Shaw Festival Canada to evaluate the potential cultural heritage impacts of the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The project encompasses four properties: 85 Queen Street (Royal George Theatre), 79 Queen Street (Tranter's House), 178 Victoria Street (residential building with small barn), and 188 Victoria Street (commercial building, formerly residential). The site is designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act as part of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) and lies within the boundaries of the Niagara-on-the-Lake National Historic Site.

Applications for an Official Plan Amendment (OPA-05-2025) and Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA-07-2025) have been submitted to support the redevelopment. The applications include:

- Re-designation of 178 Victoria Street from "Established Residential" to site-specific "General Commercial, Theatre specific", creating a unified site for theatre use.
- Rezoning of all four properties to "Queen-Picton Commercial (QPC) Site-Specific Zone," establishing provisions for frontage, setbacks, building height, lot coverage, loading, and parking to accommodate the new theatre.
- Future heritage permits for the demolition of existing structures and construction of the new building.

All four properties are classified as 'B' Buildings within the QPHCD, recognized for their contextual contribution to the district streetscape and their cultural association with Niagara-on-the-Lake's theatre heritage. The Royal George Theatre, while

a long-standing landmark, has experienced extensive alterations and functional constraints that limit its ongoing viability as a performance venue.

Pre-consultation with Town staff occurred on January 19 and November 2, 2023, followed by a Municipal Heritage Committee meeting on July 7, 2025. Feedback from Town staff, heritage consultants (ERA), the Committee, local residents (including over 400 members of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association), and two public open houses highlighted concerns about building massing, scale, façade rhythm, and transitions to residential areas on Victoria Street. A design charrette on July 28, 2025, informed significant refinements to the project, resulting in reduced overall building mass, improved setbacks, revised façade articulation, and adjusted materials to better reflect the heritage character of Queen and Victoria Streets.

This updated CHIA assesses the revised design against applicable heritage policies and guidelines, including the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan (1986), the Town's Official Plan, Downtown Heritage Character Area policies, and the broader cultural landscape of the Niagara-on-the-Lake National Historic Site. It identifies potential impacts on on-site and adjacent heritage resources, evaluates their contribution to the district's character-defining attributes, and recommends mitigation measures to support sensitive redevelopment.

Heritage Status

A previous heritage assessment determined that the subject properties meet the criteria set out under Ontario Regulation 9/06 for designation under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. They are also part of the Downtown Heritage Character Area and the federally recognized Niagara-on-the-Lake National Historic Site under the Historic Sites and Monuments Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. H-4).

While alterations to these properties, particularly the Royal George Theatre, have significantly diminished their architectural integrity, they continue to contribute to the district's heritage character through contextual and associative values, helping define the historic urban fabric of Queen Street and its cultural identity as a theatre destination.

Proposed Development

The redevelopment introduces a three-storey theatre complex with a basement and articulated fly tower designed to meet modern performance, accessibility, and sustainability standards. The design maintains a two-storey streetwall scale along Queen and Victoria Streets, with upper levels recessed to reduce visual prominence. Key features include:

- The total gross floor area has been reduced from 66,878 ft² (October 2023) to 50,311 ft² (August 2025), a 24% decrease. This reflects substantial above-grade reductions, balanced by modest increases in below-grade space to accommodate functional requirements
- Increased setbacks along north, west, and south property lines to improve compatibility with adjacent residential buildings.
- A “ghost façade” on Queen Street, reinterpreting the original Royal George frontage to preserve its symbolic presence while conveying the heritage values of the site and improving accessibility and public interface.
- A revised Victoria Street façade with reduced height, pitched

roof articulation, bay window features, and extensive landscaping to better integrate with the residential character of the street.

- A relocated accessible ramp inside the property, improving entry accessibility and eliminating external ramping that disrupted the façade rhythm.
- Outdoor courtyard and balcony planting, enhancing public gathering space and softening the building's appearance.

The proposal integrates Net Zero energy performance targets and is pursuing Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Certification for accessibility, ensuring that environmental stewardship and inclusive design are embedded within the redevelopment.

Impacts on Heritage Values

The redevelopment introduces a significant physical change within the QPHCD through the demolition of four contributing buildings, consolidation of multiple parcels, and introduction of a larger contemporary structure. While this results in permanent loss of some built heritage fabric, the project maintains the site's cultural role as a theatre, reinforces Queen Street's commercial function, and responds to the district's historic patterns through:

- Preserving the established streetwall scale and rhythm.
- Introducing compatible massing, materiality, and articulation to reduce visual dominance.
- Providing interpretive elements and commemorative landscaping to communicate the history of 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the former Royal George Theatre.
- Enhancing pedestrian connections, public spaces, and cultural programming to reinforce the site's associative value as a community gathering place.

Mitigation strategies include detailed documentation and salvage of existing buildings, vibration monitoring during construction, contextual landscaping and façade treatments, and long-term interpretation of the site's layered history.

Conclusion

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site responds to heritage concerns raised during consultation and reflects a balance between change and conservation. While the demolition of four contributing buildings represents a tangible loss of early built fabric, their altered integrity and incompatibility with modern theatre requirements support a rehabilitation approach through replacement.

The updated design strengthens compatibility with the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District, respects the broader cultural landscape, and maintains the site's legacy as a cultural and social anchor in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) has been prepared by mcCallumSather on behalf of the Shaw Festival, in support of the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site and associated properties municipally known as 85 Queen Street, 79 Queen Street, 178 Victoria Street, and 188 Victoria Street, in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. These properties are located within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District and are identified as contributing resources under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The purpose of this CHIA is to assess the cultural heritage value or interest of the subject properties, evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed development on the heritage attributes of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District, and recommend conservation strategies and mitigation measures that support a sensitive and compatible intervention. The assessment responds to the guiding principles of heritage conservation in Ontario and is grounded in the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010), the Provincial Policy Statement (2020), and relevant local planning instruments including the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan and the Queen-Picton HCD Plan (1986).

1.1 Scope of Work

The Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment forms part of a values-based conservation approach, recognizing that the significance of a historic place lies not only in its physical attributes but also in its contextual, associative, and intangible values. Within this framework, the CHIA aims to:

- **Assess Heritage Value in Context**
Document and evaluate the cultural heritage value of

the subject properties in relation to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District and the broader setting of the Niagara-on-the-Lake National Historic Site. Particular emphasis is placed on understanding the role of the Royal George Theatre as a cultural landmark, despite cumulative alterations that have diminished its material integrity.

- **Evaluate the Impact of Change**
Identify potential direct and indirect impacts resulting from the proposed intervention, including impacts on the character-defining elements of the heritage district. The assessment addresses impacts to spatial relationships, visual continuity, historic streetscapes, and the intangible cultural significance of the site.
- **Guide Compatible Interventions**
Frame a conservation strategy that enables compatible new use while retaining and reinforcing the site's heritage values. The approach aligns with the Standards and Guidelines principle of rehabilitation, which supports the sensitive adaptation of a historic place for a continuing or compatible contemporary use.
- **Recommend Mitigation Measures**
Provide recommendations that ensure the proposed development maintains the legibility of the district's historic evolution, sustains its cultural significance, and avoids creating a false sense of historical development. Strategies include guidance on scale, massing, materials, façade articulation, and interpretive integration.

In this context, the CHIA serves not only as a planning tool but also as a mechanism for informed decision-making. It supports respectful change and the long-term conservation of cultural heritage by promoting an approach that balances development needs with the enduring values of place, identity, and community memory.

1.2 Land Use & Zoning Maps

Municipal Address:

85 and 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

Legal Description:

Part of Lots 57 and 58, Registered Plan 86, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Lot Area:

Approximately 2,854 square metres (Figure 3)

Location and Boundaries:

The subject properties are located northeast of the intersection of Queen Street and Victoria Street, within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Context:

The property is situated within a predominantly commercial area along Queen Street:

- To the south, east, and west are commercial buildings, including restaurants, a medical clinic, and retail establishments.
- To the north are an Airbnb and an area of green open space.
- The properties contribute to the commercial fabric and structure the Business Area within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

Official Plan Designation:

- 85 and 79 Queen Street: Queen-Picton Commercial
- 178 Victoria Street: Established Residential with a commercial variance for the gallery space behind the house
- 188 Victoria Street: Queen-Picton Commercial

Zoning Description:

- 85 and 79 Queen Street: Queen-Picton Commercial (QPC) Zone
- 178 Victoria Street: Established Residential (ER) Zone
- 188 Victoria Street: Queen-Picton Commercial (QPC) Zone

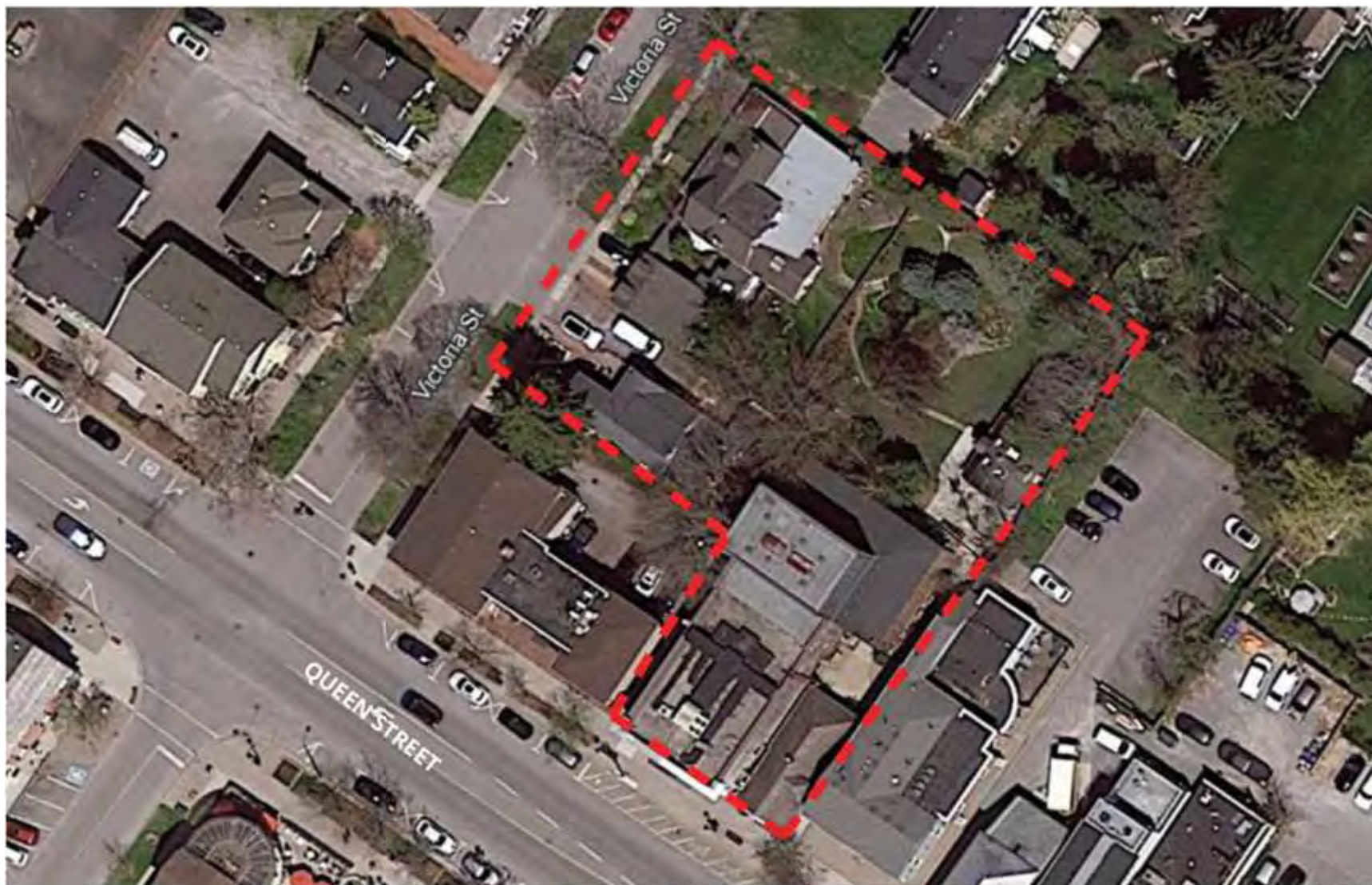


FIGURE 2. AERIAL VIEW SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY WITHIN ITS BROADER CONTEXT IN NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE. SOURCE: GOOGLE EARTH, WITH ANNOTATIONS BY MCCALLUMSATHER INDICATING PROPERTY BOUNDARIES AND KEY SITE FEATURES.

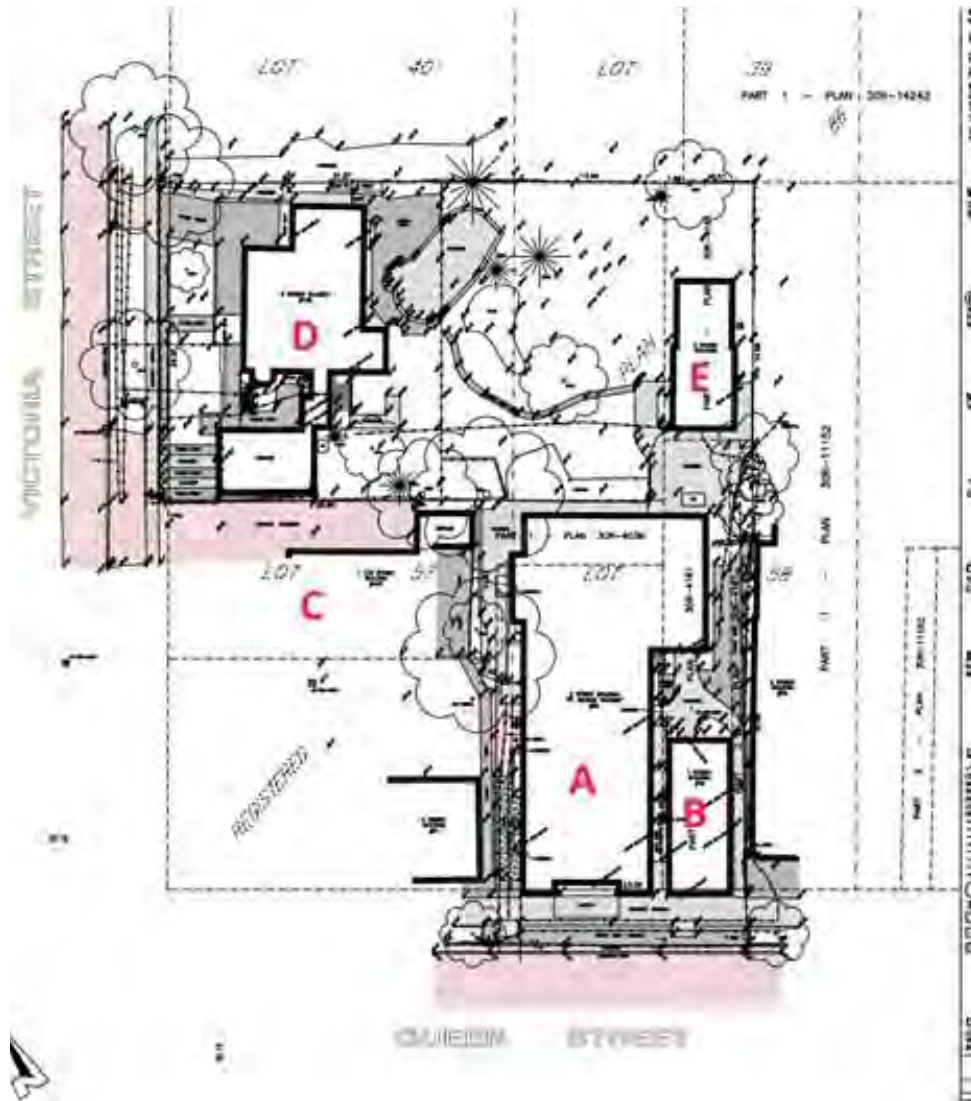


FIGURE 3. SURVEY MAP ILLUSTRATING THE BOUNDARIES AND EXTENT OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY. SOURCE: CHAMBERS AND ASSOCIATES SURVEYING LTD., MAY 2019; ANNOTATIONS BY MCCALLUMSATHER.

1.3 Context

The Royal George Theatre, municipally addressed as 85 Queen Street, is located at the northeast corner of Queen Street and Victoria Street in the historic core of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Along with 79 Queen Street (Tranter's House), 178 Victoria Street (residential dwelling and barn), and 188 Victoria Street (Dickens's Den), the theatre property occupies a pivotal site within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD), designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act in 1986. The District is also recognized as part of the Niagara-on-the-Lake National Historic Site.

The Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District is notable for its remarkably intact early 19th-century urban plan, with Queen Street serving as the primary commercial and cultural spine of the town. The street's alignment, fine-grained lot divisions, human-scaled two- to three-storey buildings, and consistent setbacks create a cohesive streetscape that reinforces the town's historic character. The architecture along Queen Street presents a blend of Georgian, Neoclassical, Victorian, and Edwardian styles, unified by common materiality (wood frame, masonry), rhythm, and modest ornamental detailing.

The Royal George Theatre anchors a visually and culturally significant section of Queen Street. Built circa 1914 as a vaudeville house and training facility for First World War officers, it was later adapted for theatrical performances and has maintained continuous cultural use for over a century. Although altered several times, its position, scale, and function contribute substantially to the rhythm and continuity of the Queen Street frontage. It supports the strong pedestrian environment and street-oriented built form emphasized in the District Plan, while its role as part of the internationally recognized Shaw Festival enhances its associative and cultural heritage value.

Adjacent properties immediately west and south of the theatre

continue the pattern of commercial development along Queen Street, with a mix of shops, cafés, and professional services in low-rise heritage buildings. To the east, Victoria Street marks a transition to a quieter residential area, characterized by historic houses set on generous lots with mature tree cover. North of the theatre site, open green spaces and small-scale residential uses provide a softer edge to the more active Queen Street commercial corridor.

The theatre and its associated properties occupy a location at a key junction in the urban structure of Old Town. They mark a subtle shift in the character of Queen Street as it moves from the intensely commercial main blocks closer to the Clock Tower cenotaph toward a slightly more residential and transitional area to the east. This transition is essential to maintaining the historic layering of uses, a hallmark of the town's original development pattern.

From a visual point of view, the Royal George Theatre contributes to the Queen Street streetscape by reinforcing the continuous street wall, supporting pedestrian enclosure, and maintaining a human scale. The theatre's massing, setback, and alignment are consistent with neighbouring structures, preserving important view corridors along Queen and Victoria Streets.

The Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan (1986) identifies several key character-defining attributes that are evident in the immediate context of the Royal George Theatre site, including:

- A fine-grained urban pattern characterized by narrow lot frontages and incremental building development;
- A cohesive streetscape of low-rise, street-oriented buildings;
- Visual continuity established through consistent setbacks and modest variations in building height;
- The integration of commercial, residential, and civic uses

- within a compact urban form;
- A strong pedestrian-oriented public realm with sidewalks, street trees, and public amenities.

Collectively, the Royal George Theatre and the associated properties reinforce these character-defining features, anchoring the east end of the Queen Street commercial core and contributing to the authenticity and sense of place that define Niagara-on-the-Lake's heritage landscape.

In its present condition, neither the Royal George Theatre nor the associated site infrastructure meets the contemporary functional, operational, or regulatory requirements expected of a modern performance venue. The theatre's base building systems have reached the end of their service life, and neither the structure nor its systems comply with current standards for accessibility, wellness, safety, or sustainability. Significant interventions would be required to modernize the aging facility to contemporary expectations.

To address these challenges, the Shaw Festival proposes the demolition of the existing theatre and adjacent structures, and the construction of a new purpose-built facility. The objectives of the redevelopment are to ensure that the new theatre maintains its critical cultural role within the community, reinforces its relationship with the triad of heritage buildings in the District, and strengthens the connection between the new facility and the Queen Street streetscape.

Access, Circulation & Site Configuration

The Royal George Theatre, located at 85 Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake, occupies a prominent position within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. The site extends from Queen Street to Victoria Street, encompassing several adjacent properties integral to the Shaw Festival's operations.

Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access is predominantly from Queen Street, where the theatre's main entrance is situated. The Queen Street frontage features a landscaped public sidewalk, enhanced with ornamental plantings and street furniture that contribute to the historic streetscape's character. Concrete walkways connect the public sidewalk to the theatre's main entrance, ensuring safe and accessible pedestrian movement.

Landscaping & Site Features

The Queen Street frontage is characterized by well-maintained landscaping, including ornamental plantings that align with the heritage aesthetic of the district. The rear of the property, accessible via the Victoria Street driveway, includes functional spaces such as service areas and ancillary structures that support the theatre's operations.

Overall, the site's configuration balances functional requirements for theatre operations with the preservation of the historic streetscape, contributing to the cultural and architectural fabric of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Niagara-on-the-Lake
Heritage Conservation Guidelines

"b" buildings



FIGURE 4. ILLUSTRATION OF TYPICAL "B" BUILDINGS WITHIN THE QUEEN-PICTON HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT. THESE BUILDINGS CONTRIBUTE TO THE HISTORIC STREETScape THROUGH THEIR SCALE, RHYTHM, MASSING, AND COMPLEMENTARY ARCHITECTURAL DETAILING.
SOURCE: NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE HERITAGE CONSERVATION GUIDELINES, NICHOLAS HILL, ARCHITECT PLANNER.



FIGURE 5. VIEW OF THE ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE AND ADJACENT PROPERTIES ALONG THE QUEEN STREET FRONTAGE, ILLUSTRATING THE CONTINUOUS LOW-RISE BUILT FORM, PEDESTRIAN SCALE, AND COHESIVE STREETScape CHARACTER WITHIN THE QUEEN-PICTON HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT.
SOURCE: MCCALLUMSATHER, 2023.



FIGURE 6. VIEW OF VICTORIA STREET, SHOWING THE SURROUNDING TWO- TO TWO-AND-A-HALF-STOREY RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS, LOOKING NORTHEAST FROM THE QUEEN AND VICTORIA STREET INTERSECTION.
SOURCE: MCCALLUMSATHER, 2023.



FIGURE 7. VIEW OF QUEEN STREET, ILLUSTRATING THE SURROUNDING TWO- TO TWO-AND-A-HALF-STOREY COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE BUILDINGS, LOOKING SOUTHWEST FROM THE QUEEN AND VICTORIA STREET INTERSECTION.
SOURCE: MCCALLUMSATHER, 2023.



FIGURE 8. VIEW OF 188 VICTORIA STREET (BUILDING C) ON THE SUBJECT SITE, PROPOSED FOR DEMOLITION, LOOKING EAST FROM VICTORIA STREET. SOURCE: MCCALLUMSATHER, 2023.



FIGURE 9. VIEW OF THE BUILDING NORTHEAST OF THE ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE ON THE SUBJECT SITE, PROPOSED FOR DEMOLITION, LOOKING EAST FROM VICTORIA STREET. (SOURCE: MCCALLUMSATHER, 2023.)



FIGURE 10. VIEW OF 178 VICTORIA STREET, SHOWING THE TWO-STOREY RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED GARAGE. THE PROPERTY CONTRIBUTES TO THE MIXED RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER OF VICTORIA STREET WITHIN THE QUEEN-PICTON HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT.
SOURCE: MCCALLUMSATHER, 2023.

1.4 Adjacent Heritage Resources

The Royal George Theatre site and its associated properties form an integral part of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District, designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. These buildings, classified as 'B' Buildings within the District, contribute to the historic streetscape, support the urban fabric, and embody the contextual values defined in the Queen & Picton Streets Heritage Conservation District Plan (1986).

The evolution of the site is well-documented in historical mapping, notably Goad's Fire Insurance Plans of 1914 and 1925, which capture changes to the built fabric over time. Although individually modest, the collective contribution of these buildings is essential to maintaining the visual cohesion, fine-grained lot pattern, and historic streetscape character that define the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

85 Queen Street – Royal George Theatre

The Royal George Theatre occupies a prominent location along Queen Street and has evolved significantly since its original construction in the early 20th century. Initially constructed circa 1914 as a commercial venue with modest architectural detailing, the structure was later transformed in the 1960s into its current Neoclassical form under the ownership of the Canadian Mime Theatre.

The façade is marked by classical references: a symmetrical temple front featuring Ionic pilasters, a pediment with a deep cornice, a Greek key frieze, and a pedimented Venetian window above the central entrance bay. Three sets of double-leaf doors, framed by reeded Doric columns and topped by a flat marquee, provide an imposing but theatrical point of entry.

Structurally, the building uses wood joists and steel beams embedded within hollow-core clay tile block walls, a typical construction technique of the era. Its more playful reimagining

of classical motifs, done by set designers rather than traditional architects, provides a whimsical counterpoint to the predominantly Neo-Colonial and Victorian architecture of Queen Street.

Following its acquisition by the Shaw Festival, the building underwent further modernization to meet the technical and accessibility needs of a contemporary theatre. Additions included a small orchestra pit, interior refurbishments, and reconfiguration of audience spaces to accommodate an expanded program.

Despite these modifications, the Royal George Theatre remains a cultural landmark within the District, contributing to the vibrancy of Queen Street and maintaining a key associative value tied to Niagara-on-the-Lake's renowned theatre heritage.

79 Queen Street – Tranter's House

Tranter's House, constructed circa 1885, offers a distinct contrast to its larger neighbours along Queen Street. Originally serving as a barber shop, the building reflects the fine-grained, mixed-use pattern of 19th-century Queen Street, where small-scale commercial enterprises operated alongside residential and service uses. The building has undergone multiple alterations throughout the past century, resulting in the retention of limited original historic fabric.

Architecturally, Tranter's House is a simple, single-storey stucco-clad building with a front-gabled orientation toward Queen Street. The façade features a parapeted roofline with denticulated frieze, lending a slight decorative flourish to an otherwise modest building. Two primary openings, a doorway and a two-part window, emphasize the building's former commercial function.

The south elevation, facing an internal courtyard, reveals two additional entrances, two windows, and a small hipped dormer,

suggesting incremental additions over time to meet evolving functional needs.

In its current use, Tranter's House supports the Shaw Festival's costume and wardrobe operations and accommodates the Royal George Theatre's only accessible washroom. While no longer a standalone commercial business, the building's contribution to the diversity, scale, and continuity of the Queen Street frontage remains important. Its smaller footprint and height reinforce the visual rhythm and historic urban character of the Heritage Conservation District.

188 Victoria Street – Dicken's Den

188 Victoria Street, constructed circa 1880, originally served as a modest residential dwelling and exemplifies the transitional architecture found along Victoria Street, blending the commercial vitality of Queen Street with the emerging residential fabric to the north.

The building's irregular gable-front-and-wing plan accommodates an eclectic arrangement of large window openings, including a tall, flat-headed 1/1 sash window that extends nearly to the roofline and a projecting bay window. The current bright yellow clapboard siding with white trim lends a cheerful, if somewhat visually assertive, presence within the streetscape.

Historically, the building transitioned from residential use to a mixed-use configuration, accommodating both retail (e.g., a pizzeria) and residential tenants. This evolution mirrors the broader adaptive patterns encouraged in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District, where flexibility in use was seen as compatible with heritage conservation.

Today, Dicken's Den serves as an example of ongoing adaptive reuse, maintaining the pedestrian-oriented scale and visual diversity essential to the historic core's character.

178 Victoria Street

178 Victoria Street is a pre-1860 vernacular residential structure, contributing significant heritage value to the District through its early date of construction and its largely intact vernacular form.

The one-and-a-half-storey building features narrow horizontal clapboard siding and a steeply pitched cross-gabled roof, typical of early Niagara-on-the-Lake residential architecture. Incremental modifications over time, such as the extension of the verandah roof to create a sheltered carport, and the addition of a connecting walkway to a detached garage, demonstrate the building's adaptive evolution without compromising its historic character.

A white picket fence enclosing the front garden enhances the property's historic residential setting, reinforcing the fine-grained streetscape texture of Victoria Street.

Currently, the property provides temporary accommodation for Shaw Festival actors, sustaining the original residential use while contributing actively to the town's cultural life. Its continued occupation and stewardship ensure that it remains a living component of the District's heritage landscape.

Small Barn at the Rear of the Royal George Theatre

The existing barn at the rear of the Royal George Theatre is a contemporary structure, constructed in the late 1980s or early 1990s by Hartley Strauss. It occupies a footprint similar to that of the property's original barn, which once formed part of the site's service and storage functions. Historic mapping and local accounts indicate that the rear yard served as a parking lot during the property's mid-20th century use as a film house and mime theatre (1950s–1970s). This portion of the property was sold to the Strauss family in 1981 as part of their acquisition of the Royal George Theatre. Hartley Strauss constructed the current barn/gallery for his wife, artist Angie Strauss, as a dedicated space for the display and sale of her artwork. While

the building maintains the approximate scale and placement of the earlier barn, it is a modern construction and does not retain historic fabric from its predecessor.

Following the Shaw Festival's reacquisition of the site, the barn was sensitively adapted as part of the Royal George Theatre's decorative garden courtyard. Repurposed as an office and meeting space, the structure now plays an active role in the Festival's operations while preserving the historic layering and visual interest of the site.

Summary

The Royal George Theatre site encompasses a group of historically significant properties within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District that are proposed for demolition as part of a major redevelopment. These include 85 and 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and a small pre-1914 barn. While these buildings have undergone various alterations over time and do not individually possess high architectural value, they collectively contribute to the historic urban fabric and contextual character of Niagara-on-the-Lake's downtown core.

Each building offers insights into the layered development of the district. The Royal George Theatre at 85 Queen Street, with its temple-front façade introduced in the 1970s by architect Peter Stokes, has long served as a cultural landmark tied to the town's performing arts history. Though not original, the façade has become a symbolic feature of the streetscape. Adjacent structures such as Tranter's House (79 Queen Street) and the modest residential buildings on Victoria Street (178 and 188) illustrate the fine-grained scale and mixed-use character that define the district. The small barn, a rare surviving ancillary structure, further enriches the site's heritage narrative by offering a glimpse into the utilitarian functions that once supported Queen Street's commercial core.

The removal of these buildings will result in the loss of heritage fabric; however, their contributions are being acknowledged through documentation, proposed interpretive measures, and a contemporary redevelopment strategy that seeks to reflect the site's cultural significance. The new design proposes a reinterpretation of the Stokes façade, landscape features that maintain the site's scale and rhythm, and an expanded cultural facility that continues the longstanding theatrical function of the Royal George Theatre. This approach aims to balance change with continuity, ensuring that the evolving built form remains rooted in the heritage values of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

2.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Indigenous History of Niagara-on-the-Lake

The area now known as Niagara-on-the-Lake holds a deep and enduring Indigenous history that long predates European settlement. Archaeological evidence and oral traditions confirm that Indigenous peoples have inhabited the Niagara region for over 13,000 years, drawn to its rich natural resources and strategic location at the mouth of the Niagara River.

Prior to European contact, the land was home to the Attawandaron, also known as the Neutral Nation. This Iroquoian-speaking confederacy occupied the territory between Lakes Ontario and Erie, establishing a network of fortified villages across the Niagara Peninsula. The Neutral Nation was known for its agricultural practices - cultivating corn, beans, and tobacco - and for its policy of remaining neutral during conflicts between other Indigenous confederacies, a trait which earned them their European name. However, the Neutral Nation's population and social structures were severely impacted in the mid-17th century by epidemic diseases introduced through European contact and conflict during the Beaver Wars, particularly incursions by the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy).

Following the decline of the Neutral Nation, the Haudenosaunee, particularly the Seneca, established a presence along the Niagara corridor. In the early 18th century, Anishinaabe peoples, notably the Mississauga, also migrated into the region, establishing new settlements and continuing to steward the land.

A pivotal moment in the area's Indigenous history came with the Treaty of Niagara in 1764. Convened at Fort Niagara, the

treaty was an important diplomatic agreement between the British Crown and over twenty Indigenous nations, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe. It affirmed principles of peace, friendship, and Indigenous sovereignty, serving as a cornerstone for future relationships between Indigenous peoples and European settlers in the region.

Today, the Niagara region continues to be home to vibrant Indigenous communities, including members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Anishinaabe Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Many Indigenous peoples in the area maintain connections to nearby communities such as Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississauga of the Credit First Nation. Their ongoing contributions enrich the cultural, social, and economic life of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Recognition of this deep Indigenous history is increasingly integrated into public education, commemorative projects, and heritage conservation initiatives. Institutions like the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum and the Landscape of Nations Memorial work to honor and share the region's Indigenous heritage, ensuring that this foundational history continues to inform the evolving narrative of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

2.2 Historical Context of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Niagara-on-the-Lake, situated at the confluence of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario, holds a significant place in Canadian history. Its strategic location made it a focal point for military, political, and economic activities from the 17th century onward.

The area's prominence began with the establishment of Fort Niagara by the French in 1679, serving as a critical point for controlling access to the Great Lakes and the interior of North America. In 1759, during the Seven Years' War, British forces captured Fort Niagara, solidifying their control over the region.

Following the American Revolutionary War, Loyalist refugees settled on the west bank of the Niagara River in 1781, founding a community initially known as Butlersburg, later renamed Newark. In 1792, Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe designated Newark as the first capital of Upper Canada, implementing a British colonial grid plan for the town's layout.

However, due to its proximity to the United States and concerns over security, the capital was relocated to York (now Toronto) in 1796. Subsequently, the town's name reverted to Niagara in 1798.

During the War of 1812, Niagara-on-the-Lake was a significant battleground. In December 1813, American forces occupied and burned the town during their retreat. The community demonstrated resilience by rebuilding in the following years, with many structures reflecting the British classical architectural tradition.

The mid-19th century saw economic shifts due to the opening of the Welland Canal in 1829, which diverted trade routes away from the town. In response, the Niagara Harbour and Dock Company was established in 1831 to revitalize the local economy through shipbuilding and related industries. Between 1880 and 1915, Niagara-on-the-Lake emerged as a popular summer destination, leading to the construction of notable establishments such as the Prince of Wales Hotel in 1864 and the Royal George Theatre in 1915. These developments contributed to the town's reputation as a cultural and recreational hub.

In the latter half of the 20th century, efforts to preserve the town's rich heritage intensified. The introduction of *Vitis vinifera* grape cultivation in the 1950s spurred the growth of the local wine industry. Simultaneously, the establishment of the Shaw Festival in 1962 by Brian Doherty and Calvin Rand further cemented Niagara-on-the-Lake's status as a center for arts and culture.

Recognizing its historical and architectural significance, the Old Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake was designated as a National Historic Site of Canada in 2004. Today, the town boasts a well-preserved collection of 19th-century buildings, reflecting its enduring legacy and commitment to heritage conservation.

2.3 History & Evolution of the Royal George Theatre

The history of the Royal George Theatre offers a vivid narrative of Niagara-on-the-Lake's growth, shifting cultural aspirations, and enduring resilience. From its early use as a blacksmith shop to its present role as a cornerstone of the Shaw Festival, the Royal George Theatre has continually evolved to meet the community's changing needs, embodying a pattern of adaptive reuse characteristic of the town's broader heritage landscape.

Early Development (Pre-1915)

Prior to the construction of the theatre, the site was occupied by a blacksmith shop—one of many trades supporting the town's commercial and agricultural economy in the 19th century. Niagara-on-the-Lake, at the time, served as a vibrant port and service hub, balancing its historic role as a Loyalist settlement with emerging commercial enterprises.

Establishment of the Kitchener Theatre (1915)

In 1915, amidst the backdrop of the First World War and a growing demand for public entertainment, Mrs. Norris

commissioned the construction of a modern vaudeville and silent movie theatre. Named the Kitchener Theatre after Lord Kitchener, a British military figure, the building was one of the most advanced entertainment venues of its time, featuring a 420-seat capacity, a fly tower for theatrical productions, and facilities for film screenings.



FIGURE 11. THEATRE UNDER OWNERSHIP OF GEORGE REID, WHO RENAMED A QUEEN STREET VENUE THE ROYAL GEORGE.
NOTE: THIS MAY DEPICT THE EARLIER ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE, A SEPARATE STRUCTURE DEMOLISHED IN THE 1930S. SOURCE: "LOOKING BACK: NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONTARIO" BY CLARK BERNAT AND JOY ORMSBY (2003). PHOTO COURTESY OF MRS. PATRICIA MCCARTHY, AS PUBLISHED IN THE REFERENCED WORK.

The Kitchener Theatre played an important social role, providing performances and entertainment for both local residents and soldiers stationed at nearby Camp Niagara.

Transition to the Royal George Theatre (1919–1930s)

Following the end of the war, the economic climate shifted. In 1919, George Reid, a local carpenter and painter, purchased the building and renamed it the Royal George Theatre in honor of King George V. Under Reid's stewardship, the theatre hosted vaudeville acts, community events, and visiting performance troupes.

However, the cost of upgrading to accommodate new technologies like "talkies" (sound films) was prohibitive, and by the late 1920s, the theatre began to struggle financially, eventually ceasing regular operations by the early 1930s.

Renovation & Rebranding as the Brock Theatre (Late 1930s–1972)

John Allan acquired the building in the late 1930s, initiating substantial upgrades that included installing modern projection equipment, new heating systems, a new marquee, and aesthetic changes to the facade. The theatre was renamed the Brock Theatre, celebrating Canadian war hero Major-General Sir Isaac Brock.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the Brock Theatre flourished as a cinema and community gathering place, hosting films, public meetings, and ceremonies. The McCourt family operated the theatre from 1946 onward, skillfully adapting it to meet changing tastes, including the introduction of widescreen film formats.

Nevertheless, the growing influence of television eroded cinema attendance, and by the early 1970s, the building was again in decline.

AIR-CONDITIONED

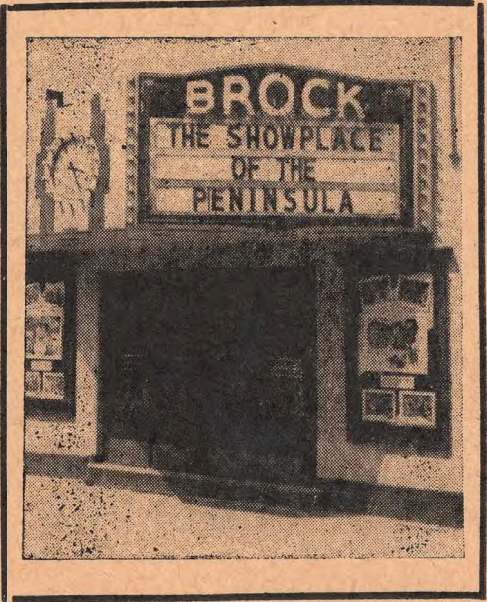
Friday Saturday Aug. 27-28	Henry Fonda, J. Wayne Shirley Temple in "FORT APACHE" Don't miss it!
Monday Tuesday Aug. 30-31	Wallace Beery in the rough and tumble comedy riot "ALIAS A GENTLEMAN" also "Speed to Spare"
Wed'sday Thursday Sept. 1-2	Fred McMurray Frank Sinatra in "MIRACLE OF THE BELLS"
Friday Saturday Sept. 3-4	Your sides will ache from laughing at Red Skelton in "THE FULLER BRUSH MAN"
Coming Sunday Midnite	Eddie Cantor, Joan Davis "IF YOU KNEW SUSIE"

BROCK

THEATRE

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

YOUR PROGRAM



1998.006.31

FIGURE 12. 1946 – "BROCK" CINEMA – OWNERS MARJORIE AND DEWEY MCCOURT: FROM TROOP CONCERTS TO SATURDAY-NIGHT DOUBLE-FEATURES, AND NOW INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED SHAW FESTIVAL PRODUCTIONS, THE BUILDING HAS MIRRORED NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE'S EVOLVING ENTERTAINMENT TASTES FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY.

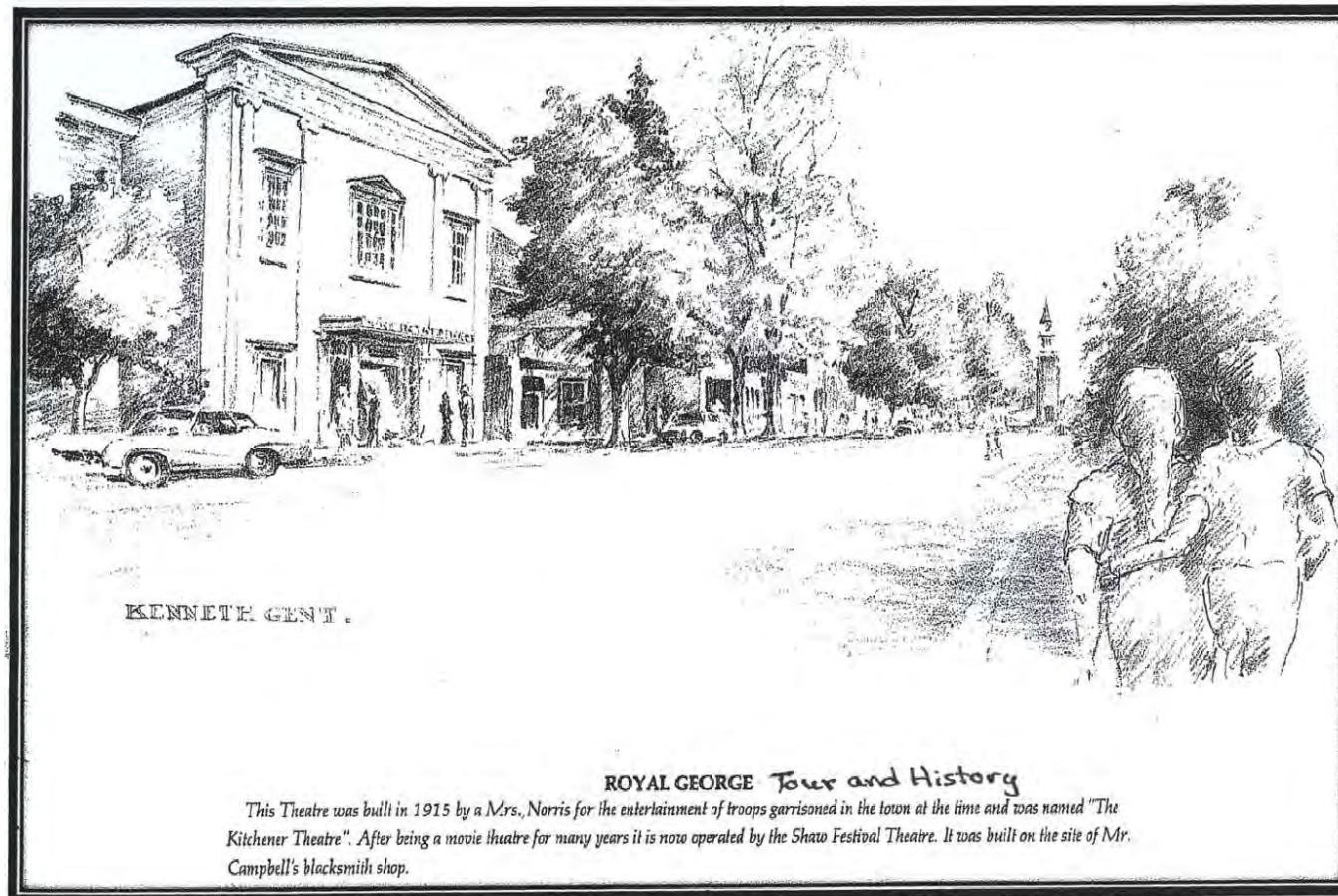


FIGURE 13. UNDATED PEN-AND-INK STREETSCAPE OF THE ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE, QUEEN STREET, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE – ARTIST KENNETH GENT. PREPARED FOR THE THEATRE'S "TOUR AND HISTORY" BOOKLET, THE DRAWING DEPICTS THE 1915 BUILDING - FIRST OPENED AS THE KITCHENER THEATRE FOR GARRISONED WW I TROOPS - SET WITHIN ITS TREE-LINED COMMERCIAL BLOCK, LONG BEFORE ITS MODERN SHAW FESTIVAL RENOVATIONS.

Acquisition by the Canadian Mime Theatre (1972–1980)

In 1972, the Canadian Mime Theatre acquired the building and undertook a transformative restoration to adapt the space for live theatrical performances. Architect Peter Stokes, a leading heritage architect of the period, redesigned the building's south façade with a Neoclassical Palladian composition intended to reintroduce the visual presence of a classical theatre within Queen Street's historic streetscape. His design removed the movie-era marquee and reinstated classical features such as Ionic pilasters, a symmetrical pedimented entrance, and formalized proportions inspired by early theatre architecture.

Archival drawings from this period provide valuable insight into Stokes' design intent, illustrating his efforts to create a "temple front" façade that visually elevated the building's cultural status while echoing historical theatre typologies. The façade was conceived as a theatrical stage set, constructed with lightweight materials to create a symbolic, rather than authentic, representation of Georgian architecture.

Despite the Canadian Mime Theatre's artistic achievements, financial constraints led to their departure by the end of the decade. However, the Stokes façade remained a defining element of the building and has since become a recognizable, feature of the Royal George Theatre's presence on Queen Street.

As part of this CHIA, the proposed redevelopment's principal (south) elevation has been evaluated in relation to Stokes' original façade drawings. The new design reinterprets key attributes of the 1978 "temple front", including its placement along the property line, symmetrical composition, height and width proportions, rhythm of vertical pilasters, and formal entrance treatment, while employing durable contemporary materials and a simplified architectural expression. This approach seeks to commemorate the Stokes façade as an important layer in the building's history, ensuring that its

symbolic contribution to Queen Street's theatre identity is retained in a manner compatible with the overall redevelopment strategy.

Shaw Festival Stewardship & Expansion (1980–Present)

In 1980, the Shaw Festival acquired the Royal George Theatre, recognizing its potential as a cornerstone venue within the company's expanding repertoire and cultural mandate in Niagara-on-the-Lake. This acquisition marked a pivotal moment in the site's history, securing its long-term role as a centre for live theatre within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. At the same time, the rear parking lot behind the theatre was sold to the Strauss family at 178 Victoria Street, where it was transformed into a garden and gallery space for artist Angie Strauss.



FIGURE 14. ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE AFTER THE 1980S RENOVATION—GEORGIAN-REVIVAL FACADE WITH SMOOTH STUCCO, CORNER PILASTERS, HIGH PARAPET, AND CENTRED MULTI-PANE SASH WINDOWS REINSTATES CLASSICAL SYMMETRY ON QUEEN STREET.

With the support of visionary leadership, notably Cameron Porteous, and significant contributions from community patrons such as Walter Carsen, the Festival launched a series of renovations and enhancements aimed at transforming the former Canadian Mime Theatre building into a refined, fully equipped performance venue. Key improvements during the 1980s and 1990s included:

- Restoration of seating and interior finishes, upgrading audience comfort while retaining the intimate atmosphere of a small-scale theatre.
- Introduction of a permanent proscenium arch and orchestra pit, allowing for a wider range of productions and improved acoustical performance.
- Installation of extensive plaster detailing, ceiling ornamentation, and Edwardian-inspired decorative treatments, designed to evoke the ambiance of an early 20th-century opera house, reinforcing the theatre's cultural identity within the historic main street setting.
- In 2006, the Royal George Theatre underwent lobby enhancements and accessibility upgrades aimed at improving patron circulation and introducing new amenities. These works sought to provide easier access within the spatial limitations of the existing building. Despite these improvements, the building continues to present several physical barriers to full accessibility.

By the early 1990s, these renovations had revitalized the Royal George Theatre and firmly embedded it into the Shaw Festival's annual operations. The venue became an integral part of the Festival's expansion strategy, offering an additional stage to complement the Festival Theatre and the Court House Theatre. The Royal George provided a unique, intimate setting for theatrical productions, enhancing the variety and depth of the Festival's programming.

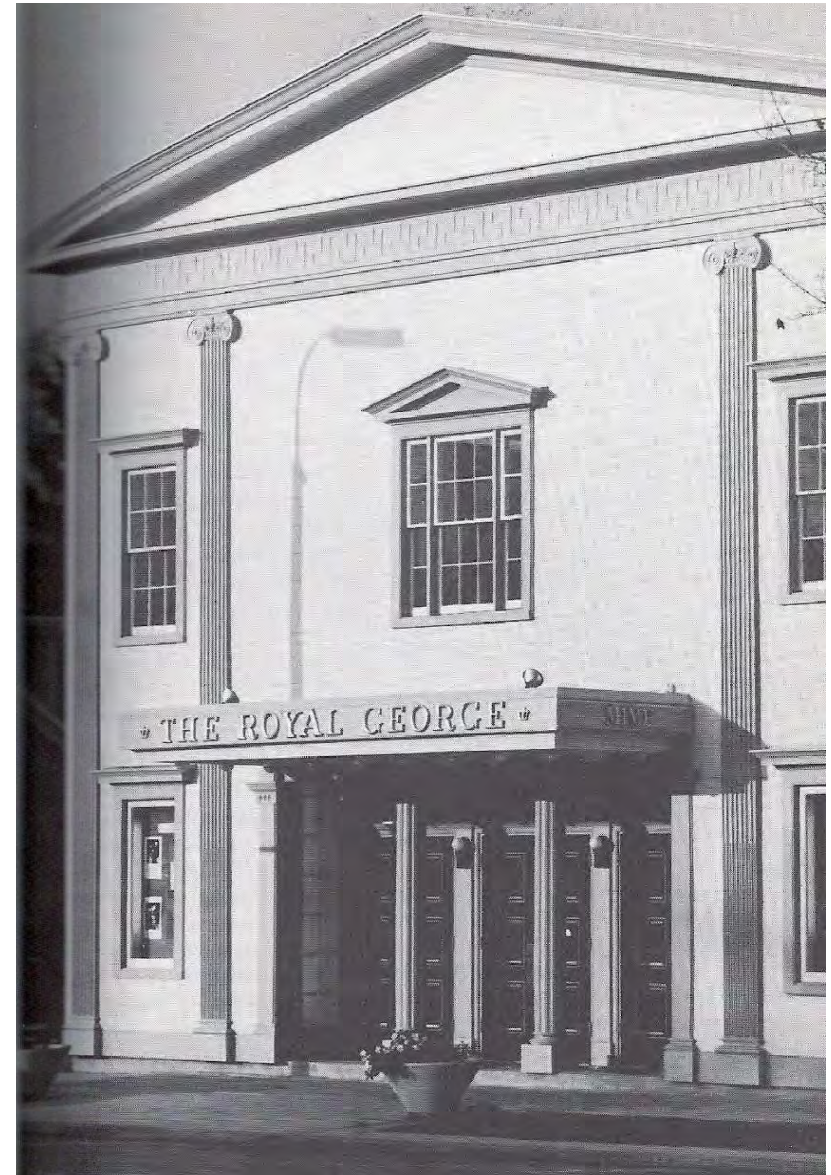


FIGURE 15. EARLY-1970S RESTORATION OF THE FORMER BROCK CINEMA AS THE CANADIAN MIME THEATRE—STUCCOED GEORGIAN FRONT WITH BOLD CORNER PILASTERS AND A CENTRAL TRIPLE-SASH WINDOW. SOURCE: WALKER & HEROD, EXPLORING NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE (1977).

Despite its cultural importance, these alterations further distanced the building from its original 1915 fabric, creating a layered history that combines early commercial/residential origins, Peter Stokes' 1972 Neoclassical reinterpretation, and the Shaw Festival's Edwardian-inspired transformations. This evolution demonstrates the theatre's adaptability but also underscores the cumulative loss of architectural authenticity, informing the current conservation approach for redevelopment.

As part of the wider Royal George Theatre site, the historic houses at 178 and 188 Victoria Street have played an important supporting role in the Shaw Festival's operations for many years. The Festival acquired 178 Victoria Street in 2017 and 188 Victoria Street in 2022, integrating them into its property holdings to support administrative, operational, and artist-related functions. Constructed during Niagara-on-the-Lake's late 19th-century residential expansion, these modest dwellings once reflected the town's early industrial and commercial growth, providing housing for workers and tradespeople within walking distance of Queen Street's emerging business core.

Following their acquisition by the Shaw Festival, the properties were sensitively adapted to accommodate seasonal artists, designers, theatre students, and visiting performers. This adaptive reuse allowed the buildings to retain their essential residential character and maintain the traditional streetscape pattern of narrow lots, modest house forms, and landscaped setbacks along Victoria Street, while also responding to the evolving needs of a major cultural institution.

In their current configuration, the Victoria Street properties form part of a unified theatre campus that supports the Shaw Festival's production cycle and creative community:

- The main Royal George Theatre provides a dedicated venue for live performances within the historic commercial heart of

Niagara-on-the-Lake.

- Auxiliary spaces in adjacent properties support set design, costume preparation, rehearsal needs, and production logistics.
- The residential houses on Victoria Street offer accommodation for artists, technical staff, and students, fostering a close-knit creative environment and reinforcing the town's tradition of live-in theatre culture.

This integrated model of performance, production, and residence has enabled the Shaw Festival to operate year-round, sustain a vibrant artistic community, and ensure the continued use of historic properties that might otherwise have been left vacant or underutilized. By combining cultural programming with heritage stewardship, the Festival has contributed to the economic vitality of Niagara-on-the-Lake while maintaining the layered character of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

The Role of the Royal George Theatre Today

For more than half a century, the Shaw Festival has evolved into one of Canada's foremost cultural institutions, shaping the identity and economic vitality of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Drawing nearly 300,000 visitors each year, the Festival supports local businesses, stimulates tourism, and sustains a dynamic cultural landscape that attracts audiences from across Canada and beyond. Within this ecosystem, the Royal George Theatre holds a unique position. Its intimate scale and central location on Queen Street provide a distinct theatrical experience that complements the offerings of the larger Festival Theatre and the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre.

The Royal George Theatre serves not only as a performance venue but as a cultural touchstone that embodies the town's longstanding association with the arts. It has provided generations of artists, students, and audiences with a shared space for exploration, dialogue, and connection, fostering a

legacy of creativity deeply intertwined with the community's identity.

However, like many historic theatres, the Royal George faces challenges that threaten its ability to remain functional and relevant. Evolving audience expectations for comfort, accessibility, and amenities; rapid advancements in stage technology; and the inherent limitations of an aging structure place pressure on the building's capacity to meet contemporary performance standards. Without continued reinvestment and sensitive adaptation, historic theatres risk falling into disuse, becoming abandoned relics, demolished structures, or preserved artifacts devoid of their original vibrancy and purpose.

The Royal George Theatre stands at a pivotal crossroads. The proposed redevelopment represents an opportunity to reimagine the site for the future while respecting its layered past. By combining modern performance infrastructure with contextually sensitive design, the new theatre aims to ensure that this historic venue remains a cornerstone of Niagara-on-the-Lake's cultural fabric. Through thoughtful stewardship, the Royal George can continue to operate not as a static monument to the past, but as a living, evolving landmark that reflects the ongoing story of the town and its deep connection to the performing arts.



FIGURE 16. 1914 FIRE INSURANCE MAP (CHAS. E. GOAD, MONTREAL), ANNOTATED BY MCCALLUMSATHER TO OUTLINE THE LOT BOUNDARY THAT EXISTED BEFORE THE ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE WAS BUILT.

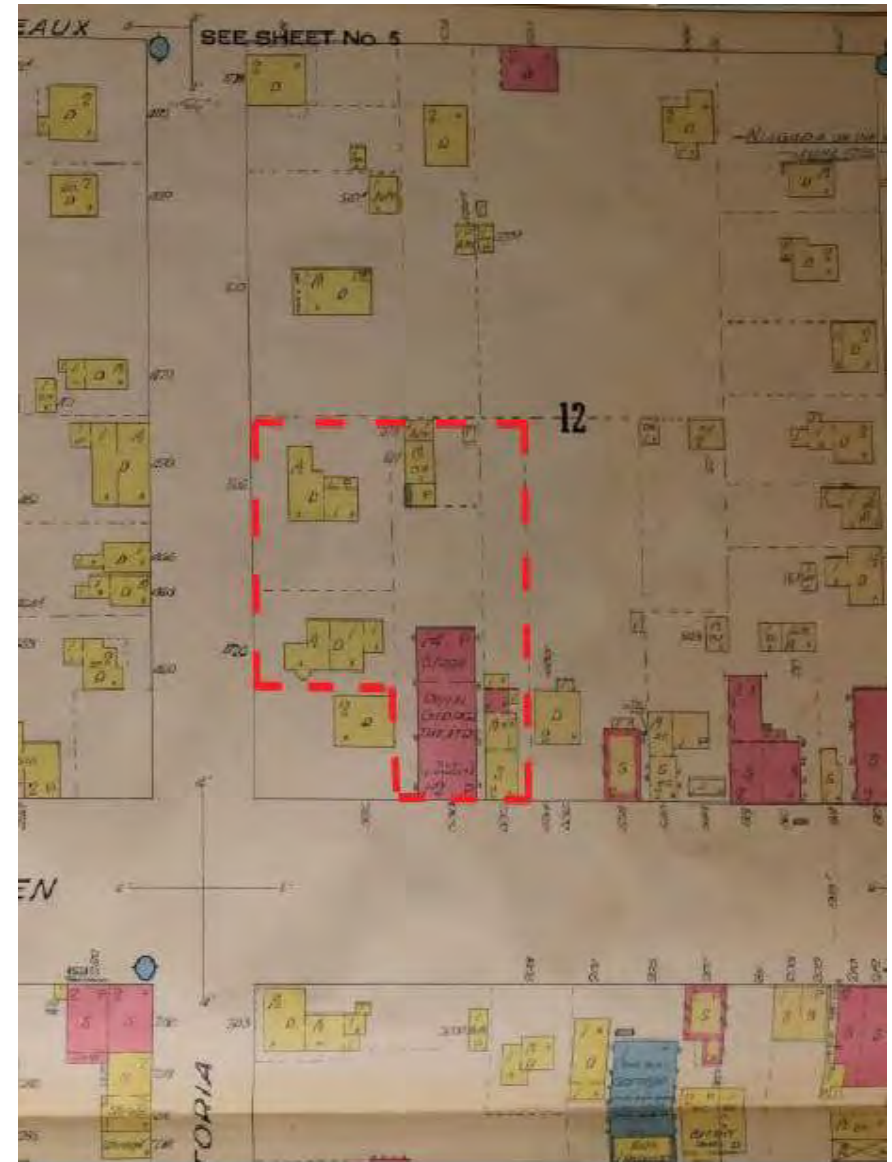


FIGURE 17. 1925 FIRE INSURANCE MAP (CHAS. E. GOAD, MONTREAL), ANNOTATED BY MCCALLUMSATHER TO OUTLINE THE ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE LOT BOUNDARY.

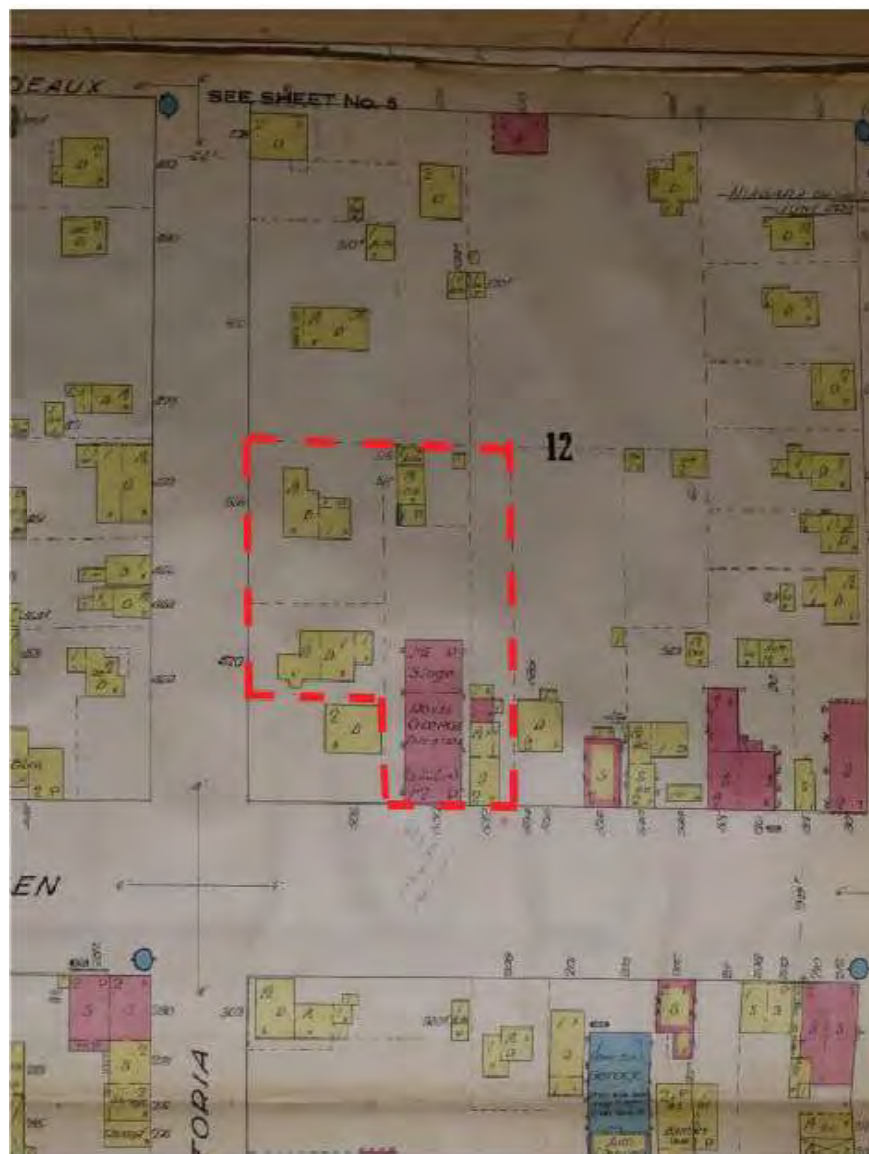


FIGURE 18. 1926 FIRE INSURANCE MAP (CHAS. E. GOAD, MONTREAL), ANNOTATED BY MCCALLUMSATHER TO OUTLINE THE PROPERTY'S APPROXIMATE LOT BOUNDARY.



FIGURE 19. 1949 FIRE INSURANCE MAP (CHAS. E. GOAD, MONTREAL), ANNOTATED BY MCCALLUMSATHER TO INDICATE THE APPROXIMATE LOT BOUNDARY OF THE PROPERTY.

3.0 HERITAGE VALUE

Heritage value is what makes a historic place meaningful to its community, in this case, the residents and visitors of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Traditionally, historic places were valued primarily for their architectural merit or historical associations. Today, a broader understanding recognizes that places can also embody cultural, social, spiritual, and community significance. A single site may possess multiple heritage values, and different communities may attribute different meanings to it. Furthermore, these values can evolve over time as the community's needs, understanding, and identity change.

Niagara-on-the-Lake is widely recognized as a leader in heritage conservation in Canada. With a long history of protecting its historic built environment, the town has demonstrated its commitment to stewardship through numerous initiatives, culminating in the receipt of the National Trust for Canada's Prince of Wales Prize in 2020. This award recognizes outstanding municipal heritage conservation leadership and celebrates Niagara-on-the-Lake's sustained efforts to preserve its remarkable collection of 19th-century residential, commercial, and civic buildings.

The Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (designated in 1986 under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act) encompasses a significant portion of Niagara-on-the-Lake's historic core. The district comprises approximately 160 properties, including residential, commercial, institutional, and public service buildings. It was established to recognize and protect not only individual structures of significance but also the overall historic streetscape and cohesive architectural character.

According to the Queen & Picton Streets Heritage Conservation District Plan (Nicholas Hill, 1986), buildings within the District are

categorized into "A", "B", and "C" ratings based on their individual contribution to the district's character:

- 'A' Buildings: Structures of major individual architectural or historical value.
- 'B' Buildings: Structures of contextual value that contribute significantly to the historic streetscape, even if they are not individually distinguished.
- 'C' Buildings: More recent or altered buildings that do not strongly reinforce the heritage character but are still evaluated within the overall planning framework.

The Royal George Theatre and its associated properties at 79 Queen Street (Tranter's House), 178 Victoria Street, 188 Victoria Street (Dickens's Den), and the small rear barn are all designated 'B' Buildings under this system. While not individually recognized for exceptional architectural merit, these properties collectively enhance the district's heritage character. They contribute essential qualities such as:

- Visual continuity along Queen and Victoria Streets
- Reinforcement of the district's human-scaled urban fabric
- Representation of the historic layering and evolution of Niagara-on-the-Lake over two centuries

These buildings embody the "contextual value" at the heart of the Queen-Picton Plan's objectives. Their preservation supports broader goals of maintaining a pedestrian-oriented, historically resonant streetscape that invites both residents and visitors to experience a living link to Ontario's early colonial and post-colonial periods.

Importantly, the designation also reflects an understanding that

the heritage value of this ensemble lies not solely in individual buildings, but in their collective presence, their architectural rhythms, alignments, materials, and scales, which create an irreplaceable historic setting within Niagara-on-the-Lake's downtown core.

3.1 Design & Physical Value

The architectural value of the Royal George Theatre has been significantly diminished over time due to a series of alterations, adaptations, and renovations in response to evolving functional needs. Over the past century, these cumulative changes have compromised the building's original architectural integrity.

Based on our evaluation, the Royal George Theatre does not exhibit a high degree of craftsmanship, artistic merit, or technical innovation beyond what was typical for its period. The construction techniques, material choices, and spatial arrangements are representative of common early 20th-century vernacular practices. The current exterior cladding, consisting of wood siding of relatively low quality, and the replacement of windows and interior modifications have further eroded its architectural authenticity.

While some elements hint at a Neoclassical Palladian inspiration, particularly those introduced during the 1978 refurbishment when the building was adapted by the Canadian Mime Theatre, the evidence of original high-style architectural expression is limited. The current facade reflects Grecian stylistic motifs interpreted through later interventions rather than original construction.

As it stands today, 85 Queen Street is neither rare, unique, nor strongly representative of a particular style, typology, material, or construction method. Although it exhibits some superficial Neoclassical elements, the building is best understood as a

vernacular structure that has been heavily modified over time. Its architectural value lies less in the preservation of original fabric or exemplary design, and more in its contribution to the broader historic streetscape and its contextual role within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

3.2 Historical & Associative Value

The Royal George Theatre possesses notable historical associations through its succession of owners and its longstanding role in Niagara-on-the-Lake's entertainment and cultural life. Documentary evidence confirms the building's association with several individuals and groups of local and regional significance, including Mrs. Norris (an American entrepreneur from Bay City, Michigan), George Reid, John Allan, Marjorie and Dewey McCourt, Brian Doherty, Adrian Pecknold, and ultimately, the Shaw Festival.

Each successive owner contributed to the building's physical and functional evolution, adapting it to meet the community's changing entertainment demands across the 20th century. Mrs. Norris's establishment of the Kitchener Theatre in 1915, George Reid's rebranding as the Royal George Theatre in the post-World War I period, John Allan's mid-century modernization as the Brock Theatre, and the Canadian Mime Theatre's 1970s reinterpretation of the facade all represent phases of ownership that reflect broader shifts in the town's cultural and economic landscape. The Shaw Festival's acquisition of the property in 1980 further solidified its ongoing use as a cultural venue.

While these associations document the building's continuous engagement with the entertainment industry and its role in the commercial and social development of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the property does not demonstrate outstanding historical value under the evaluative criteria typically used for designation. The loss of significant original materials, extensive alterations to the

structure, and changes to its physical context have diminished the building's ability to effectively communicate its layered historical narrative.

Although the theatre retains a direct associative value with the cultural identity of Niagara-on-the-Lake, particularly through its association with the Shaw Festival, the physical fabric no longer strongly embodies these connections. In its current form, 85 Queen Street does not appear to yield, nor is it likely to yield, information that would substantially enhance an understanding of the broader historical development of the community. The original reasons for its historical importance are now more effectively communicated through its continued function as a cultural venue rather than through the building's extant physical attributes.

3.3 Contextual Value

The Royal George Theatre holds significant contextual and landscape value within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. Although the building has been substantially altered over the past century, its form, scale, and urban presence contribute meaningfully to the defining character of Queen Street and the surrounding historic fabric of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Contextually, the Royal George Theatre aligns in height, massing, and commercial function with other heritage buildings along Queen Street, maintaining the historic pedestrian scale and urban rhythm characteristic of the district. The surrounding area displays a notable diversity of architectural styles and periods; within this variety, the Royal George Theatre stands out as one of the most recognizable and visually distinctive landmarks.

The theatre's prominence is not solely due to its architectural merit but is also a result of its form, exaggerated decorative treatments, and adaptation over time. Its stylistic eclecticism,

evident in the playful Neoclassical Palladian-inspired façade introduced during the Canadian Mime Theatre's renovations in the 1970s, exemplifies characteristics associated with built vernacular heritage. As defined in the Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage (ICOMOS, 1999), vernacular heritage "occupies a central place in the affection and pride of all peoples" and represents both a "record of the history of society" and an "expression of cultural diversity." In this respect, the Royal George Theatre reflects the community's evolving cultural expressions, adapted through local needs and resources rather than adherence to a formal architectural canon.

In urban landscape studies, built vernacular structures such as theatres, hotels, and commercial halls are often noted for their distinctive façades and decorative elements, intended to capture public attention. The Royal George Theatre conforms to this pattern: it employs amplified proportions, classical allusions, and vibrant material treatments to establish a memorable street presence. Its role as a visual and cultural anchor along Queen Street is significant, reinforcing the commercial vitality and heritage identity of the district.

Previous evaluations have determined that the building does not possess outstanding individual architectural or historical value. However, its strong contextual contribution enhances the collective streetscape experience. The Royal George Theatre acts as a visual terminus and a point of reference within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District, shaping the user experience and supporting the broader heritage landscape. In summary, while the Royal George Theatre's architectural integrity has been compromised by successive alterations, its contextual and associative values remain intact. The building contributes meaningfully to the continuity, character, and vibrancy of the district.

In the opinion of mcCallumSather, 85 Queen Street meets the criteria for Contextual Value as outlined under Ontario Regulation 9/06, specifically:

- It is important in defining, maintaining, and supporting the character of the area.
- It is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings.

For these reasons, the relationship between the existing Royal George Theatre, its adjacent properties, and the new development is central to the successful conservation and integration of the site into the evolving heritage fabric of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Summary of Ontario Regulation 9/06 Evaluation

An evaluation of the Royal George Theatre at 85 Queen Street was undertaken against the criteria outlined in Ontario Regulation 9/06. The property was found to possess historical/associative and contextual value, although it does not meet the threshold for design or physical value due to extensive alterations. The following table summarizes the findings:

Evaluation Category	Criteria	Evaluation	Summary of Evaluation
Design or Physical Value	Rare, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	N	The existing building has been irreversibly altered without consideration for its original Neoclassical design. No significant interior heritage attributes were found.
Design or Physical Value	Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N	No evidence showing a high degree of craftsmanship, artistic merit, or scientific achievement.
Design or Physical Value	Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	N	Use of siding and construction methods are typical of its time and do not demonstrate technical or scientific innovation.
Historical or Associative Value	Direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	Y	The building has associative value related to the history of entertainment in the area and contributes to the streetscape.
Historical or Associative Value	Yields or has potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	N	No evidence found to offer a greater understanding of the community culture.
Historical or Associative Value	Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	N	No evidence associating the building with a notable architect or builder.
Contextual Value	Important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	Y	The visual relationship between the building and its role in the streetscape provides contextual value.
Contextual Value	Physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	Y	The presence of the theatre physically and visually contributes to the surrounding heritage area.
Contextual Value	Is a landmark	Y	The theatre acts as a recognizable landmark within the heritage district.

Summary

Heritage Value & Significance of the Royal George Theatre Site

The Royal George Theatre site, comprising 85 Queen Street and adjacent properties, holds significant contextual and associative heritage value within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. While the architectural integrity of the Royal George Theatre has been diminished by multiple renovations over time, the site's broader contribution lies in its role as a cultural landmark and streetscape anchor in Niagara-on-the-Lake's historic core.

The buildings at 85 Queen Street, 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the small rear barn are all classified as "B" buildings under the 1986 Heritage Conservation District Plan, meaning they are valued for their contextual contribution rather than their individual architectural distinction. These properties collectively reinforce the town's heritage character through their scale, rhythm, alignment, and material presence along Queen and Victoria Streets.

The architectural value of the Royal George Theatre is considered modest due to significant loss of original material and stylistic alterations, particularly those introduced in the 1970s by the Canadian Mime Theatre. Despite this, its associative value remains strong, having served multiple cultural functions over a century and currently operating as a key venue within the Shaw Festival. Its evolution mirrors broader changes in the town's cultural and entertainment landscape.

Most notably, the building's contextual value is central to its heritage contribution. It retains visual prominence on Queen Street, supports a pedestrian-oriented historic environment, and acts as a visual terminus and reference point within the district. It exemplifies the vernacular adaptation of Neoclassical forms, with an expressive, community-rooted aesthetic that aligns with the Charter on Built Vernacular Heritage (ICOMOS, 1999).

Although it does not meet the threshold for architectural or historical significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06, the Royal George Theatre clearly satisfies the criteria for contextual value, as it:

- Helps define and support the character of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District;
- Remains physically, visually, and functionally integrated with its surroundings.

Therefore, any proposed redevelopment must carefully consider and sustain these values. The success of the future intervention will depend on its ability to respect and interpret the site's layered significance—supporting a meaningful continuity of place in Niagara-on-the-Lake's evolving cultural heritage landscape.

3.4 Character-Defining Attributes of the Royal George Theatre

The character-defining attributes of the Royal George Theatre encompass its form, scale, architectural expression, relationship to its surroundings, and continued cultural function. These attributes, individually and collectively, contribute to the building's recognized heritage value within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. Despite alterations over time, the Royal George Theatre continues to anchor Queen Street's historic streetscape and maintains strong contextual and associative significance.

Architectural Form & Massing

The Royal George Theatre's built form and massing reflect its early 20th-century origins as a community performance venue. Its scale and proportion align with surrounding heritage properties, maintaining the historic human scale of Queen Street.

- **Overall Building Form:** The theatre maintains a rectangular plan with a strong horizontal emphasis, typical of its original public assembly use.
- **Scale and Proportion:** Its modest two-storey height and width-to-height ratio reinforce the pedestrian character of Queen Street.
- **Symmetrical Organization:** Despite renovations, the building preserves a clear sense of symmetry, particularly on the primary façade.

Facade & Exterior Design

The external expression of the Royal George Theatre blends vernacular and classical influences, with design interventions that reflect its evolving theatrical functions.

- **Classical Revival Expression:** The 1970s façade renovation introduced simplified Neoclassical elements, including a prominent pediment, frieze, and pilasters.
- **Entrances and Windows:** Symmetrical window and door openings, including the central Venetian window and triple-door entrance, emphasize the building's formal role.
- **Materials and Finishes:** While later in date, the painted stucco and restrained classical detailing maintain visual compatibility with Queen Street's historic texture.

Site Orientation & Urban Context

The Royal George Theatre's orientation, setbacks, and spatial relationships reinforce its integration into the historic urban framework of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

- **Consistent Street Wall:** The building maintains the continuous historic street edge that defines Queen Street's heritage streetscape.
- **Relationship to Adjacent Properties:** Its scale, massing, and materiality are compatible with adjacent historic commercial and residential structures, supporting the district's character.

- **Courtyard and Secondary Structures:** The open courtyard and surviving rear barn structure illustrate historic patterns of ancillary service spaces behind commercial buildings.

Cultural & Functional Continuity

The sustained cultural use of the Royal George Theatre is a critical aspect of its heritage value, supporting both community identity and historic continuity.

- **Longstanding Use as an Entertainment Venue:** Since its construction in 1915, the building has remained a venue for public performances, cinema, and live theatre.
- **Association with Cultural Institutions:** Its current association with the Shaw Festival, a nationally significant performing arts organization, enhances its cultural heritage significance.
- **Contribution to the Heritage Streetscape:** The theatre's function and presence help animate Queen Street's commercial and cultural core.

Landscape & Setting

The relationship of the Royal George Theatre to its immediate landscape and surrounding townscape plays a critical role in reinforcing its contextual value.

- **Pedestrian Relationship:** Direct access from Queen Street sidewalks supports the historic pedestrian-oriented commercial character.
- **Views and Vistas:** The theatre forms a key visual landmark along Queen Street, contributing to important sightlines and reinforcing the spatial organization of the district.

Summary

Although the Royal George Theatre has undergone numerous alterations, its character-defining attributes — including its scale, massing, classically inspired façade elements, cultural function, and role within the Queen Street streetscape — continue to

sustain its cultural heritage value. These attributes must guide any conservation, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse strategies to ensure the ongoing protection of its role within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

3.5 Heritage Value of Properties

The Royal George Theatre site includes several properties owned by the Shaw Festival, as well as adjacent properties that contribute to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District's character. These include 85 Queen Street (Royal George Theatre), 79 Queen Street, 178 Victoria Street, and 188 Victoria Street. While 164 Victoria Street is not part of the current submission and is not owned by the Shaw Festival, it is immediately adjacent to 178 Victoria Street and is a contributing property within the Heritage Conservation District. Its inclusion in this assessment provides a complete understanding of the surrounding heritage context and the potential impacts of the proposed redevelopment on neighbouring properties.



FIGURE 20. 1946 VIEW OF THE 'BROCK' CINEMA, OPERATED BY MARJORIE AND DEWEY MCCOURT. THE THEATRE SERVED AS A LOCAL CULTURAL VENUE BEFORE BECOMING PART OF THE EVOLVING THEATRICAL LANDSCAPE IN NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE.

3.5.1 79 Queen Street

79 Queen Street, known historically as Tranter's House, is classified as a "B" building in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) Plan (1986). Constructed circa 1885 as a small barber shop, the one-storey building reflects the late 19th-century tradition of modest, service-oriented commercial establishments that lined Queen Street during its period of growth as a thriving local main street. The structure features a simple gable-end orientation facing the street and a narrow, utilitarian frontage designed to accommodate pedestrian activity. Over time, the building has been adapted and is now physically connected to the east side of the Royal George Theatre, supporting the Shaw Festival's costume and wardrobe operations.

While unremarkable in its individual architectural features, the building remains a tangible reminder of Niagara-on-the-Lake's commercial evolution and contributes to the continuity of the district's fine-grained urban fabric. Its small scale, human-oriented frontage, and adjacency to the Royal George Theatre help maintain the established historic rhythm of Queen Street.

Design & Physical Value

The design of 79 Queen Street is representative of the functional, small-scale commercial buildings that characterized late 19th-century Ontario towns. Its single-storey height, narrow lot, and front-gabled form are typical of utilitarian shops serving local residents and visitors during the period.

Subsequent alterations, including stucco cladding, updated fenestration, and its integration with the Royal George Theatre—have compromised the building's authenticity and eroded original materials and detailing. There is no evidence of advanced craftsmanship, artistic merit, or technical innovation in its construction. While the building provides a modest example of late Victorian vernacular commercial architecture, it is not rare,

unique, or sufficiently intact to meet the design or physical value threshold under Ontario Regulation 9/06.

Historical & Associative Value

Tranter's House is historically associated with the type of small-scale, service-based enterprises that supported Queen Street's role as the commercial spine of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Initially built as a barber shop, it reflects a longstanding pattern of modest businesses providing everyday services to the community and contributing to the mixed-use character of the historic downtown core.

No documentary evidence links the property to individuals, organizations, or events of notable historical significance. Its current function as a support space for the Shaw Festival continues its legacy of adaptation for evolving community needs. However, its broader associative value remains general rather than specific, and does not meet the threshold for individual designation under Ontario Regulation 9/06.



FIGURE 21 : 79 QUEEN STREET, LOOKING NORTHEAST FROM QUEEN STREET. CONTRIBUTING PROPERTY WITHIN THE QUEEN-PICTON HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SOURCE: GOOGLE MAPS, 2023).

Contextual Value

The principal heritage value of 79 Queen Street lies in its contextual contribution to the Queen-Picton HCD. The building's scale, orientation, and placement reinforce the historic pattern of fine-grained, one-storey commercial structures interspersed along Queen Street. It maintains a pedestrian-focused frontage, complements the larger Royal George Theatre building, and provides a transitional element between more substantial commercial and institutional buildings.

Its presence supports the continuity of the historic streetscape and contributes to the layered character of Niagara-on-the-Lake's commercial district. While it is not individually a landmark, the building plays a supporting role in preserving the district's cohesive appearance and cultural atmosphere, visually linking past and present commercial uses.

Conclusion

79 Queen Street (Tranter's House) does not meet the threshold for individual designation under Ontario Regulation 9/06 due to its modest, utilitarian design, loss of original integrity, and lack of specific historical associations. Its heritage value is primarily contextual, supporting the fine-grained, pedestrian-oriented scale and historic rhythm of Queen Street and contributing to the cohesive character of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

Ontario Regulation 9/05 Evaluation - 79 Queen Street
(See Page 38).

Evaluation Category	Criteria	Evaluation	Summary of Evaluation
Design or Physical Value	Rare, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, method	N	Modest, altered commercial vernacular; not rare or intact enough for designation.
Design or Physical Value	Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N	Utilitarian design with no significant decorative or crafted elements remaining.
Design or Physical Value	Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	N	Standard late 19th-century construction; no innovations evident.
Historical or Associative Value	Direct associations with a theme, event, person, activity, organization of significance	N	General association with local commercial history; no specific historic associations of note.
Historical or Associative Value	Yields or has potential to yield information contributing to understanding of community	N	Does not offer unique or significant research potential.
Historical or Associative Value	Reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, or designer of significance	N	No documented association with a notable architect or builder.
Contextual Value	Important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	Y	Reinforces fine-grained commercial scale and streetscape pattern of Queen Street.
Contextual Value	Physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	Y	Maintains physical and functional relationship with adjacent heritage properties, particularly the Royal George Theatre.
Contextual Value	Is a landmark	N	Not individually a landmark, but contributes to overall streetscape character.

3.5.2 188 Victoria Street (Dicken's Den)

188 Victoria Street, historically constructed around 1880 as a private residence, is identified as a "B" building in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) Plan (1986). The structure has since been adapted for commercial use, reflecting the evolving mixed-use character of this part of Niagara-on-the-Lake over the late 19th and 20th centuries. The building retains some stylistic elements associated with the Queen Anne Revival tradition, notably a shingled front gable, an asymmetrical façade composition with large windows, and a prominent second bay window on its south elevation. While these features contribute to the visual interest of the building within its streetscape, subsequent modifications and its modest vernacular expression limit its individual heritage significance.

Design & Physical Value

The building embodies some architectural traits of the Queen Anne Revival style, popular in Ontario's residential construction during the late 19th century. These features include the varied window arrangements, textured gable treatment, and informal massing. However, the overall design is restrained and vernacular in execution, lacking the elaborate detailing or craftsmanship often found in high-style examples of Queen Anne Revival architecture.

Over time, alterations to the exterior finishes, fenestration, and building envelope, particularly those associated with its adaptation for commercial purposes, have diminished its original material integrity. While the building remains representative of its era's residential forms, it does not demonstrate exceptional craftsmanship, technical innovation, or rarity sufficient to meet the design or physical value criterion for individual designation under Ontario Regulation 9/06.

Historical & Associative Value

Built around 1880, the property contributes to the historical

narrative of Victoria Street as a residential area that gradually incorporated small-scale commercial activities in support of Niagara-on-the-Lake's growing tourism and service economy. The building's adaptive reuse illustrates a broader pattern of evolution within the downtown core, where domestic buildings were frequently repurposed for retail, dining, or accommodation purposes as the town developed.

No documentary evidence has been found linking 188 Victoria Street to historically significant individuals, events, or organizations. While it reflects a general trend in the area's development, the property does not yield, nor is it likely to yield, information of unique value to the understanding of the community's history. Its historical significance is therefore considered general rather than specific.



FIGURE 22 : VIEW OF 188 VICTORIA STREET, A ONE-AND-A-HALF-STOREY BUILDING CONTRIBUTING TO THE MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL CHARACTER OF VICTORIA STREET WITHIN THE QUEEN-PICTON HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT. (SOURCE: MCCALLUMSATHER, 2023.)

Contextual Value

The principal heritage value of 188 Victoria Street lies in its contextual contribution to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. The building's scale, massing, and siting are consistent with the historic pattern of residential properties along Victoria Street, many of which have been adapted for commercial purposes over time. Its architectural treatment adds visual interest to the streetscape, complementing adjacent properties and maintaining a pedestrian-friendly, small-scale urban form characteristic of the district.

Although not individually a landmark, the property helps define and reinforce the transitional character of Victoria Street between the commercial frontage of Queen Street and surrounding residential areas. Its presence contributes to the historic layering and mixed-use environment central to the district's character.

Conclusion

188 Victoria Street (Dicken's Den) does not meet the threshold for individual designation under Ontario Regulation 9/06 due to its modest vernacular design, alterations, and lack of strong historical associations. Its heritage value is primarily contextual, stemming from its contribution to the scale, rhythm, and mixed-use character of Victoria Street within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. The building helps sustain the historic layering and pedestrian-friendly streetscape that defines this part of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Old Town.

Ontario Regulation 9/06 Evaluation – 188 Victoria Street
(See Page 41).

Evaluation Category	Criteria	Evaluation	Summary of Evaluation
Design or Physical Value	Rare, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, method	N	Exhibits modest Queen Anne Revival elements but not a rare or intact example of the style.
Design or Physical Value	Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N	Limited detailing; alterations have diminished architectural expression and craftsmanship.
Design or Physical Value	Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	N	Typical residential construction of its era; no technical innovation identified.
Historical or Associative Value	Direct associations with a theme, event, person, activity, organization of significance	N	General association with residential-to-commercial evolution; no significant historic associations documented.
Historical or Associative Value	Yields or has potential to yield information contributing to understanding of community	N	Does not provide unique historical insight beyond established patterns of local development.
Historical or Associative Value	Reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, or designer of significance	N	No known association with a notable architect, builder, or designer.
Contextual Value	Important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	Y	Maintains scale, siting, and form consistent with historic streetscape pattern on Victoria Street.
Contextual Value	Physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	Y	Contributes to the visual continuity and mixed-use character of the district; supports transition between commercial and residential zones.
Contextual Value	Is a landmark	N	Not individually a landmark; its value lies in collective contribution to the streetscape.

3.5.3 178 Victoria Street

178 Victoria Street is a pre-1860s, one-and-a-half-storey vernacular dwelling clad in narrow clapboard with a steeply pitched cross-gabled roof. It represents one of the earlier surviving residential structures within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) and contributes to the area's 19th-century residential streetscape. The property has undergone a series of alterations over time, including the extension of the verandah roof to form a carport on the north side, the addition of a covered walkway connecting the main house to a detached garage on the south, and other exterior modifications that have diminished aspects of its original architectural integrity. Despite these changes, the dwelling retains elements of its early scale, form, and massing, and its white picket fence enclosing a small front garden helps to maintain a traditional residential character along Victoria Street.

To the rear of the property stands a small, late-20th-century barn, constructed on a footprint similar to that of the original historic barn once associated with the site's service functions. While of contemporary construction, its modest scale and placement recall the outbuildings that historically supported Queen Street's mixed commercial and residential uses. Both the house and barn are currently used by the Shaw Festival for temporary accommodation and operational support.

Today, both the house and barn are used by the Shaw Festival for temporary accommodations and operational support.

Design & Physical Value

The house at 178 Victoria Street reflects the vernacular domestic architecture of mid-19th century Ontario. Its one-and-a-half-storey form, steeply pitched roof, and narrow clapboard siding are characteristic of simple, utilitarian dwellings of the period. Despite this, the house has been extensively modified over time, with modern additions and altered details that detract from

its original proportions and craftsmanship. These alterations, combined with the loss of historic fabric, mean the house no longer demonstrates high design or physical value under Ontario Regulation 9/06.

Historical & Associative Value

The property predates much of the surrounding residential development and provides a tangible link to Niagara-on-the-Lake's early settlement period and its historic pattern of mixed residential and commercial uses. As one of the older surviving houses in the area, it exemplifies the domestic scale, vernacular form, and functional simplicity characteristic of mid-19th-century dwellings. Its modest design and location suggest a likely association with tradespeople, artisans, or service workers whose livelihoods supported Queen Street's commercial growth



FIGURE 23 : VIEW OF 178 VICTORIA STREET, A PRE-1860 VERNACULAR RESIDENCE WITH A STEEPLY PITCHED CROSS-GABLED ROOF, CONTRIBUTING TO THE RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AND HISTORIC LAYERING OF VICTORIA STREET WITHIN THE QUEEN-PICTON HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT. (SOURCE: MCCALLUMSATHER, 2023.)

and the broader economic life of the town. The presence of an outbuilding to the rear continues the traditional relationship between main residences and ancillary structures, reflecting a form of property use that was once common but is now rare within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. Collectively, these attributes contribute to the property's role as a surviving witness to the evolution of the Old Town's built form, economy, and community life over more than 160 years.

No specific associations have been identified linking the property to historically significant persons, events, or organizations. Its historical value is therefore general, illustrating early residential and service patterns rather than individual historical importance.

Contextual Value

The primary heritage value of 178 Victoria Street lies in its contextual contribution to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. Its residential scale, siting, and garden setting provide a visual transition between Queen Street's commercial core and the surrounding residential area. The small barn, although modest, strengthens the site's contribution by illustrating the layered, mixed-use nature of historic downtown properties and the relationship between main street commerce and rear-lot service functions.

The house helps maintain the district's fine-grained, human-scaled character, contributing to the overall sense of time and place within this historic setting. Their presence supports the established spatial rhythm of Victoria Street and preserves evidence of early land-use patterns.

Conclusion

178 Victoria Street does not meet the threshold for individual designation under Ontario Regulation 9/06 due to alterations, modest design, and lack of specific historical associations. Their heritage value is primarily contextual, derived from their role

in maintaining the historic residential scale of Victoria Street, providing evidence of early domestic architecture, and preserving a rare example of a working-yard outbuilding once typical of downtown Niagara-on-the-Lake properties. Collectively, they contribute to the layered historic character and spatial diversity of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

Ontario Regulation 9/06 Evaluation – 178 Victoria Street (House and Barn)

(See Page 44)

Evaluation Category	Criteria	Evaluation	Summary of Evaluation
Design or Physical Value	Rare, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, method	N	Representative of mid-19th-century vernacular housing but altered; barn is a rare surviving type but lacks distinguishing design features.
Design or Physical Value	Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N	Simple utilitarian construction with limited decorative detailing; alterations have diminished integrity.
Design or Physical Value	Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	N	Standard construction for the period; no technical innovation evident.
Historical or Associative Value	Direct associations with a theme, event, person, activity, organization of significance	N	General association with early settlement patterns and commercial support functions; no notable persons or events documented.
Historical or Associative Value	Yields or has potential to yield information contributing to understanding of community	N	Offers some insight into early working-yard patterns, but not unique enough to meet threshold for designation.
Historical or Associative Value	Reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, or designer of significance	N	No known associations with a significant architect or builder.
Contextual Value	Important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	Y	Reinforces the historic residential scale, setbacks, and garden setting of Victoria Street; barn contributes to understanding of historic lot organization.
Contextual Value	Physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	Y	Maintains strong spatial and functional links to Queen Street and surrounding heritage properties.
Contextual Value	Is a landmark	N	Not a landmark; value lies in collective contribution and rare retention of ancillary building type.

3.5.4 164 Victoria Street

164 Victoria Street is a one-and-a-half-storey, gambrel-roofed dwelling clad in narrow clapboard siding, identified as a “B” building in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) Plan (1986). Historical mapping, including Goad’s Fire Insurance Plan (pre-1914), confirms the building predates that year and contributes to the early residential development pattern along Victoria Street. Its setting, with a generous front yard and side yard setback adjacent to 178 Victoria Street, reflects a more spacious, residential streetscape pattern that contrasts with the denser commercial frontage along Queen Street.

Design & Physical Value

The building’s gambrel roof and simple wood-clad construction are indicative of vernacular residential architecture typical of Niagara-on-the-Lake in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While the overall form and proportions remain legible, alterations to exterior finishes, fenestration, and other elements over time have diminished its architectural integrity. The building demonstrates neither a high degree of craftsmanship nor technical innovation. It is not a rare or unique example of its type and, therefore, does not meet the threshold for design or physical value under Ontario Regulation 9/06.

Historical & Associative Value

164 Victoria Street contributes to an understanding of the early residential development of Niagara-on-the-Lake, particularly as a supporting property within the transition zone between Queen Street’s commercial uses and surrounding housing stock. However, there are no known associations with historically significant persons, events, or organizations, nor is the property likely to yield new or unique historical information. Its historical value is therefore considered general and does not warrant individual designation under Ontario Regulation 9/06.

Contextual Value

The property’s contextual value is its most significant heritage attribute. Its generous setbacks, one-and-a-half-storey scale, and modest residential form reinforce the historic spatial rhythm of Victoria Street and provide a visual buffer between the denser commercial structures of Queen Street and adjacent residential properties. Its placement contributes to the layered urban fabric of the Queen-Picton HCD, maintaining the historic transition from commercial to domestic land uses. While not individually a landmark, 164 Victoria Street supports the historic character, massing, and lot patterning of the district.



FIGURE 24: VIEW OF 164 VICTORIA STREET, A ONE-AND-A-HALF-STOREY GAMBREL-ROOFED RESIDENCE CLAD IN NARROW CLAPBOARD, CONTRIBUTING TO THE HISTORIC STREETScape AS A DESIGNATED “B” BUILDING IN THE QUEEN-PICTON HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT. (SOURCE: GOOGLE MAPS, 2018.)

Conclusion

164 Victoria Street does not meet the threshold for individual designation under Ontario Regulation 9/06 due to its modest vernacular design, alterations, and limited historical associations. Its heritage value is primarily contextual, supporting the scale, setbacks, and residential transition zone that characterizes Victoria Street within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. The property contributes to the cohesive historic fabric of the area through its placement, massing, and relationship to adjacent heritage resources.

Ontario Regulation 9/06 Evaluation – 164 Victoria Street
(See Page 47)

Evaluation Category	Criteria	Evaluation	Summary of Evaluation
Design or Physical Value	Rare, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, method	N	Representative of vernacular residential architecture but neither rare nor intact enough for individual designation.
Design or Physical Value	Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N	Simple utilitarian construction with no evidence of notable craftsmanship.
Design or Physical Value	Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	N	Typical residential building methods for its period; no technical innovation.
Historical or Associative Value	Direct associations with a theme, event, person, activity, organization of significance	N	General contribution to early residential development patterns; no documented significant associations.
Historical or Associative Value	Yields or has potential to yield information contributing to understanding of community	N	Offers general historical understanding; no unique information potential identified.
Historical or Associative Value	Reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, or designer of significance	N	No association with a recognized architect, builder, or designer.
Contextual Value	Important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	Y	Contributes to historic scale, rhythm, and transitional residential character of Victoria Street.
Contextual Value	Physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	Y	Maintains physical and visual relationship with adjacent heritage properties and overall district setting.
Contextual Value	Is a landmark	N	Not individually a landmark but supports the district's cohesive character and spatial organization.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Shaw Festival proposes the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site at 85 Queen Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, to create a purpose-built, contemporary theatre that addresses long-standing operational, artistic, accessibility, and audience needs. The project is conceived as a long-term investment in the cultural vitality of the community, providing modern technical facilities, inclusive design, and an enhanced public realm, while respecting the site's historic context within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD).

The proposed development replaces the existing Royal George Theatre and three adjacent properties (79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street) with a three-storey theatre complex with a basement level and articulated fly tower. The building integrates heritage-informed strategies to maintain a pedestrian-scale streetscape, including a two-storey streetwall, recessed upper floors, and material choices compatible with surrounding heritage structures. The design reflects contemporary architectural expression while reinforcing the site's long-standing cultural role.

4.1 Project Rationale

The redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre is driven by a combination of operational, cultural, and community factors that reflect both immediate functional needs and long-term heritage stewardship goals for the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD). The project recognizes that the existing buildings on-site, including the current Royal George Theatre, no longer meet the requirements of a modern performing arts venue and that their altered condition diminishes their heritage

integrity. At the same time, the site holds significant intangible heritage value as a longstanding cultural anchor on Queen Street. The redevelopment proposal seeks to balance these realities by introducing a purpose-built, high-performing theatre that sustains the site's cultural role while integrating sensitively into the historic fabric of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The rationale for this project can be understood through the following key drivers:

- **Operational Limitations of Existing Facilities:**
The current Royal George Theatre, constructed as a modified adaptation of earlier structures, does not provide adequate stage technology, backstage support, or circulation space to meet the needs of contemporary theatre productions. Issues include poor acoustic conditions, limited performer amenities, lack of accessible routes, and outdated mechanical systems. These limitations directly impact the quality of productions and audience experience.
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:**
The existing building does not meet modern accessibility standards. Steep ramps, narrow circulation paths, and limited accessible seating create barriers for patrons, performers, and staff with mobility or sensory challenges. A key project objective is to achieve Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Certification, ensuring a truly inclusive cultural venue that reflects the community's values of openness and equitable access.
- **Cultural Continuity and Heritage Stewardship**
While the physical authenticity of the four buildings on-site has been compromised by alterations and additions over time, their cultural significance as part of Niagara-on-the-

Lake's theatre history remains strong. The site has been a focal point for the performing arts for decades, contributing to the town's identity as an internationally recognized cultural destination. Redevelopment aims to preserve this intangible heritage by sustaining and enhancing the site's role as a place for artistic exchange and community gathering.

- **Alignment with Heritage District Objectives**
The project seeks to strengthen the historic character of Queen and Victoria Streets by introducing a design that maintains a two-storey streetwall, respects historic lot divisions, and integrates materials and rhythms compatible with the surrounding heritage context. Feedback from the Municipal Heritage Committee, heritage consultants (ERA), and residents highlighted concerns regarding massing, scale, and streetscape fit, which have been addressed through refined setbacks, stepbacks, pitched roof elements, and the introduction of a "ghost façade" referencing the site's earlier theatre forms.
- **Community and Stakeholder Expectations**
The Shaw Festival engaged extensively with Town staff, regional authorities, the heritage consultant, and residents, including members of the NOTL Residents Association. Input from these groups emphasized the importance of maintaining a fine-grained commercial frontage on Queen Street, reducing the perceived bulk of the new theatre, and ensuring that the redevelopment contributes positively to the pedestrian experience. The latest design revisions directly respond to these comments by increasing setbacks, reducing building area, introducing more landscaping, and softening elevations with planters, transparent glazing, and public gathering spaces.
- **Long-Term Resilience and Sustainability**
As a flagship cultural venue, the Royal George Theatre must embody environmental responsibility and climate resilience. The project is designed to achieve Net Zero energy performance, ensuring minimal long-term environmental

impact. This aligns with broader municipal sustainability goals and demonstrates that heritage districts can accommodate contemporary environmental standards while preserving their cultural value.

Overall, the rationale for redeveloping the Royal George Theatre site is grounded in the need to provide a state-of-the-art, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable performance venue that continues the site's cultural legacy. The project respects the historic setting by carefully integrating massing, materiality, and streetscape features compatible with the QPHCD, while addressing modern functional demands and responding to community concerns. The redevelopment represents a balanced approach to heritage conservation, where change is guided by principles of continuity, compatibility, and enhancement of shared cultural values.

4.2 Design Evolution & Community Response

The redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre has undergone multiple iterations since the initial concept submission in October 2023. Each stage of design refinement has been informed by ongoing engagement with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Region, the Municipal Heritage Committee, ERA Architects (heritage consultant), and extensive feedback from residents and community stakeholders. The design process reflects a collaborative effort to ensure that the new theatre meets contemporary functional needs while integrating sensitively into the historic setting of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD).

4.2.1 Initial Concept (October 2023)

The original concept proposed a three-storey theatre building with a prominent fly tower and a total gross floor area of approximately 66,878 ft² (OBC definition). While functionally robust, this early version was perceived as overly large relative to

adjacent heritage properties, with concerns expressed regarding:

- The scale and massing of the building, particularly along Victoria Street and at the Queen Street corner.
- Limited setbacks from neighbouring properties, creating potential visual dominance.
- A façade treatment that lacked sufficient reference to the fine-grained rhythm of Queen Street’s heritage commercial buildings.
- A lack of articulation and landscaping to soften the transition to the residential character of Victoria Street.

This feedback, along with comments from Town staff and the Municipal Heritage Committee, set the foundation for significant revisions to the project.

4.2.2 Refinement & Area Reductions (April–May 2025)

In response to formal and informal feedback, the design team reduced the overall building area by approximately 24%, from 66,878 ft² to 51,133 ft². Key changes included:

- Increasing setbacks along the north, west, and south property lines to create more breathing room between the theatre and neighbouring properties.
- Reducing ground floor and second-floor lobby areas, as well as the size of rehearsal spaces, to create a more compact footprint.
- Recessing the third floor to limit its visual prominence from Queen and Victoria Streets.
- Enhancing landscaping along Victoria Street to restore some of the green frontage lost through demolition.

These changes were welcomed as a step toward improved compatibility with the QPHCD but further refinements were requested, particularly in terms of façade treatment, streetscape activation, and maintaining a sense of historic continuity.

4.2.3 Community Feedback & Open Houses (June–July 2025)

A series of open houses and meetings with the NOTL Residents Association (over 400 members), as well as direct submissions from residents, highlighted recurring concerns:

- Desire to retain the “character” of the existing Royal George façade, even though it is a non-original, theatrical stage-set construction.
- Need for a stronger pedestrian-oriented experience along Queen Street, including outdoor gathering spaces and more transparent ground-floor interfaces.
- Requests for improved integration with the residential rhythm of Victoria Street, including roof articulation and setbacks that reflect surrounding houses.
- Concerns about the visibility of the scenic delivery dock and potential disruption to adjacent properties.

This input prompted a further series of refinements incorporated into the August 2025 re-zoning resubmission.

4.2.4 Updated Design (August 2025 Resubmission)

The revised design introduces several key changes directly addressing comments from the Town, heritage advisors, and residents:

- **Ghost Façade on Queen Street:**
A reinterpretation of the nostalgic Royal George frontage will be constructed using durable materials, maintaining the familiar proportions, window openings, and column articulation of the former façade. This approach preserves the symbolic heritage presence of the theatre on Queen Street while allowing universal accessibility at grade.
- **Setbacks and Massing Adjustments**
The building footprint has been reduced by an additional 2,832 ft², with further pullbacks on the ground, second, and third floors. This results in a more compact, human-scaled

frontage along both Queen and Victoria Streets.

- **Enhanced Landscaping**
Outdoor seating areas, tree plantings, and cascading planters on terraces soften the appearance of upper floors and enhance the streetscape experience, aligning with Niagara-on-the-Lake's rich tradition of commercial and residential landscaping.
- **Victoria Street Façade Improvements**
The rehearsal hall has been stepped back and articulated with a bay window feature that engages passersby. Rooflines have been modified with a 5:12 pitched roof to harmonize with surrounding houses. Decorative fencing, brick pillars, and plantings now conceal the scenic delivery dock, minimizing visual disruption to neighbouring properties.
- **Improved Public Realm Experience**
A small courtyard on Queen Street offers pre- and post-show gathering space, fostering community interaction. Interior reconfiguration allows barrier-free entry directly from the sidewalk, improving accessibility and eliminating external ramps.

These refinements reflect a meaningful response to the heritage and community concerns expressed throughout the consultation process. The updated design demonstrates a more balanced approach to integrating a modern cultural venue within the QPHCD, respecting historic patterns of scale, massing, and streetscape character while meeting the functional and symbolic needs of a contemporary theatre.

4.3 Key Features of the Proposed Development

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre represents a carefully considered response to operational, artistic, accessibility, and heritage context needs, shaped by multiple rounds of consultation with municipal authorities, heritage specialists, and the community. The final design

balances contemporary theatre requirements with the small-scale, fine-grained fabric of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD), creating a building that is contextually respectful, functionally efficient, and symbolically rooted in Niagara-on-the-Lake's cultural history.

4.3.1 Overall Building Design

The new theatre is conceived as a three-storey structure with a basement level and an articulated fly tower, set within an enhanced landscaped site. The massing has been significantly reduced from earlier schemes, with a total gross floor area of 50,310 ft² (as per current August 2025 plans), representing a 24% decrease from the original 2023 proposal. This reduction is achieved through increased setbacks, optimized interior layouts, and reconfigured program distribution. The design maintains a strong two-storey streetwall presence on both Queen and Victoria Streets, consistent with the district's heritage rhythm, while the third floor and fly tower are recessed and visually articulated to reduce prominence.

4.3.2 Queen Street Façade

The Queen Street frontage has been redesigned to better align with the heritage streetscape and community expectations:

- **Ghost Façade:** A reinterpretation of the former Royal George façade preserves the symbolic character of the site. The design recreates its proportions, window placements, and column articulation using high-quality materials, providing continuity with the historic streetscape while avoiding pastiche.
- **Universal Accessibility:** The entrance is now fully barrier-free at grade, eliminating the need for exterior ramps and enhancing accessibility to the box office and main lobby.
- **Outdoor Courtyard:** A small public space planted with trees and partially covered by a canopy offers opportunities for informal gatherings before and after performances,

strengthening the theatre's role as a community hub.

- **Upper-Level Terraces:** Setbacks of 24.5 ft on the second floor and 11.5 ft on the third floor create outdoor terraces softened by planter boxes with cascading greenery, reducing perceived building height and adding visual interest.

4.3.3 Victoria Street Façade

The Victoria Street interface has been refined to respond to the residential scale and character of adjacent properties:

- **Setbacks and Massing Adjustments:** The façade has been moved back an additional 5 ft, with reduced wall width near the scenic delivery area to create a more generous buffer between the theatre and neighbouring houses.
- **Pitched Rooflines:** A 5:12 pitched roof has been introduced over the rehearsal hall and scenic dock to harmonize with surrounding residential roof forms.
- **Bay Window Feature:** A new bay window on the rehearsal hall façade animates the street frontage, allowing passersby to glimpse artistic activity and strengthening the theatre's educational and outreach mission.
- **Screened Scenic Dock:** Decorative wrought iron fencing with brick pillars and landscaping conceals the delivery dock, minimizing visual disruption and noise impact on nearby residences.
- **Enhanced Landscaping:** Ornamental planting, trees, and low fencing maintain a soft, residential edge along Victoria Street, referencing the setbacks and green spaces of the former house-form buildings.

4.3.4 Internal Layout & Program Distribution

The theatre's interior program has been redesigned to improve functional flow, accessibility, and technical capacity:

- **Basement Level:** Expanded to 13,744 ft² to house mechanical systems, wardrobe and performer support areas, optimizing

above-ground massing and preserving the streetscape scale.

- **Ground Floor:** Features a transparent, welcoming lobby connected to Queen Street, a relocated box office, and commercial frontage to activate the pedestrian realm. The internal ramp ensures universal access without compromising the façade's visual continuity.
- **Second Floor:** Houses balcony seating and related amenities, with a reduced floor area and outdoor terrace partially concealed by the ghost façade. Opportunities exist for donor or art installations visible to terrace users and pedestrians below.
- **Third Floor:** Now accommodates a flexible multi-purpose room for educational workshops, community events, and artistic practice. This level has been reduced in size and setback to minimize visual impact.
- **Main Performance Hall:** A state-of-the-art theatre space designed to meet contemporary acoustic, staging, and accessibility standards, supporting diverse productions and enhanced audience experience.

4.3.5 Public Realm & Cultural Integration

The project enhances its role as a cultural anchor within Niagara-on-the-Lake through:

- **Improved Pedestrian Experience:** Ground-level transparency, active commercial frontages, and outdoor gathering areas foster a vibrant streetscape along Queen Street.
- **Community Programming:** The multi-purpose room, rehearsal hall bay window, and outdoor spaces strengthen connections between the Shaw Festival and the wider community.
- **Interpretive and Commemorative Features:** Integration of plaques, displays, and potential reuse of salvaged materials ensures that the history of 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the original Royal George Theatre is visible and celebrated.

4.3.6 Sustainability & Accessibility Commitments

- Net Zero Energy: The building is designed to achieve Net Zero energy performance, aligning with contemporary climate resilience goals and reducing environmental impact.
- Rick Hansen Gold Certification: Universal design principles ensure a fully inclusive experience for all patrons, performers, and staff, setting a new accessibility standard for cultural facilities within Niagara-on-the-Lake.

This latest iteration of the Royal George Theatre redevelopment balances heritage sensitivity, functional enhancement, and community aspirations, creating a revitalized venue that continues to support Niagara-on-the-Lake's cultural legacy while respectfully contributing to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.



FIGURE 25 : 3D TOP VIEW - EXISTING CONDITIONS
 AERIAL PERSPECTIVE SHOWING THE CURRENT ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE SITE AND SURROUNDING BUILDINGS, ILLUSTRATING EXISTING MASSING, ROOFLINES, AND
 RELATIONSHIP TO QUEEN AND VICTORIA STREETS. (SOURCE: UNITY DESIGN STUDIO, AUGUST 2025)



FIGURE 26 : 3D TOP VIEW - PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT
AERIAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROPOSED NEW ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE, HIGHLIGHTING REVISED MASSING, EXPANDED FOOTPRINT, AND RECONFIGURED BUILDING VOLUMES WITHIN THE HERITAGE STREETSCAPE. (SOURCE: UNITY DESIGN STUDIO, AUGUST 2025)



FIGURE 27 : 3D STREET VIEW - EXISTING CONDITIONS

GROUND-LEVEL 3D RENDERING OF THE EXISTING ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE AND ADJACENT PROPERTIES, SHOWING CURRENT FAÇADES, ROOF HEIGHTS, AND STREET RELATIONSHIP. (SOURCE: UNITY DESIGN STUDIO, AUGUST 2025)



FIGURE 28 : 3D STREET VIEW - PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT
GROUND-LEVEL 3D RENDERING OF THE PROPOSED THEATRE DESIGN, DEMONSTRATING UPDATED FAÇADE ARTICULATION, MATERIALS, AND IMPROVED INTEGRATION WITH THE QUEEN AND VICTORIA STREET CONTEXT. (SOURCE: UNITY DESIGN STUDIO, AUGUST 2025)



FIGURE 29 : VICTORIA STREET STREETScape - EXISTING CONDITIONS
STREETSCAPE ELEVATION OF VICTORIA STREET SHOWING EXISTING BUILDING FORMS, HEIGHTS, AND RHYTHM, WITH THE CURRENT THEATRE AND RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES IN CONTEXT. (SOURCE: UNITY DESIGN STUDIO, AUGUST 2025)



FIGURE 30 : VICTORIA STREET STREETScape - PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT
STREETSCAPE ELEVATION OF VICTORIA STREET WITH THE PROPOSED THEATRE DESIGN, SHOWING ADJUSTED SETBACKS, REDUCED VISUAL MASSING, AND NEW FAÇADE
ELEMENTS DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT THE HERITAGE DISTRICT. (SOURCE: UNITY DESIGN STUDIO, AUGUST 2025)

4.4 Demolition Scope

The redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site necessitates the removal of four existing structures and associated elements currently occupying the properties at 79–85 Queen Street and 178–188 Victoria Street. These buildings, while recognized as contributing resources within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD), have undergone extensive alterations over time, resulting in a significant loss of original fabric, diminished architectural integrity, and functional obsolescence. Their current configuration no longer supports the operational, accessibility, or technical needs of a contemporary performance venue.

The proposed demolition scope includes:

- 178 Victoria Street: A two-storey residential structure with later additions, including a detached garage and a barn. Both house and ancillary structures have been significantly modified and are no longer representative of their original form or materials.
- 188 Victoria Street: A one-and-a-half-storey commercial building altered through multiple unsympathetic renovations that have diminished its historic character and structural viability.
- 79 Queen Street (Tranter's House): A small-scale, single-storey commercial structure that contributes to the historic layering of Queen Street but has limited architectural integrity due to alterations and later construction.
- 85 Queen Street (Royal George Theatre): The existing theatre building, a modified structure that was adapted from earlier commercial premises and heavily altered in the mid-to-late 20th century. The current façade is a theatrical "stage set" homage to Georgian design but lacks historic authenticity or material value.
- Associated elements: Hard landscaping, sheds, non-historic fences, paved surfaces, and vegetation within the affected parcels.

The adjacent designated heritage properties at 75, 89, 91, and 95 Queen Street will remain intact. Their relationship to the site is an important component of the QPHCD streetscape, and the new development will be carefully designed to maintain compatible scale, rhythm, and visual continuity with these neighbouring heritage resources.

While the loss of these four contributing buildings represents a permanent change to the historic fabric of this part of the district, their removal is considered necessary to allow for the construction of a purpose-built theatre that can meet modern requirements while enhancing the site's cultural role. Detailed archival documentation, material salvage where feasible, and interpretive features will ensure that the layered history of these properties remains visible and understood as part of the evolving heritage landscape of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

4.5 Rationale for the New Royal George Theatre: Rehearsal Space Needs, Demolition Justification, & Heritage Mitigation Strategy

Why is a Rehearsal at the New Royal George needed?

For the Royal George Theatre to continue with its presence as a performance venue on Queen St, it has been established that the theatre must be rebuilt as the original structure is well beyond its functional lifespan.

To sustain a theatre into the future support facilities are essential both for Front of House and Back of House. For the patrons, such spaces include accessible lobbies with concessions and a combination of standing and seated areas, adequate washroom facilities, box office and patron services desks for distribution of assistive listening devices and for addressing special patron needs, coat check and staff areas for the front of house workers.

For the actors and production staff these support spaces include, dressing rooms and green room (staff break room), warm-up

rooms, wardrobe and wig maintenance rooms, lighting and equipment repair and storage areas, storage and repair rooms for both large and small props, and a scenic delivery area and dock. The Royal George is a repertory theatre with up to 4 shows running at once in daily rotation, and storage space for each of the sets is required adjacent to the stage or back stage, stacked up to change between matinees and evening shows.

The current Royal George has very limited storage space and the stage designers and crews need to be creative with set and storage design for daily performance change-overs. The staff work in, kindly put, less-than-ideal conditions and extreme space limitations. The new theatre will replace rigging technology that is becoming obsolete with modern equipment and with sufficient space to allow those with disabilities using wheeled mobility devices to navigate traditionally inaccessible spaces.

Rehearsal space is essential for the operation of any theatre. Currently, the Courthouse at 26 Queen St, a facility owned by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is being used for this purpose for the Shaw to support the Royal George shows. As this facility is not owned by the Shaw Festival and is not normatively available to the Shaw year-round, it is (at best) a near term solution to the Shaw's rehearsal space deficit, especially if more work in the cusp seasons is to be contemplated. The ideal, and preferred condition for any performing arts facility, in particular a new purpose-built building, is to have rehearsal space beside the stage and 'under one roof'. The rehearsal studio size should ideally be the same size as the stage, at a minimum, with a double height ceiling space, storage space for large props or set elements like staircases and platforms, and an area for the creative staff to direct from. When not in use for rehearsals, the room will be used to host every middle and high school student to the Shaw for workshop programs. It will also serve as a space for pre or post performance functions/dinners or speaking events in support of the theatre.

And, when not in use by the Shaw Festival it can be made available to community groups who ask the Shaw for such spaces constantly.

Justification for 178 & 188 Victoria St Demolition

1. In order to operate the program and protect the operation of the theatre, a rehearsal space is required. The mandate for the new facility is to house all functions under one roof to allow programming to be maintained and further expand to reach a broader audience, while reducing operational costs.
2. 178 and 188 Victoria Street have undergone significant alterations over time, with renovations that have changed their original character and left the buildings in a condition that is not suitable for reuse. Due to their irregular floor plans and existing layouts, the buildings in their current form cannot accommodate the functional requirements of the New Royal George Theatre. Many program spaces, such as the scene dock, rehearsal hall, and lobbies, require double-height or larger volumes that the existing structures cannot provide. As a result, adapting or retaining portions of these houses is not considered feasible given the incompatibility with the theatre's spatial needs.
3. The site's limited footprint also constrains construction options. Retaining either building, particularly 178 Victoria Street, would significantly reduce the space available for the new theatre and hinder functional integration. Demolition is therefore necessary to realize the project's design and operational objectives. Landscaping is proposed along the northern fence line and in the northwest corner to create a softer transition to the adjacent residential context.

Mitigation Measures

1. It is recognized that the structure of 178 Victoria contributes to the residential character on Victoria St. The Shaw Festival is committed to a heritage recording of the buildings that could be in a commemorative form such as photographic

documentation and display about the property's history in the new facility. There may be items of interest that could be included in the display.

2. The new façade along Victoria St will respond to the residential character on the street:
 - Creating a 'bay window' into the Rehearsal Room which is 19ft high and transitions from the 2-storey height BMO bank building at the corner of Queen and Victoria to the 2 storey residential houses on Victoria St.
 - The 5:12 pitched Rehearsal Hall and Scenic Loading Dock roof form relates to the pitched roofs of the houses on Victoria street
 - The building façade of the Rehearsal Hall will now be set back 23ft from the property line and ornamental planting in keeping with the NOTL aesthetic, and provide a pedestrian friendly relationship of sidewalk, landscape buffer and building edge.
 - The scenic loading bay is setback 56ft from the property line and behind an ornamental wrought iron fence and automatic gate complete with brick pillars. A large area of ornamental planting will maintain continuity with the planting in front of the rehearsal hall and further soften the edge between the sidewalk and building façade. Other decorative plantings and elements are being contemplated and will be developed to further mitigate the industrial feel of these structures.
3. In order to reduce the impact of the flytower to the neighbors on the north side of the property line the façade is located 20ft south of the property line. The North façade of the property line will be fit-out with a support frame system that will allow vines to grow from the top of the roof and cascade down towards the ground to create a wall of greenery. Mature trees in the 20+' setback area will also help with this. Additional greenery is being planned for other roof lines and area visible from Victoria to soften the effect.

Honouring the Royal George Façade

The Queen Street Royal George Theatre façade, while built as an exterior 'stage set' to create the effect of a Georgian theatre on the main street, has become a part of the fabric of the Main Street in and holds a sentimental value as a layer of history on Queen St

To preserve the associated value, the façade will be rebuilt as a Heritage 'Ghost Façade'. It will have very similar placement relative to the property line, preserving overall proportions, building height, fenestration and representative ornamental detailing re-created in a material(s) selected for longevity. The façade will be an entry portal for the new performance venue beyond. The exterior marquee will extend beyond the building face, as it does currently, and continue to be an illuminated beacon on the street leading patron's through the main entrance and connecting the echo of the original façade to the new Royal George Theatre.

A small exterior courtyard area will be created between the Ghost Façade and the new Royal George Theatre façade. Trees will be planted in this paved courtyard area and there will be seating there in the summer months when theatre's doors can open up onto the courtyard. The Ghost Façade entry portal and courtyard will be at grade, level with the sidewalk. The exterior ramp in the previous scheme will be relocated to the interior of the lobby creating a level at grade entry and sloping up to the 2' rise out of the water table farther back from the Queen streetscape. This also allows for better accessibility to the box office, first aid, elevator and concessions areas.

The exterior façade of the building with terraces on the second and third floor will be lined with planter boxes draped with layers of ornamental planting indicative of the NOTL streetscape aesthetic. The stepped terraces pull the higher massing further back from Queen street, better masking the taller elements.

4.6 Considered Alternatives

As part of the redevelopment planning process, several alternatives were explored to understand potential options for retaining the existing buildings or altering the project scope. Each option was assessed in light of the operational requirements of a modern theatre, the physical condition of the structures, heritage best practices, and the surrounding heritage context.

Alternative 1: Do Nothing (Status Quo)

Retaining the existing Royal George Theatre and the associated properties (178 and 188 Victoria Street, 79 Queen Street) without redevelopment was considered. Under this scenario, the buildings would remain largely as-is, with only minor repairs undertaken to address pressing safety or maintenance issues.

- This option does not resolve the significant functional limitations of the current Royal George Theatre, including accessibility barriers, insufficient support spaces, obsolete technical systems, and lack of rehearsal facilities.
- Retaining the building in its current condition is not a viable option, as it cannot be brought into compliance with modern building code and accessibility standards without substantial intervention.
- Deferred maintenance would likely lead to escalating costs and further deterioration.

Given these limitations, the “do nothing” option was not considered viable.

Alternative 2: Relocation of 178 and 188 Victoria Street

Relocating the existing houses, either elsewhere on the site or to an off-site location, was examined as a theoretical alternative to demolition. While technically possible, relocation would remove the buildings from their historic setting within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District, severing their contextual relationship to the surrounding streetscape. This is contrary to recognized heritage conservation principles, including the

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, which emphasize the importance of conserving a resource in its original location whenever possible.

Both structures have been extensively altered over time and retain limited heritage integrity, reducing the conservation benefit of relocation. The process would also involve substantial cost, logistical complexity, and environmental impact, with no identified receiving site that would provide an appropriate or meaningful context for the buildings.

For these reasons, relocation is not considered a viable or recommended alternative.

Alternative 3: Adaptive Reuse & Partial Retention

Adapting the existing houses or retaining their façades within the new development footprint was investigated.

- The irregular layouts, small floorplates, and limited ceiling heights of these structures are incompatible with the programmatic needs of a state-of-the-art performance venue.
- Required spaces, such as rehearsal studios, scenic loading areas, and public lobbies, demand double-height volumes and efficient circulation that cannot be accommodated within the existing buildings.
- Retaining fragments of these buildings would significantly compromise site functionality and would not deliver meaningful conservation outcomes, given their diminished heritage integrity.

This alternative was not considered feasible.

Alternative 4: Full Reconstruction/Reconstitution/Restoration of the Royal George Theatre

An in-kind reconstruction, full reconstitution, or complete

restoration of the Royal George Theatre was considered as an alternative. While technically feasible, these approaches are not aligned with recognized heritage conservation principles as outlined in the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and international charters, which caution against creating a false sense of history through conjectural rebuilding. Such interventions would replace rather than conserve the building's remaining heritage fabric, erasing the tangible evidence of its authentic evolution over more than a century.

A full restoration or reconstitution to an earlier appearance, whether to its 1914 vaudeville house configuration or its later "temple front" design, would also require the removal of subsequent alterations that have themselves acquired cultural significance as part of the building's layered history. Moreover, these approaches would not resolve the theatre's fundamental operational shortcomings, including inadequate rehearsal, lobby, and backstage areas, nor would they achieve current accessibility, sustainability, and technical performance standards. For these reasons, reconstruction, reconstitution, and full restoration were determined to be inconsistent with heritage best practices and unable to meet the programmatic requirements of the New Royal George Theatre, and were therefore not pursued.

Preferred Option

The option selected, the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre with a purpose-built, contemporary facility, has emerged as the result of a deliberate and thorough evaluation process. It balances the following considerations:

- Operational needs: Ensuring that the Shaw Festival has a fully functional, accessible, and sustainable venue capable of meeting current and future performance requirements.
- Heritage context: Respecting the surrounding streetscape

through compatible scale, setbacks, landscaping, and the re-interpretation of the existing façade as a "ghost façade."

- Feasibility: Addressing site constraints, building condition issues, and avoiding impractical or poor conservation solutions such as relocation or partial retention of altered buildings.

This approach is considered the most appropriate and effective strategy to secure the long-term cultural vitality of the Royal George Theatre site while acknowledging and mitigating heritage impacts.

5.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site represents a significant intervention within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD), an area recognized for its distinctive historic streetscapes, fine-grained building pattern, and layered cultural history. The site includes four heritage properties, 79 Queen Street, 83-85 Queen Street (Royal George Theatre), 178 Victoria Street, and 188 Victoria Street, all designated as contributing resources under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. The project is also adjacent to additional contributing heritage properties, including 164 Victoria Street.

This section evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed development on these cultural heritage resources, the immediate streetscape along Queen and Victoria Streets, and the broader character of the QPHCD. The analysis responds directly to comments from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake (July 2025) and addresses the requirements outlined in the Town's Standard Terms of Reference for Heritage Impact Assessments (2021).

The assessment has been prepared in accordance with recognized conservation planning frameworks, including:

- Provincial Policy Statement (2024) – Section 4.3.1
- Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan (QPHCD Plan), 1986
- Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan (2019)
- Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Study
- Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan (OP) 2017 Consolidated
- Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010) – particularly principles of minimal

intervention, compatibility, and reversibility

- Ontario Heritage Tool Kit (2006) – guidance on evaluating impacts and mitigation measures

The evaluation adopts a values-based approach, recognizing that the site's heritage significance extends beyond its physical fabric to include its contextual role within the district, its associative value as a cultural landmark, and its contribution to the historic pattern of Queen and Victoria Streets.

In line with the Town's request, this section:

- Examines the fine-grained residential character of Victoria Street, using before-and-after analysis to understand potential changes to scale, rhythm, and spatial relationships.
- Evaluates the impact of removing 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and their contribution to the QPHCD's historic evolution.
- Assesses adjacent heritage properties, particularly 164 Victoria Street, and how their heritage attributes may be affected.
- Outlines design alternatives considered for partial or full retention of existing buildings on Victoria Street, explaining why these were found unfeasible.
- Identifies mitigation measures to address unavoidable impacts, focusing on design compatibility, streetscape transition, and heritage interpretation.

The goal is to provide a comprehensive, transparent, and defensible evaluation that balances the operational needs of the Shaw Festival with the long-term conservation of heritage values in Niagara-on-the-Lake's historic core.

5.1 On-site Heritage Resource

The Royal George Theatre site comprises four contributing heritage properties within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD): 79 Queen Street (Tranter's House), 83–85 Queen Street (Royal George Theatre), 178 Victoria Street, and 188 Victoria Street. These buildings, along with adjacent properties, collectively contribute to the district's established pattern of narrow frontages, varied lot sizes, and a mix of commercial and residential forms that define the historic character of this part of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Each property has associative and contextual value within the QPHCD:

- 79 Queen Street is a small-scale commercial building that reflects the town's historic main street retail character and the incremental development of Queen Street.
- 83–85 Queen Street (Royal George Theatre) has long served as a cultural landmark, anchoring the Shaw Festival's presence downtown and contributing to the historic pattern of entertainment and commercial activity in the area.
- 178 and 188 Victoria Street are house-form buildings that, despite alterations, continue to define the fine-grained, residential scale and rhythm of Victoria Street. They help transition between the commercial frontage of Queen Street and the predominantly residential character of the adjacent properties, including 164 Victoria Street.

Over time, these buildings have undergone substantial alterations, additions, and material losses. The Royal George Theatre has been reconstructed and retrofitted multiple times, leaving little authentic historic fabric. Both 178 and 188 Victoria Street have irregular floor plans, altered facades, and building conditions that would require significant intervention to accommodate the functional and spatial needs of a modern theatre complex. Similarly, 79 Queen Street has been modified

repeatedly and retains limited architectural authenticity.

While the physical integrity of the buildings has been diminished, their removal would represent a notable change to the established urban pattern of the district, particularly along Victoria Street where the residential scale, narrow lots, and low building heights are key character-defining elements. This impact must be recognized as a potential negative effect on the heritage attributes of the QPHCD, requiring careful consideration and mitigation.

Previous design iterations and charrette discussions explored the feasibility of alternative approaches, including full or partial retention of the house-form buildings, façade incorporation, or relocation. These options were ultimately not advanced due to functional incompatibility, compromised structural condition, and the risk of decontextualizing heritage resources by moving them from their historic setting. The current redevelopment concept is therefore the result of a deliberate, multi-step evaluation process that balanced the need for a purpose-built, accessible, and operationally viable theatre with the desire to respect and reflect the surrounding heritage context.

Mitigation strategies are proposed to reduce the impact of demolition on the district's heritage character, including:

- Maintaining the established two-storey streetwall and rhythm along Queen Street.
- Introducing setbacks, pitched rooflines, and landscaped setbacks along Victoria Street to soften the interface with neighbouring residences and echo the historic scale of the demolished houses.
- Incorporating commemorative interpretation of the four demolished properties within the new theatre, supported by archival documentation, historic photographs, and potential salvage of materials.

- Enhancing the public realm and pedestrian experience along both frontages, reflecting the layered history of the site.

This approach aligns with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, which recognize that when a property's physical integrity has been severely compromised and adaptive reuse is not feasible, conservation planning may appropriately focus on retaining contextual and associative values through sensitive, compatible new construction.

The subject site is surrounded by several designated heritage properties that contribute to the cultural landscape of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD), including 164 Victoria Street immediately to the west, as well as a series of contributing commercial and residential buildings along Queen Street. These resources collectively define the fine-grained character, narrow lotting pattern, low building heights, and human-scaled proportions that are key heritage attributes of this area.

The proposed redevelopment will result in the removal of existing house-form buildings on the west portion of the site (178 and 188 Victoria Street), altering the established rhythm of small residential structures along Victoria Street and potentially increasing the perceived scale of development next to 164 Victoria Street. This change represents a notable impact on the adjacent heritage setting, as it introduces a larger, more institutional building within an area historically defined by small-scale dwellings.

Potential impacts on nearby heritage resources include:

- A change in the transition between the residential-scale properties on Victoria Street and the larger, commercial-scale

buildings along Queen Street.

- Alteration of views, setbacks, and lot divisions that currently define the streetscape character.
- Potential visual dominance of the new building when viewed from adjacent residential properties, including 164 Victoria Street.

Mitigation strategies have been integrated into the proposed design to address these concerns:

- Introducing deeper setbacks, stepbacks, and pitched roof elements along Victoria Street to soften the massing and reflect the historic rhythm of neighbouring properties.
- Incorporating landscaped buffers, fencing, and ornamental planting to create a transitional edge between the new theatre and adjacent residences.
- Using masonry materials, window proportions, and facade articulation that reference the surrounding heritage buildings without direct imitation.
- Retaining a pedestrian-oriented scale at street level and aligning the new building with established setbacks to maintain continuity along the streetscape.

While the proposed development introduces a new built form on the site, these mitigation measures are intended to reduce potential adverse effects on nearby heritage resources and to support ongoing compatibility with the QPHCD. The project's design approach seeks to balance functional requirements for a modern theatre with sensitivity to the district's established heritage patterns and adjacent contributing properties.

5.3 Potential Impacts

The redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site represents a major intervention in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD). While the proposed design aims to respect

many of the district's heritage attributes, it introduces substantial change through the removal of four contributing heritage buildings and the consolidation of a larger building footprint. These actions will permanently alter the existing spatial organization, scale, and fine-grained built pattern along Victoria and Queen Streets.

The following assessment identifies potential adverse impacts, both direct and indirect, on the heritage resources on site, adjacent properties, and the broader district. It also outlines proposed mitigation measures to minimize or offset these impacts, while supporting the continued cultural use of the site.

5.3.1 Impact on the Residential Character of Victoria Street

Victoria Street currently exhibits a fine-grained residential character defined by narrow frontages, modest one- to two-storey house-form buildings, landscaped front yards, and a rhythm of small-scale structures separated by side yards. This character serves as a transition between the busier commercial frontage of Queen Street and quieter residential areas to the north.

The removal of 178 and 188 Victoria Street and their replacement with a larger, continuous theatre building will alter this pattern in several ways:

- Loss of two individual house-form buildings that contribute to the established scale, rhythm, and variety of the streetscape.
- Introduction of a larger, consolidated building frontage with fewer visual breaks and reduced open side yard space.
- Potential visual dominance over adjacent residential properties, particularly 164 Victoria Street, which is smaller in scale and more traditional in form.
- Reduction in the varied rooflines and informal landscaped setbacks that currently provide a soft residential edge.

Mitigation measures include:

- Designing the Victoria Street façade with deep setbacks, stepbacks at upper levels, and a pitched roofline on the rehearsal hall to echo the scale of nearby houses.
- Creating vertical bays and façade articulation to reflect the rhythm of the historic lotting pattern and avoid a monolithic frontage.
- Enhancing the streetscape with landscaped buffers, ornamental planting, and fencing to retain a residential feel along the sidewalk.
- Integrating commemorative features, such as interpretive panels or salvaged materials, to acknowledge the historic presence of the removed houses.

5.3.2 Impact of Removing 79 Queen Street (Tranter's House)

79 Queen Street, commonly known as Tranter's House, is a one-storey commercial building that forms part of the established pattern of small-scale, mixed-use structures along Queen Street. Though modest in size and architectural expression, the building contributes to the historic commercial streetscape by representing the incremental development of Queen Street over time, particularly its evolution from early residential uses to a fine-grained main street retail corridor.

The building's scale, simple façade treatment, and alignment with adjacent storefronts help define the pedestrian-oriented character of this section of Queen Street. It also contributes to the layered heritage value of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) by embodying the gradual transformation of Queen Street into the town's cultural and commercial heart.

Its removal as part of the proposed redevelopment will have the following potential impacts:

- **Loss of a contributing building type:** The demolition of 79 Queen Street will permanently remove a modest-scale commercial building that reflects an important phase of Queen Street's historical development, thereby reducing the variety of built forms that tell the story of the street's evolution.
- **Change in fine-grained lotting pattern:** The removal of the small, narrow building footprint contributes to the consolidation of lots on this block, replacing multiple small-scale properties with a larger, single structure. This risks weakening one of the defining attributes of the QPHCD: its rhythm of narrow frontages and multiple, distinct building volumes.
- **Alteration of streetscape continuity:** The replacement building may change how pedestrians experience this portion of Queen Street, potentially reducing the variation in scale, materiality, and façade treatment that has historically given the street its rich character.

Mitigation measures proposed include:

- **Archival documentation:** A full record of 79 Queen Street will be prepared prior to demolition, including professional photographs, measured drawings, and historical research. This documentation will be submitted to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for archival purposes and may also be made accessible to the public.
- **Salvage and reuse of materials:** Selected architectural elements and materials (e.g., original signage, trim, brickwork) will be carefully dismantled and preserved for potential reuse or display within the new theatre, linking the past and present function of the site.
- **Interpretation of commercial history:** The new Royal George Theatre will incorporate interpretive features acknowledging the site's layered history, including the story of 79 Queen Street as part of Niagara-on-the-Lake's retail and cultural

fabric. These features could take the form of wall panels, floor inlays, or integrated art installations accessible to theatre visitors.

- **Maintaining fine-grained frontage:** The design of the new theatre will introduce a narrow-bay pattern along Queen Street, with multiple entry points, transparent glazing, varied façade articulation, and pedestrian-oriented detailing. This will maintain the rhythm and walkability of the historic streetscape, echoing the scale and experience of smaller storefronts even within a larger building footprint.
- **Commemoration in public realm:** Opportunities will be explored to commemorate the history of 79 Queen Street through public-facing elements, such as engraved paving stones, a plaque, or outdoor interpretive signage visible from the sidewalk.

These measures aim to ensure that while the physical building is lost, its contribution to the history and identity of Queen Street remains legible in the redesigned streetscape and within the new Royal George Theatre.

5.3.3 Impact on Adjacent Properties, including 164 Victoria Street

The proposed theatre will be constructed directly adjacent to 164 Victoria Street, a designated heritage residence that contributes to the fine-grained residential character of the west side of Victoria Street. The scale, setback, and landscaped yard of 164 Victoria provide a visual and spatial buffer between other heritage dwellings on the street. The introduction of a larger, more continuous theatre structure has the potential to alter this established character and the relationship between individual house-form buildings.

Potential impacts include:

- Visual dominance of the larger theatre structure when

viewed from 164 Victoria Street and other neighbouring properties, creating a perceived imbalance in scale and massing.

- Changes to sky views, natural light access, and the sense of openness currently afforded by existing side yards and detached house forms.
- Alteration of spatial rhythms, as the removal of 178 and 188 Victoria Street and their consolidation into a single footprint reduces the pattern of individually expressed buildings separated by landscaped setbacks.
- Potential perception of encroachment on the domestic setting of 164 Victoria Street due to the proximity of a larger, institutional building.

Mitigation measures include:

- Stepping back the building mass closest to 164 Victoria Street, particularly the rehearsal hall and service areas, to create a more gradual transition in scale between residential and institutional uses.
- Introducing generous landscaped buffers with mature trees, ornamental plantings, and decorative fencing to provide a softer interface and maintain a garden-like streetscape character.
- Using compatible façade treatments such as horizontal siding or masonry finishes, window proportions, and vertical bays that visually relate to neighbouring dwellings without imitating their historic style.
- Modulating rooflines and incorporating pitched roof elements on the Victoria Street frontage to echo the surrounding residential forms and reduce perceived height differences.
- Positioning mechanical equipment, service entrances, and loading areas away from shared property lines where possible, minimizing noise and visual disruption to adjacent residences.
- Considering a low garden wall, trellis, or green screen along

the shared boundary to further buffer views of the theatre building from 164 Victoria Street's front yard and windows.

5.3.4 Cumulative Impact on the QPHCD

The combined demolition of four contributing buildings (79 Queen Street, 85 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street) and their replacement with a larger, contemporary theatre structure will permanently alter the historic lotting pattern, scale, and architectural layering of this block within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD). The existing buildings, despite alterations and loss of integrity, represent incremental development that is typical of Niagara-on-the-Lake's evolution, where individual residential and commercial structures were gradually adapted over time.

The consolidation of multiple smaller footprints into a single, larger building changes the historic rhythm of detached houses and shopfronts separated by open spaces, reducing the fine-grained diversity that contributes to the district's character. This cumulative impact will be particularly evident on Victoria Street, where house-form buildings and landscaped setbacks currently create a soft transition from commercial to residential use.

Mitigation measures proposed include:

- Retaining a two-storey streetwall along both Queen and Victoria Streets to maintain the historic scale and pedestrian orientation of the block.
- Introducing a "ghost façade" on Queen Street that recalls the long-standing presence of the Royal George Theatre, maintaining the street's cultural and spatial continuity.
- Using setbacks, stepbacks, and modulated façade treatments to break down the larger building mass and reflect the rhythm of earlier narrow lots.
- Enhancing public realm connections with widened sidewalks, landscaped forecourts, and outdoor gathering spaces to

preserve the social function of the site as a cultural hub.

- Incorporating interpretive installations, archival displays, and salvaged materials from the demolished buildings into the new theatre to convey the layered history of the site and its incremental development over time.
- Applying a restrained material palette and human-scaled detailing that respects the character of surrounding heritage resources and the overall streetscape.

These strategies aim to reduce the perceived scale and footprint of the new development, maintain its role as a cultural landmark, and interpret the loss of earlier buildings to ensure that their historic contribution remains visible in the district's evolving narrative.

5.3.5 Other Potential Impacts & Mitigation

This section identifies additional potential impacts arising from the proposed redevelopment that extend beyond physical demolition and architectural integration. These include effects related to construction activity, changes in site use, and alterations to the surrounding cultural landscape. While these impacts may be less immediately visible, they can influence the long-term character, function, and heritage interpretation of the site. The following considerations and mitigation strategies are recommended to address these broader concerns and support a respectful evolution of the Royal George Theatre site within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

Landscape & Streetscape Impact

The demolition of the small-scale houses at 178 and 188 Victoria Street will remove key features that currently define the fine-grained landscape character of this section of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. These properties contribute to the rhythm of detached dwellings interspersed with landscaped front yards, green buffers, and open side-yard spacing. The loss of these elements will consolidate multiple lots into a single

building frontage, reducing the variation in setbacks, greenery, and building breaks that form part of the historic residential streetscape character. The change will also alter sightlines along Victoria Street, replacing low-scale rooflines and open green space with a larger, more continuous built form.

The existing houses provide visual permeability between buildings, allowing for glimpses of rear yards, mature plantings, and sky views that are characteristic of this transition zone between the commercial intensity of Queen Street and the quieter residential setting further west. Their removal will diminish this layered spatial quality and reduce the contrast between residential softness and commercial activity that contributes to the district's overall heritage value.

Mitigation measures will focus on reintroducing elements of landscape rhythm and residential character through design interventions. These include creating landscaped buffers with mature trees, ornamental shrubs, and low heritage-appropriate fencing to provide visual relief along the Victoria Street frontage. The building's west façade should be articulated into narrower vertical bays that suggest the historic lot divisions once present on the site, helping to avoid a monolithic appearance.

Opportunities to integrate commemorative landscape elements, such as small interpretive gardens, plaques marking the footprints of former houses, or paving treatments that reflect previous property boundaries, can help convey the layered history of the site. A combination of soft landscaping, street trees, and varied setbacks will assist in maintaining a pedestrian-oriented scale and a greener, more residential edge, balancing the new theatre's presence with the established heritage character of Victoria Street.

Architectural & Visual Impact

The proposed redevelopment will introduce a building that is larger in both footprint and height compared to the existing house-form and small-scale commercial structures currently on the site. This change will significantly alter the pattern of varied rooflines, setbacks, and open side yards that presently define this portion of Queen and Victoria Streets. The new theatre's consolidated massing will create a more continuous streetwall and a visually dominant presence, particularly when viewed from adjacent heritage properties, including 164 Victoria Street and neighbouring residential dwellings. The introduction of a three-storey volume and a fly tower element will change established views and skyline patterns, potentially reducing the layered and incremental character that contributes to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

The new theatre also risks creating a sense of institutional scale in a setting defined by smaller, individually expressed buildings, where architectural variation and fine-grained detailing are key heritage attributes. Without careful design responses, there is potential for the building to overshadow its neighbours, disrupt traditional rhythms of façades and lot divisions, and visually contrast too sharply with surrounding heritage resources.

Mitigation measures are proposed to address these potential impacts and reinforce compatibility with the district's character. These include introducing deeper setbacks and stepbacks at the upper levels, particularly along Victoria Street, to visually break down the building mass and reduce perceived bulk when viewed from neighbouring properties. Rooflines should incorporate pitched forms and changes in elevation that echo adjacent residential buildings, creating a more gradual transition in scale. The façades should be articulated into narrow vertical bays aligned with historic lot divisions, avoiding a monolithic appearance and reinforcing the rhythm of the streetscape.

Material selection should prioritize masonry, fenestration patterns, and detailing that reference neighbouring heritage dwellings while avoiding direct imitation, allowing the building to read as a contemporary but contextually sensitive intervention. Corner treatments at Queen and Victoria Streets should be designed to soften the visual prominence of the theatre, integrating transparent glazing, active frontages, and pedestrian-scale detailing to maintain a lively, human-oriented experience at street level. Collectively, these measures aim to mitigate visual dominance, maintain harmony with the surrounding heritage context, and support the continued legibility of the district's historic form and character.

Land Use & Cultural Continuity

The Royal George Theatre site represents a microcosm of the layered evolution of Queen and Victoria Streets, transitioning over time from early residential dwellings to a blend of small-scale commercial operations and, eventually, a cultural hub anchored by the theatre. This incremental development pattern, characterized by a mix of house-form buildings, shopfronts, and cultural venues, reflects the historic adaptability of the district and contributes to its distinctive identity as a place where domestic, commercial, and cultural life intersect.

The proposed redevelopment maintains the site's cultural role by continuing its long-standing function as a theatre and gathering place for the community and visitors. However, it removes the smaller residential and commercial buildings that have historically expressed this mixed-use layering. Their demolition consolidates multiple narrow lots into a single, larger footprint, altering the traditional land use pattern defined by variation in building form, scale, and function. This consolidation has the potential to diminish the fine-grained texture and incremental urban evolution that are key heritage attributes of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

Mitigation measures focus on ensuring that the new development continues to support and interpret the site's historic layering of uses. The design should prioritize active, transparent ground-floor façades along Queen Street, reflecting the rhythm of traditional storefronts that have historically animated this part of the streetscape. Publicly accessible outdoor spaces, such as a courtyard or small plaza, could provide gathering areas that reinforce the social and communal role the site has played over time. These spaces should be visible and directly connected to pedestrian routes, allowing the theatre to remain a permeable and welcoming cultural landmark rather than a closed, singular institution.

Interpretive features, such as plaques, embedded paving markers, or interior displays, could tell the story of the site's evolution, from early domestic buildings to commercial shops and eventually the Royal George Theatre, ensuring that the legacy of its layered land uses is understood and appreciated by future generations. Additionally, programming flexible community-oriented spaces within the theatre, such as rehearsal halls or meeting areas available for public use, can continue the tradition of the site as a shared social and cultural venue. Through these measures, the redevelopment can balance necessary change with the preservation and communication of the site's historic function and meaning within the district's cultural landscape.

Construction & Isolation Impacts

Redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site will necessitate extensive construction activity, including excavation, piling, and the operation of heavy machinery over a prolonged period. These activities pose potential temporary risks to adjacent heritage resources, including physical impacts such as ground vibration, settlement, and structural stress on historic foundations, as well as environmental nuisances like elevated dust, noise, and restricted access for neighbouring properties.

Older heritage buildings in close proximity, such as 164 Victoria Street, may be particularly vulnerable due to their age, construction materials, and historic foundation systems, which were not designed to withstand prolonged construction activity of this intensity.

In addition to temporary physical risks, the larger, consolidated footprint of the new theatre building introduces a permanent change in scale relative to the smaller, detached house-form buildings that define Victoria Street. Without careful design transitions, there is a risk that neighbouring heritage properties could appear visually and spatially isolated, disrupting the historic rhythm of individual lots and detached dwellings separated by side yards. This visual isolation could erode the legibility of the historic streetscape pattern that contributes to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District's character.

Mitigation strategies include the development of a comprehensive Construction Vibration and Monitoring Plan prepared by qualified structural engineers. This plan should establish baseline condition surveys of adjacent heritage buildings, continuous monitoring during high-impact activities, and thresholds for vibration levels to avoid damage. Protective hoarding, temporary bracing, and controlled excavation techniques should be implemented to further safeguard neighbouring properties. Communication protocols with nearby residents and property owners should be established to provide advance notice of disruptive activities and ensure prompt response to concerns or emerging risks.

To address long-term visual and spatial impacts, the design should incorporate landscaped buffers, stepped massing transitions, and articulated façade breaks on the Victoria Street frontage. These elements will visually bridge the scale difference between the new theatre and adjacent heritage residences, preserving the perception of narrow lot divisions and detached

house forms. The inclusion of mature tree plantings, fencing, and ornamental gardens along the shared boundaries will further soften the transition, maintaining a sense of continuity in the streetscape and reducing the risk of neighbouring heritage buildings appearing isolated within the altered context.

Demolition Impact

The removal of four contributing buildings – 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the existing Royal George Theatre – represents a permanent loss of built heritage fabric within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District. Collectively, these structures provide a link to earlier periods of residential and commercial development in Niagara-on-the-Lake, illustrating the gradual evolution of this block from individual house-form dwellings to mixed-use cultural and retail spaces. While each building has been altered over time, their presence contributes to the historic layering, variety of scale, and incremental lot development that define the district's character.

Mitigation measures should go beyond standard documentation to ensure that the history of these properties remains visible and interpretable in the redeveloped site. This includes:

- Preparing comprehensive archival documentation of all buildings slated for removal, capturing exterior and interior conditions through high-resolution photography, measured drawings, and detailed historical research. This record should be deposited with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and local archives for public accessibility.
- Salvaging significant architectural materials and features – such as wood siding, windows, door surrounds, decorative trim, or signage – for potential reuse in the new theatre or public realm installations. These elements could be incorporated into interior finishes, furniture, or sculptural pieces that reference the earlier buildings' forms and craftsmanship.

- Developing an on-site interpretation program that includes plaques, panels, or interactive installations to narrate the layered history of the site. This could include a visual timeline of the properties' evolution, archival photographs, and information about former uses and occupants, ensuring the stories of 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the original Royal George Theatre remain part of the community memory.
- Exploring opportunities for outdoor commemorative features, such as pavement markers outlining former building footprints or garden installations named after former properties, to retain a physical reminder of the previous lot configuration.

These measures, while not replacing the loss of tangible heritage fabric, aim to preserve the associative and contextual values of the site, allowing residents and visitors to understand and appreciate its historical evolution within the broader cultural landscape of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

5.4 Summary of Potential Impacts of the Proposed Redevelopment

The revised design for the Royal George Theatre redevelopment introduces significant changes aimed at improving compatibility with the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) while meeting the operational requirements of a modern theatre. The updated approach addresses several heritage concerns through modifications to building massing, façades, landscape treatments, and commemorative strategies.

However, the project continues to involve the demolition of four contributing buildings, resulting in a permanent loss of physical heritage fabric and altering the fine-grained urban pattern historically present on this block.

Key potential impacts and updated mitigation measures include:

- **Impact on on-site heritage resources:**
The demolition of 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the existing Royal George Theatre permanently removes heritage fabric that illustrates the site's incremental development over time. While altered and degraded, these structures collectively contributed to the district's historic layering. Mitigation measures include detailed archival documentation of each building, salvage of heritage assets, and integrated interpretive features within the theatre and public realm to communicate their history and evolution.
- **Impact on residential character of Victoria Street:**
The revised design incorporates greater setbacks along Victoria Street, reducing the visual bulk of the new façade. A pitched roof form and lowered rehearsal hall height help align the building with the roofscapes of neighbouring houses. Enhanced landscaping, including mature tree plantings, decorative fencing, and climbing vegetation, softens the interface and maintains a residential feel along the street.
- **Impact of removing 79 Queen Street (Tranter's House):**
The updated design introduces a ghost façade on Queen Street, reinterpreting the scale, proportions, and window patterns of the former building. This measure commemorates the historic streetscape while improving accessibility with a grade-level entry, ensuring that the cultural memory of 79 Queen Street remains visible in the redeveloped site.
- **Impact on adjacent properties:**
The scenic delivery area has been repositioned farther from neighbouring residences and is now visually screened by fencing, brick pillars, and landscaping, reducing both functional and visual impacts on adjacent heritage properties, particularly 164 Victoria Street.
- **Cumulative impact on the QPHCD:**

While the replacement of several small buildings with a larger theatre continues to alter the district's historic lotting pattern and architectural layering, revised massing, increased setbacks, and enhanced vertical articulation improve compatibility with the surrounding context and maintain elements of the historic rhythm of development along Queen and Victoria Streets.

- **Landscape and streetscape impact:**
The removal of small house-form buildings reduces landscaped breaks along Victoria Street. The updated design introduces generous tree planting, planter boxes, ornamental shrubs, and commemorative garden features to provide visual relief, reinforce the pedestrian scale, and maintain a softer residential edge.
- **Architectural and visual impact:**
The new building remains larger in scale than the structures it replaces, but mitigation measures such as stepbacks, pitched roof elements, narrow façade bays, and a restrained material palette referencing neighbouring buildings help to integrate the theatre within its heritage setting while allowing it to read as a contemporary addition.
- **Land use and cultural continuity:**
The redevelopment retains the site's cultural function as a theatre but removes the mixed residential and commercial forms that once contributed to its layered land-use history. The inclusion of active, transparent ground-floor façades, a publicly accessible courtyard, and multipurpose spaces within the theatre reinforces its long-standing role as a community gathering place and helps to interpret the site's historic evolution.
- **Construction and isolation impacts:**
Excavation and heavy equipment operations present temporary risks to adjacent heritage buildings from vibration, dust, noise, and structural stress. The revised design reduces overall floor area and reconfigures the scenic dock to lessen construction impacts. A Construction Vibration and

Monitoring Plan, protective hoarding, controlled excavation methods, and communication protocols with neighbours will help safeguard nearby heritage resources. Landscape buffers, stepped massing, and visual breaks in the new building's façade will help maintain continuity and prevent visual isolation of adjacent properties.

- Demolition impact:
The loss of four contributing buildings permanently erases tangible evidence of the area's incremental growth and adaptation. Mitigation measures include thorough archival documentation, salvage of significant materials, and on-site interpretation through plaques, panels, paving markers, and public displays narrating the history of 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the former Royal George Theatre. These strategies aim to retain and communicate the site's layered heritage within the new development.

Overall, the revised design introduces meaningful improvements that help balance the needs of a modern theatre with heritage conservation objectives. While the loss of contributing buildings remains unavoidable, the proposed mitigation measures, commemorative strategies, and refined design approach help ensure that the site continues to contribute to the historic, cultural, and social fabric of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

6.0 CONSERVATION STRATEGY & APPROACH

The proposed conservation approach for the Royal George Theatre site is Rehabilitation, following the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010) and established heritage conservation best practices recognized at the municipal, provincial, and international levels. Rehabilitation is identified as the most suitable treatment because it allows for the adaptation of the site to meet current and future needs while conserving its heritage values. The decision reflects the deteriorated physical condition of the existing buildings, the significant loss of original material integrity due to multiple alterations over time, and the need to ensure that the site continues to play a meaningful role in the cultural and social fabric of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

While the physical authenticity of the Royal George Theatre and adjacent properties has been compromised, the site retains high associative and contextual values. It has served for decades as a gathering place for the performing arts, contributing to the identity and vitality of Queen Street and forming part of the collective memory of residents and visitors. The proposed conservation strategy aims to sustain these enduring values while introducing a contemporary theatre facility that responds to present-day requirements for accessibility, functionality, and safety.

The following components form the basis of this approach:

- **Redevelopment through sensitive rehabilitation**
The existing buildings will be demolished due to their compromised condition, outdated structural systems, and inability to accommodate the technical requirements of a modern theatre. The new building will be purpose-built to support the Shaw Festival's programming while respecting the heritage context of the district. The design will reinterpret the site's cultural significance, creating a building that reflects its historic role as a cultural hub while clearly expressing its contemporary construction and purpose.
- **Contextually responsive design**
The massing, proportions, and overall architectural expression of the new theatre are carefully tailored to reinforce the established character of Queen and Victoria Streets. Design measures include maintaining a two-storey streetwall height, stepping back upper levels, and using a restrained material palette compatible with neighbouring buildings. Vertical articulation will reference the original lotting pattern, while façade details, glazing proportions, and roof profiles echo the rhythms of surrounding heritage properties without resorting to replication.
- **Preservation of streetscape relationships**
The new theatre will maintain historic alignments and setbacks along both street frontages, reinforcing the spatial organization that has long defined this block. Façade modulation will introduce a sense of varied building fronts,

preserving the visual interest and pedestrian-scale rhythm of the streetscape. Landscaping and tree plantings will reintroduce greenery along Victoria Street, mitigating the loss of individual front yards associated with the removed houses.

- **Commemoration of cultural associations**
The project will integrate interpretive and commemorative features to honour the history of the Royal George Theatre site and its predecessor buildings, including 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street. These features may include archival photographs, historic timelines, salvaged building elements, plaques, paving markers, and curated interior displays. Together, they will provide opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with the site's layered history and understand its contribution to the district's development and cultural life.
- **Public realm enhancement**
The redevelopment will expand opportunities for public engagement with the theatre and the surrounding area. The design includes outdoor gathering spaces, landscaped courtyards, widened pedestrian pathways, and active ground-floor frontages that animate Queen Street and improve connections to Victoria Street. These measures help sustain the site's role as a community meeting place and enhance its accessibility and integration within the heritage district.
- **Sustainable and durable design**
The new building will be designed for longevity, using high-quality, compatible materials that will weather well within the heritage setting. Attention will be given to minimizing environmental impacts, reducing energy use, and ensuring that the building contributes positively to the long-term stewardship of the district's built environment.
- **Construction best practices**
A Construction Vibration and Monitoring Plan will be prepared to protect nearby heritage properties, particularly 164 Victoria Street, during demolition and excavation.

Protective hoarding, temporary supports, dust control measures, and controlled construction sequencing will be employed to safeguard structural integrity and maintain public safety. Ongoing communication with neighbouring property owners will form part of the mitigation strategy to manage temporary impacts effectively.

This conservation strategy recognizes that heritage places are living environments that evolve over time. The proposed redevelopment seeks to respect the district's historic framework while enabling the Royal George Theatre to continue serving as a cultural anchor for generations to come. By balancing contemporary needs with careful design, interpretation, and stewardship measures, the project contributes to the conservation of Niagara-on-the-Lake's heritage values in both tangible and intangible ways, sustaining the site's role in the town's cultural landscape well into the future.

6.1 Mitigation Measures

The redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site introduces a substantial physical transformation within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD). While the proposed design incorporates several context-sensitive elements intended to respond to its historic setting, it also involves the loss of four contributing heritage buildings, consolidation of smaller parcels into a larger contemporary structure, and temporary construction impacts on adjacent properties. These changes require a carefully considered suite of mitigation measures to ensure that new development proceeds in a manner that respects heritage values, supports the district's character, and sustains the site's long-standing cultural role as a community landmark.

In support of the proposed redevelopment, a series of mitigation strategies are recommended to minimize potential adverse

heritage impacts and guide the sensitive integration of the new building within its historic context. These measures are informed by the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010), the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan (1986), and applicable municipal, provincial, and federal heritage policies.

The proposed conservation approach – Rehabilitation – acknowledges the need for change to accommodate contemporary theatre operations while honouring the symbolic, contextual, and associative values that define the site’s significance. Mitigation measures are designed to balance necessary physical transformation with the preservation, interpretation, and communication of the site’s layered history, ensuring that its contribution to the cultural life of Niagara-on-the-Lake remains visible and meaningful for future generations. To achieve this balance, mitigation strategies are organized into key categories that address both the immediate impacts of demolition and construction and the long-term stewardship of heritage values on the site. These categories include:

- Pre-Demolition and Construction Phase Measures, aimed at documenting, salvaging, and protecting heritage resources before and during redevelopment to avoid irreversible losses and unintended damage to adjacent heritage properties.
- Architectural and Urban Design Integration, ensuring that the new building’s scale, massing, materials, and detailing respond sensitively to the fine-grained heritage character of Queen and Victoria Streets while avoiding visual dominance over neighbouring historic properties.
- Landscape and Streetscape Strategies, designed to mitigate the loss of open yard space and house-form rhythm along Victoria Street through landscaped buffers, tree planting, and interpretive features that recall the former built pattern.
- Cultural Continuity and Interpretation, providing measures to retain the site’s long-standing cultural role as a community

gathering place, while commemorating the history of the demolished buildings through interpretive installations, salvaged materials, and public storytelling initiatives.

- Long-Term Monitoring and Heritage Stewardship, recommending ongoing oversight, heritage review, and adaptive management to ensure that both physical and intangible heritage values are conserved beyond project completion.

Together, these categories provide a comprehensive framework for guiding the redevelopment in a manner that respects the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District’s character, mitigates unavoidable heritage losses, and enhances public understanding of the site’s layered evolution over time.

Documentation, Salvage, & Pre-Demolition Measures

Before demolition begins, it is essential to document and retain as much information and material evidence as possible from the four buildings being removed (79 Queen Street, 178 Victoria Street, 188 Victoria Street, and the former Royal George Theatre). These measures include:

- Archival documentation:
 - o High-resolution photographs capturing all exterior elevations, interiors, streetscape views, and site context
 - o Drone imaging to record spatial relationships between buildings and surrounding properties
 - o Measured drawings documenting façades, footprints, rooflines, and key architectural details
 - o Historical research and a written narrative on each building’s evolution and role in the town’s development
 - o Submission of records to the Town’s heritage archives and potential publication online for public access
- Salvage of heritage assets:
 - o Recovery of reusable materials such as brickwork, decorative wood trim, windows, original signage, and cornices

- o Assessment by a qualified heritage professional to determine suitability for integration into the new building or for public display
- o Incorporation of salvaged materials into interior feature walls, lobby spaces, public art, or interpretive installations
- Construction protection measures:
 - o Pre-condition surveys of adjacent heritage properties, notably 164 Victoria Street and others along Queen Street
 - o Implementation of vibration monitoring and protective barriers during demolition and excavation
 - o Controlled work hours, dust suppression, and noise reduction measures to limit impacts on nearby residences and businesses
 - o Ongoing supervision by a structural engineer with experience in heritage conservation

Architectural & Urban Design Compatibility

The new theatre's design must respond sensitively to its historic setting to mitigate visual dominance and scale transitions between commercial and residential areas. The updated design incorporates several strategies, which should be further refined:

- Contextual massing and setbacks:
 - o Reduced gross floor area compared to previous proposals
 - o Stepped-back upper levels on Queen and Victoria Streets to lessen perceived height and maintain access to light and sky views
 - o Pitched rooflines along Victoria Street that visually relate to neighbouring house forms
 - o Vertical divisions on façades reflecting historic lot widths, preserving the rhythm of the streetscape
- Façade articulation and material palette:
 - o Use of stone and brick compatible with the surrounding district while ensuring a contemporary, non-mimetic approach

- o Narrow bays, recessed glazing, and pedestrian-scaled detailing along both frontages
- o Differentiation between the ghost façade and new construction to avoid creating a false historic appearance
- Public realm activation:
 - o Multiple street-facing entrances improving permeability and accessibility
 - o Transparent glazing along Queen Street supporting visual connection to interior lobby spaces
 - o Retention of a cultural marquee reinforcing the theatre's historic presence in the district

Landscape & Streetscape Continuity

The loss of landscaped yards and setbacks on Victoria Street requires compensatory design elements to retain a residential character and visual relief in the streetscape:

- Green buffers and planting strategies:
 - o Continuous landscaped edges with mature trees, ornamental shrubs, and low fencing along Victoria Street
 - o Planting layouts recalling historic front yard setbacks and providing visual separation from adjacent houses
- Semi-public courtyard space:
 - o A small pedestrian forecourt or garden area between the ghost façade and main theatre entrance
 - o Outdoor seating, interpretive signage, and heritage markers to commemorate demolished properties and provide a community gathering spot
- Screening of service areas:
 - o Decorative fencing, climbing plants, and layered landscaping to visually buffer loading docks and mechanical equipment from neighbouring properties

Cultural Continuity & Heritage Interpretation

The project provides an opportunity to retain and reinterpret the site's cultural significance while communicating its layered history:

- Interpretive installations:
 - o Permanent exhibits narrating the history of 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the former Royal George Theatre
 - o Use of archival photographs, historical maps, and written narratives within the theatre lobby and outdoor public realm
 - o Interactive or digital installations allowing visitors to visualize the site's past and its evolution
- Reuse of salvaged materials:
 - o Display of recovered elements as part of the theatre's interior finishes, feature walls, or public art installations
 - o Outdoor plaques or markers highlighting where former buildings once stood
- Community programming:
 - o Spaces within the theatre designed for workshops, lectures, and community gatherings beyond theatrical performances
 - o Events celebrating the Shaw Festival's and Niagara-on-the-Lake's broader cultural heritage

Construction Impact Management & Neighbourhood Integration

Mitigating temporary construction impacts and maintaining cohesion with neighbouring properties is critical:

- Construction management protocols:
 - o Staging plans designed to maintain pedestrian access and minimize street closures on Queen Street
 - o Dust, noise, and vibration mitigation strategies, with continuous monitoring and reporting to the Town and neighbours

- o Clear communication with adjacent property owners on timelines and protection measures
- Isolation prevention:
 - o Building scale transitions, landscaped buffers, and visual breaks in façades to avoid creating abrupt contrasts with adjacent house-form buildings
 - o Continued fine-grained frontage along Queen Street to prevent consolidation into a visually monolithic structure

Post-Construction Monitoring & Long-Term Stewardship

To ensure that heritage values are preserved beyond project completion:

- Post-construction heritage review:
 - o Evaluation of the completed building's integration with adjacent heritage resources
 - o Assessment of the effectiveness of mitigation measures, particularly landscaping and visual transitions
- Adaptive management:
 - o Updating interpretive features and commemorative elements over time in consultation with local heritage organizations
 - o Adjusting landscaping or façade treatments as needed to better integrate with the evolving district context
- Maintenance plan:
 - o Regular upkeep of landscaping, heritage displays, salvaged materials, and public realm enhancements
 - o Long-term commitment to preserving the cultural identity and public accessibility of the theatre

6.2 Design Responses to Mitigation Measures

The revised design for the Royal George Theatre redevelopment has incorporated several key changes in direct response to identified heritage impacts and mitigation measures. These responses aim to balance the need for a larger, contemporary

theatre facility with the protection, commemoration, and continued expression of the site's heritage values within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD).

Responses to Documentation & Salvage Recommendations

- Commitment to full archival documentation of all four buildings proposed for demolition, including high-resolution imagery, measured drawings, and historical narratives for submission to the Town's heritage archives.
- Designation of interior display areas within the new theatre for showcasing salvaged materials and historical information, ensuring that tangible connections to the site's past remain accessible to the public.
- Structural allowances for incorporating selected salvaged materials, such as original signage, decorative trim, or brick, into feature walls or public art installations.

Responses to Massing, Scale, & Setback Mitigation

- Gross floor area reduced by approximately 2,832 square feet compared to previous iterations, reducing overall massing impact.
- Increased setbacks and deepened stepbacks along Victoria Street, providing greater separation from neighbouring residential properties and reducing visual dominance.
- Pitched roof profiles introduced on the west side to better transition to adjacent house-form buildings, particularly 164 Victoria Street.
- Vertical articulation along both street frontages now reflects historic lotting patterns, avoiding a monolithic appearance.

Responses to Landscape & Streetscape Mitigation

- Landscaped buffers along Victoria Street integrated into the design, including mature tree plantings, ornamental shrubs, and low decorative fencing to recreate a softened, residential edge.
- Creation of a semi-public courtyard at the Queen Street

frontage, recalling historic yard spaces and providing a gathering place linked to heritage interpretation.

- Screening of service areas with plantings and architectural fencing to reduce their visibility and impact on adjacent properties and pedestrian views.

Responses to Cultural Continuity & Interpretation Measures

- Inclusion of a ghost façade along Queen Street to reinstate the scale, rhythm, and cultural presence of the historic Royal George Theatre frontage.
- Enhanced transparency with multiple entries and glazing along Queen Street to activate the public realm and reflect the traditional fine-grained commercial character.
- Dedicated interpretive installations within the building lobby and outdoor courtyard to share the history of 79 Queen Street, 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and the original theatre.
- Programmed community spaces within the theatre available for heritage talks, small performances, and public gatherings, reinforcing the site's cultural role.

Responses to Construction Impact Mitigation

- Provisions for vibration monitoring and protective barriers during demolition and construction, particularly adjacent to 164 Victoria Street.
- Phased demolition plan designed to maintain pedestrian circulation and minimize disruption to Queen Street businesses and residents.
- Oversight by a structural engineer with heritage experience to safeguard nearby designated properties.

Responses to Long-Term Stewardship Recommendations

- Post-construction heritage review planned in consultation with municipal heritage staff to evaluate visual transitions, landscaping maturity, and effectiveness of mitigation measures.
- Long-term maintenance strategy for interpretive features,

landscaped buffers, and salvaged materials to ensure they remain in good condition and accessible to the public.

- Flexibility built into the interpretive program, allowing content updates over time in collaboration with heritage organizations and the Shaw Festival.

This suite of design responses demonstrates how the revised proposal has evolved to address the heritage impacts identified in the HIA. By integrating these measures into the design and construction process, the project aims to deliver a contemporary, functional theatre that remains compatible with the heritage district, while commemorating and communicating the site's layered history.

6.3 Sustainability Considerations

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental sustainability, integrating Net Zero energy performance as a core design objective. This approach ensures that the theatre not only fulfills its cultural and functional role but also sets a precedent for sustainable development within a heritage context. The combination of high-performance design and heritage-informed planning supports the theatre's evolution as a civic landmark while contributing positively to the long-term stewardship of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD).

Net Zero Energy Performance

The redevelopment is designed to achieve Net Zero energy performance, producing as much energy on-site as it consumes annually. Key strategies include:

- High-efficiency building envelope with advanced insulation, airtight construction, and thermally optimized glazing to minimize energy demand.
- Renewable energy systems, such as rooftop solar

photovoltaic panels, to generate clean energy on-site.

- High-performance mechanical, lighting, and ventilation systems designed to exceed baseline energy efficiency standards.
- Advanced energy monitoring and control systems to optimize performance throughout the building's lifecycle.

These measures reduce operational energy consumption, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and ensure the building's long-term environmental sustainability.

Integration of Sustainability with Heritage Conservation

From a heritage perspective, sustainability objectives align closely with conservation principles that emphasize adaptive reuse, stewardship, and longevity. The design responds to heritage values in several ways:

- Retaining the site's cultural function as a theatre ensures the building continues to serve its historic role as a community gathering place.
- Sensitive siting, massing, and material selection respect the established character of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District while introducing contemporary, sustainable building practices.
- Durable, low-impact materials with high recycled content support long-term maintenance and reduce the need for frequent replacements, aligning with conservation priorities.

Landscape & Environmental Enhancements

The sustainability strategy also extends to the surrounding public realm and site landscaping:

- Native and drought-resistant plantings reduce irrigation needs and support local biodiversity.
- Green buffer zones along Victoria Street help manage stormwater naturally while reinforcing the residential

character of the street.

- Permeable paving and bioswale features assist with rainwater infiltration, reducing runoff and improving on-site water management.

These measures contribute to the ecological health of the district while maintaining its historic patterns of landscaped frontages and green spaces.

Climate Resilience & Future Adaptability

The redevelopment aims to provide a building that remains resilient to future climate challenges, ensuring that it can serve the community for decades to come:

- Passive design strategies, including natural daylighting, solar shading, and operable windows, reduce reliance on mechanical systems and improve occupant comfort.
- Structural flexibility allows future adaptation of interior spaces without requiring major alterations to the building envelope or overall form.
- Selection of non-toxic, low-emission materials improves indoor air quality and enhances the visitor experience.

These elements support the sustainable, long-term use of the theatre while respecting its role as a dynamic part of the heritage district.

Contribution to Heritage & Community Values

By integrating sustainability and heritage conservation, the redevelopment advances the broader goals of the QPHCD:

- Reinforces the site's symbolic importance as a place of civic innovation and cultural leadership.
- Demonstrates how new development in a heritage context can embody environmental responsibility while respecting historic patterns and character.

- Strengthens community identity by providing a modern, high-performing cultural facility that contributes positively to Niagara-on-the-Lake's environmental and social fabric.

Sustainability is therefore not merely a technical consideration but an essential aspect of the site's ongoing heritage value. The project exemplifies how contemporary architecture can respond to pressing environmental concerns while remaining rooted in the layered history and cultural significance of its context.

6.4 Accessibility

In parallel with the project's sustainability objectives, the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre places a strong emphasis on accessibility and universal design principles. Both sustainability and accessibility are essential to creating a resilient, inclusive, and culturally relevant public facility that continues to meet the needs of Niagara-on-the-Lake's residents, visitors, and cultural community. The new theatre will set a benchmark for accessibility in heritage contexts by combining state-of-the-art inclusive design with sensitivity to the historic character of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD).

Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Certification

A central element of this commitment is the pursuit of Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) Gold Certification, a nationally recognized standard for accessible design in the built environment. Achieving this certification will ensure that the new theatre:

- Meets or exceeds established best practices for physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility.
- Provides a fully inclusive environment for patrons, performers, staff, and visitors of all abilities.
- Demonstrates leadership in accessible cultural facility design within a heritage district setting.

Universal Design Features

The RHF Gold framework will guide the incorporation of comprehensive accessibility measures, seamlessly integrated into the new building's design:

- Barrier-free entrances and circulation: Step-free access to all public and back-of-house areas, wide corridors, and automated door systems.
- Accessible seating areas: Distributed throughout the auditorium to offer choice and equitable viewing experiences, including companion seating options.
- Backstage and performer accessibility: Fully accessible dressing rooms, rehearsal spaces, and stage access to support inclusive participation in productions.
- Accessible washrooms: Designed to accommodate a wide range of mobility devices, with clear maneuvering space and high-quality fixtures.
- Sensory accessibility: Features such as hearing loop systems, adaptable lighting, and visual contrast elements to support individuals with sensory sensitivities or low vision.
- Intuitive wayfinding: Clear, multilingual, and tactile signage to facilitate independent navigation for all visitors.

Heritage & Cultural Continuity

From a heritage conservation perspective, integrating accessibility features enhances, rather than compromises, the cultural value of the site:

- It ensures the theatre's continued relevance and usability for future generations, aligning with the principle of "living heritage" where historic places evolve to meet contemporary needs.
- It supports the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, which recognize that respectful adaptation is essential to sustaining heritage significance over time.

- By removing physical and social barriers, the redevelopment reinforces the Royal George Theatre's long-standing role as a cultural and community gathering place.

Contribution to Community Identity

Accessibility is not only a technical requirement but a social and cultural imperative:

- It expands participation in cultural events, fostering diversity and inclusion within Niagara-on-the-Lake's arts community.
- It strengthens the theatre's identity as a welcoming civic landmark, fully aligned with the town's values of hospitality, inclusivity, and cultural continuity.
- It ensures that the redeveloped theatre remains an integral part of the QPHCD's evolving story, reflecting contemporary social priorities within a historic setting.

By pursuing RHF Gold Certification and embedding universal design principles throughout the project, the Royal George Theatre redevelopment will not only meet the highest accessibility standards but will also enhance its heritage value as a living, inclusive, and socially relevant place. The project demonstrates that heritage sites can adapt responsibly to modern expectations, ensuring long-term cultural vibrancy and shared public benefit.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has evaluated the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site at 85 Queen Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake, with reference to all relevant federal, provincial, and municipal heritage policies and guidelines, including the Ontario Heritage Act, the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan (1986), the Town's Official Plan and Heritage Character Area policies, the Niagara-on-the-Lake National Historic Site designation, and the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010). The assessment also reflects best practices in heritage conservation and recognized international charters on the protection and adaptive reuse of historic places.

The Royal George Theatre and adjacent properties at 79 Queen Street, 178 Victoria Street, and 188 Victoria Street collectively illustrate the layered evolution of this part of Niagara-on-the-Lake, transitioning over time from early residential dwellings to mixed commercial uses and ultimately to a cultural campus supporting the Shaw Festival. These properties have historically contributed to the associative and contextual value of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District by sustaining a lively pedestrian-oriented streetscape and maintaining long-standing cultural functions that reinforce the town's reputation as a centre for the performing arts. However, decades of alterations, the replacement of earlier buildings, and successive functional adaptations have significantly diminished the architectural integrity and material authenticity of these properties, particularly the current Royal George Theatre, which has undergone extensive exterior and interior modifications since the 1960s.

In this context, the decision to pursue rehabilitation through redevelopment is an appropriate conservation strategy.

Contemporary heritage practice recognizes that sustaining heritage value does not always require the strict preservation of altered or compromised physical fabric, especially when it no longer effectively conveys its original character or meets ongoing functional needs. Sensitive redevelopment provides an opportunity to retain and strengthen the site's cultural and associative heritage values, ensuring that it remains an active and meaningful part of the QPHCD and the Niagara-on-the-Lake National Historic Site.

The revised design, prepared by Lett Architects in consultation with the Town, heritage consultants, and the community, demonstrates a more balanced and contextually responsive approach than earlier iterations. Key refinements include:

- A reduction in gross floor area by approximately 24% compared to the original 2023 submission, creating a more compact building footprint and improving adjacencies to nearby heritage properties.
- Increased setbacks and stepped massing along Queen Street and Victoria Street, softening the building's visual impact and restoring a finer-grained rhythm to the streetscape.
- A reinterpreted ghost façade that draws inspiration from architect Peter Stokes' 1978 neoclassical temple-front design for the Canadian Mime Theatre era, aligning with the scale, proportions, and decorative rhythm of the former theatre façade while improving accessibility at grade.
- Enhanced landscape design and residential-scaled treatments along Victoria Street, including pitched roof elements, ornamental fencing, and additional tree planting to create a softer, more sympathetic transition to the adjacent residential context.
- A commitment to Net Zero energy performance and Rick

Hansen Foundation Gold Certification, ensuring that the new theatre meets contemporary environmental and accessibility standards while demonstrating stewardship and inclusivity as part of its long-term cultural legacy.

These design refinements directly address many of the concerns raised by Town staff, the Municipal Heritage Committee, the Town's heritage consultant (ERA), and the Niagara-on-the-Lake community. They improve the project's compatibility with the heritage district by reinforcing pedestrian scale, acknowledging historical design references, and integrating public realm enhancements that support cultural vibrancy and year-round use of the site.

Nonetheless, the redevelopment entails the permanent removal of four contributing heritage buildings, resulting in the loss of tangible evidence of the area's incremental residential and commercial growth. While these structures are not of high individual architectural merit and have been significantly altered, their demolition reduces the fine-grained diversity of the block and the physical layering that has characterized this portion of the QPHCD for over a century. To balance necessary change with heritage conservation objectives, the following additional recommendations are proposed:

- Explore opportunities to further improve the transition from the theatre's west elevation to the residential context on Victoria Street. This could include retaining portions of existing heritage fabric, reducing perceived building mass through additional articulation, or relocating certain program elements (e.g., the rehearsal hall) to the third floor behind the ghost façade to limit impacts on adjacent dwellings.
- Strengthen the compatibility of the Queen Street elevation by refining the material palette, detailing, and façade proportions to align more closely with the existing heritage streetscape while maintaining a contemporary expression.
- Develop a comprehensive interpretation and commemoration strategy for the site's layered history, including public installations, plaques, or digital tools to share the story of 79 Queen Street, 178–188 Victoria Street, the Royal George Theatre, Peter Stokes' 1972 design, and the role of the Canadian Mime Theatre and Shaw Festival in shaping its cultural identity.
- Commit to salvaging and reusing significant architectural elements from the buildings slated for demolition, integrating them into the new theatre or the surrounding public realm to reinforce physical connections to the past.
- Establish a long-term heritage management framework for the new development, outlining policies for ongoing maintenance, interpretation, and potential future adaptations in consultation with the Town and heritage authorities.
- Maintain transparent and active public engagement throughout design development, construction, and post-completion phases to ensure that the project continues to reflect community values and expectations.
- Implement robust construction management protocols, including vibration, noise, and dust monitoring, as well as protective measures for adjacent heritage buildings, to safeguard surrounding heritage resources during demolition and construction activities.

With the implementation of these recommendations, the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site can become a model for contemporary heritage district renewal. The project offers a unique opportunity to sustain the site's cultural significance while adapting to evolving artistic, technical, and accessibility requirements. Through careful design, interpretation, and long-term stewardship, the new theatre can reinforce Niagara-on-the-Lake's identity as a leading cultural destination, celebrate its layered heritage, and ensure that the site continues to contribute meaningfully to the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District for generations to come.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: References

Appendix B: Site Photos

Appendix C: Archival Data

Appendix D: Heritage & Urban Policy Framework

Appendix E: Drawing Sets (including Stokes Drawings, 2023 & 2025)

Appendix F: Building Condition Assessment

Appendix G: Archeological Assessment

Appendix H: Presentation ERA

Appendix I: Presentation mcCallumSather (July 9, 2025)

Appendix J: Comments from City (June 27 & July 22 2025)

Appendix K: Rationale for Rehearsal Space

APPENDIX A: REFERENCES

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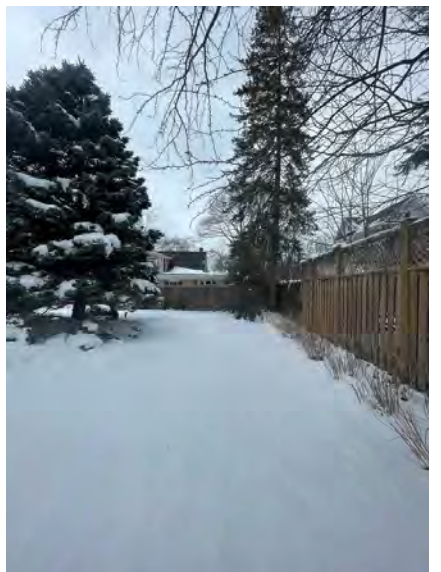
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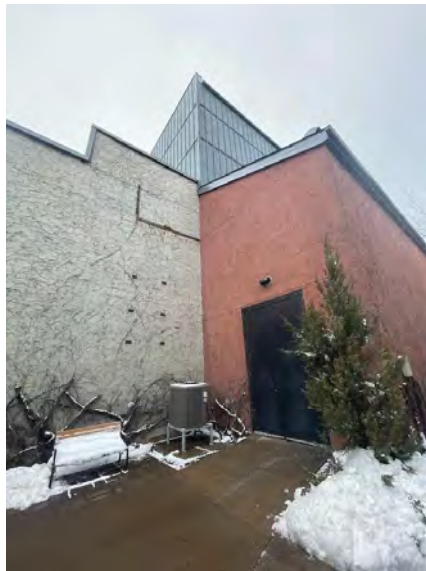
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APPENDIX B: SITE PHOTOS











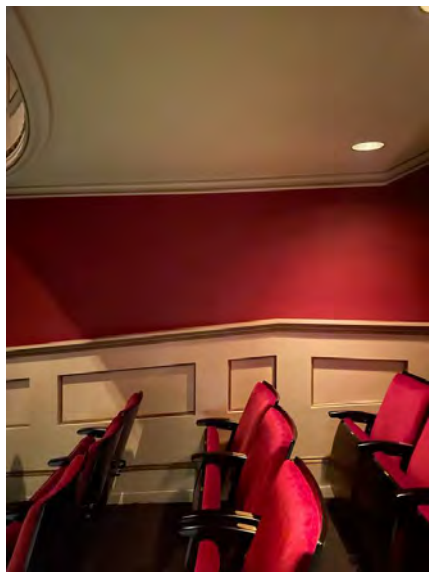


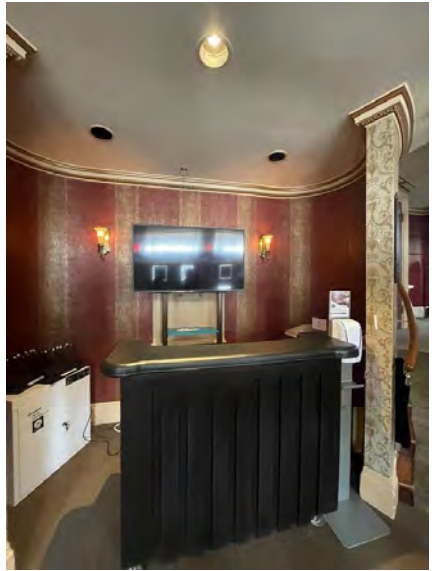
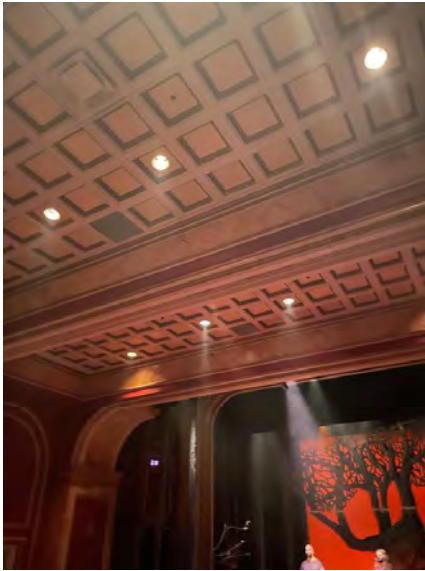
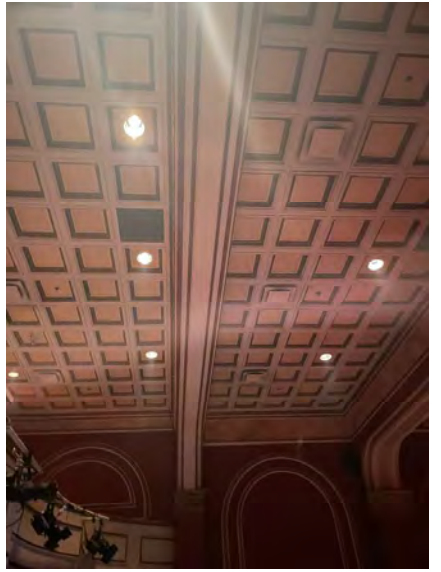


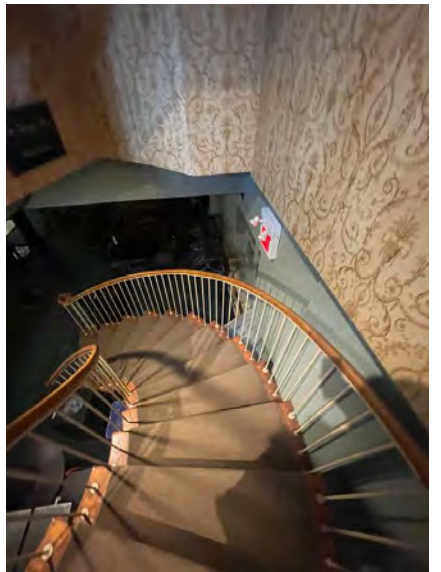
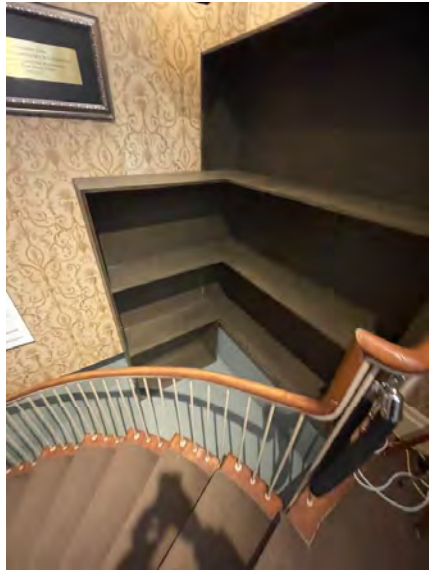
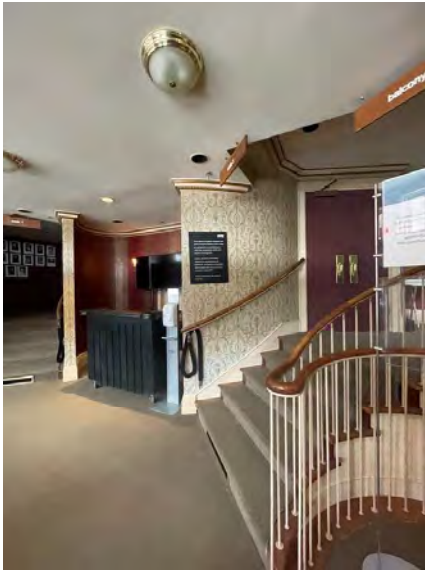
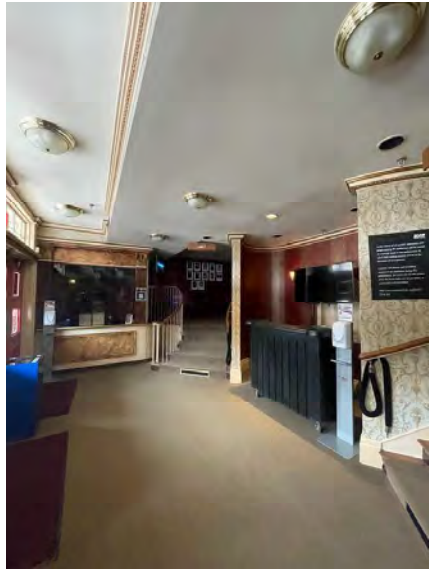
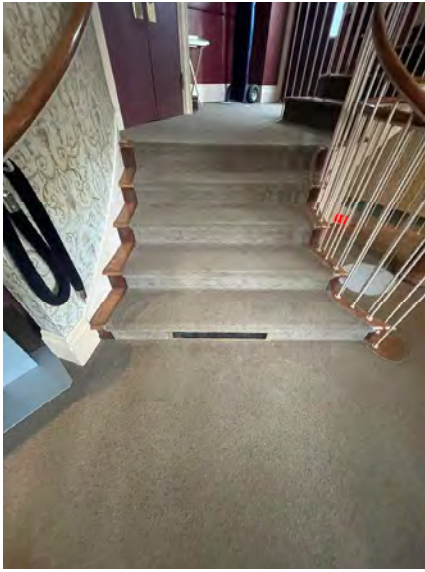


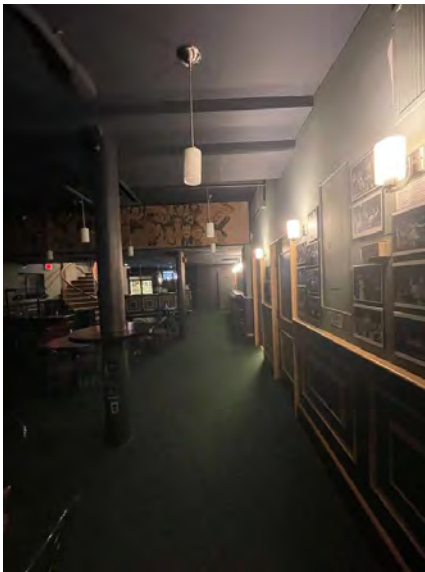
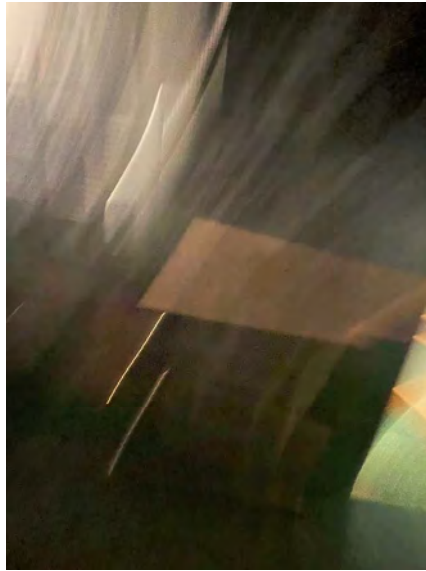
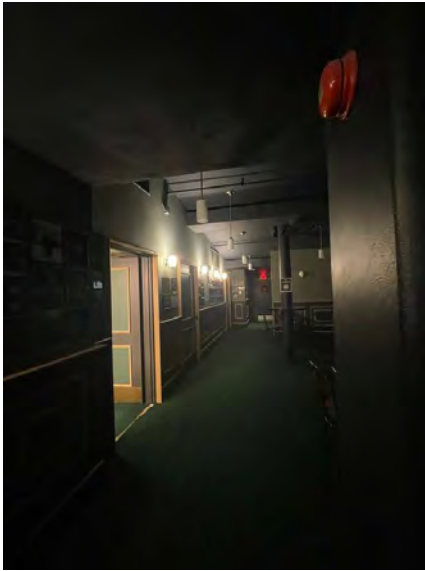
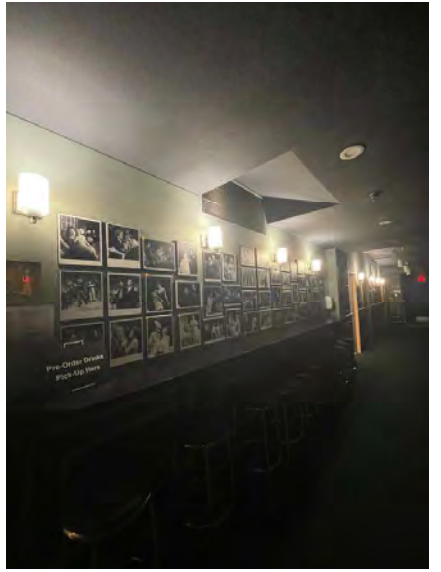
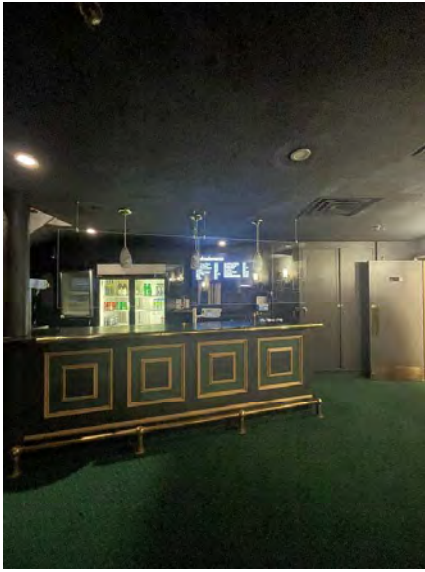


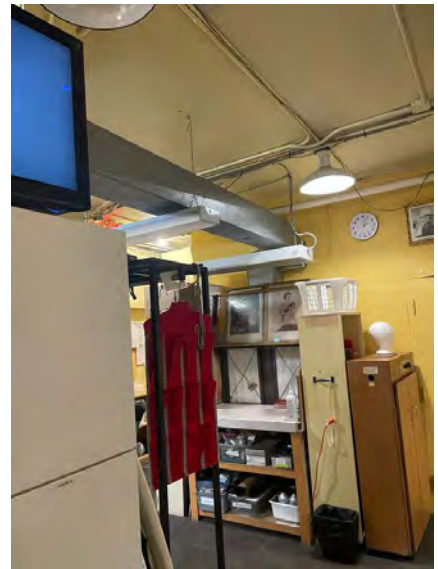
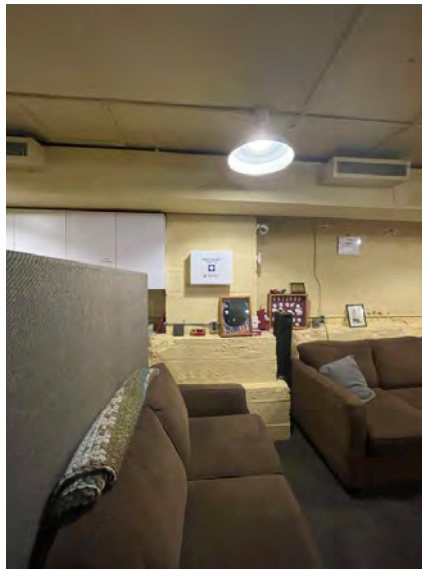
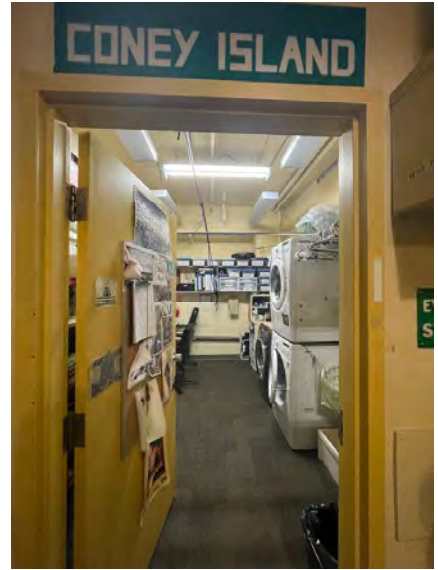


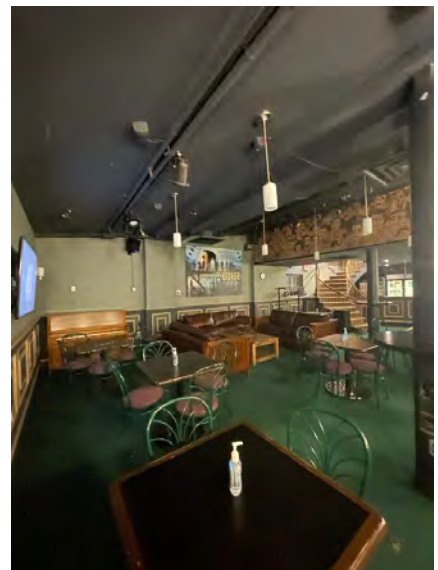
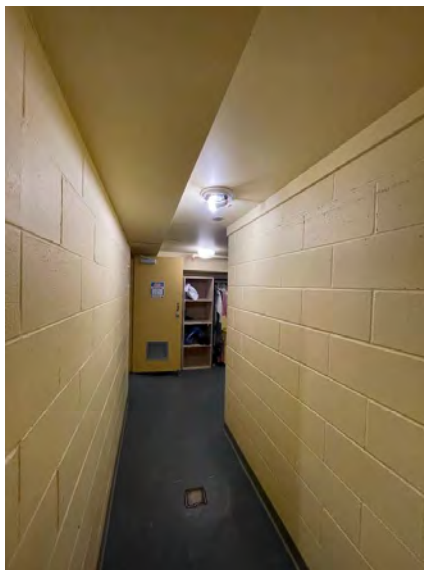
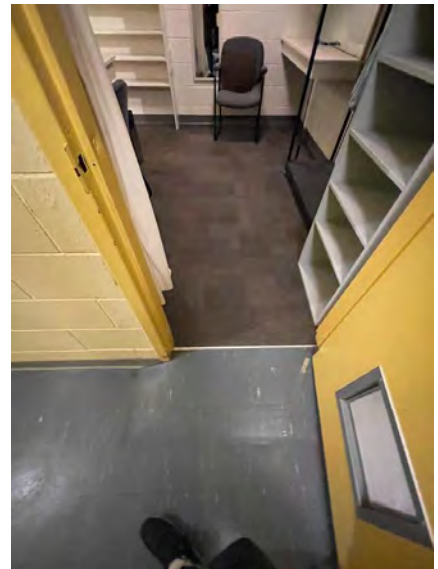


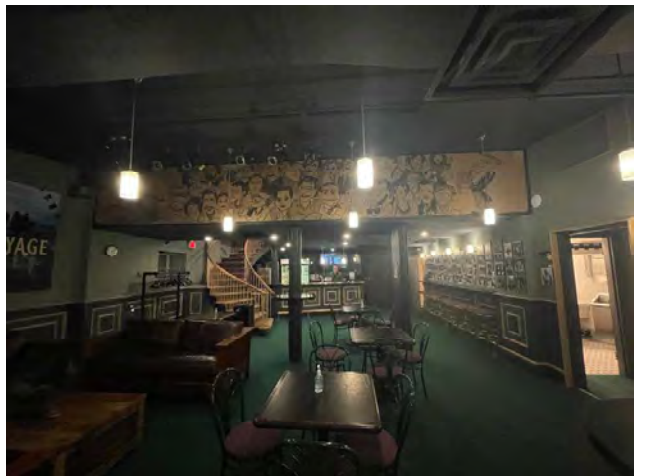
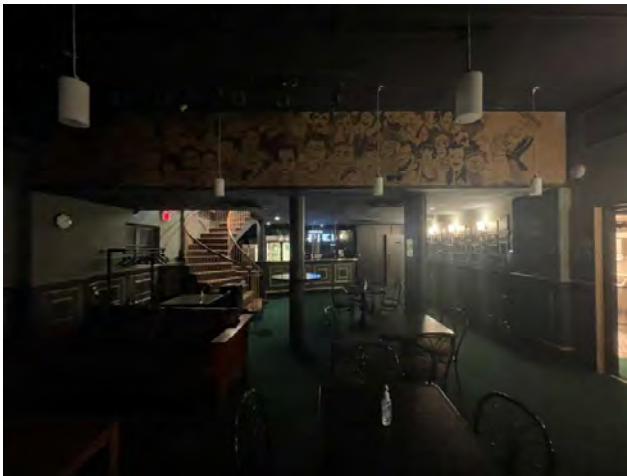
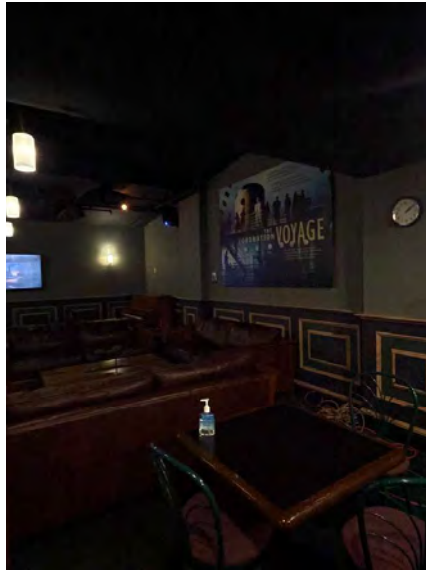
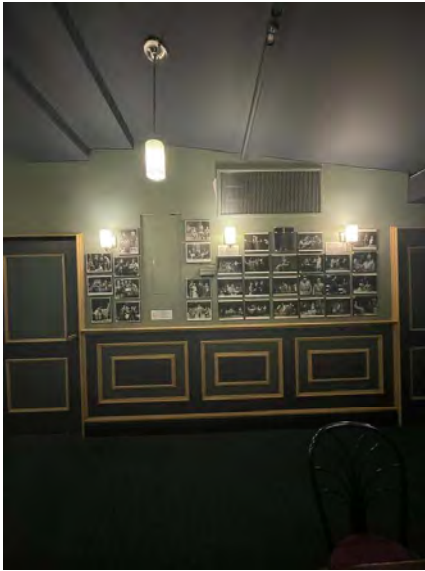
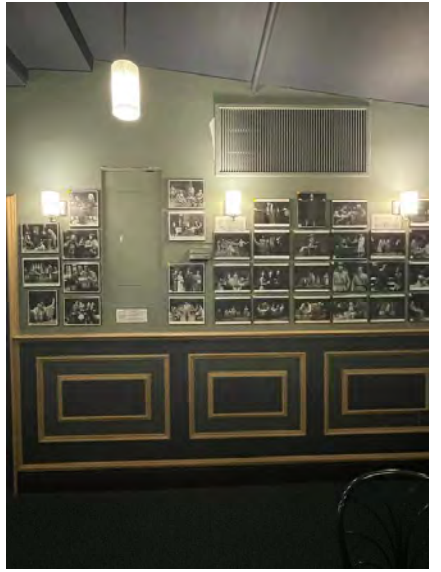


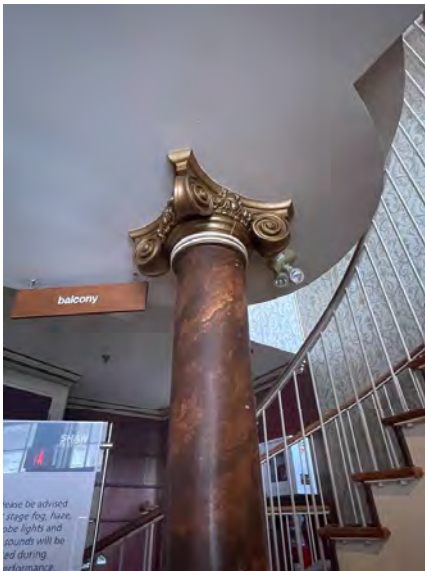
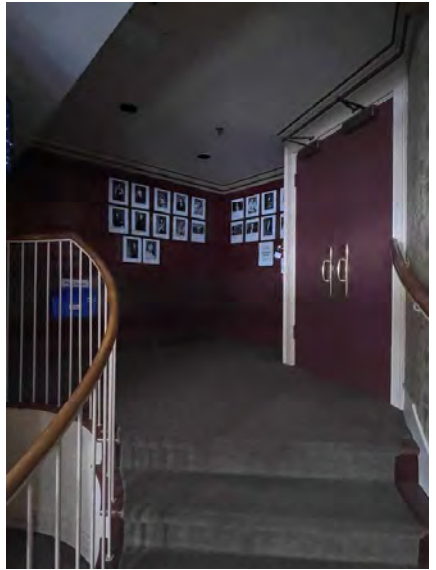


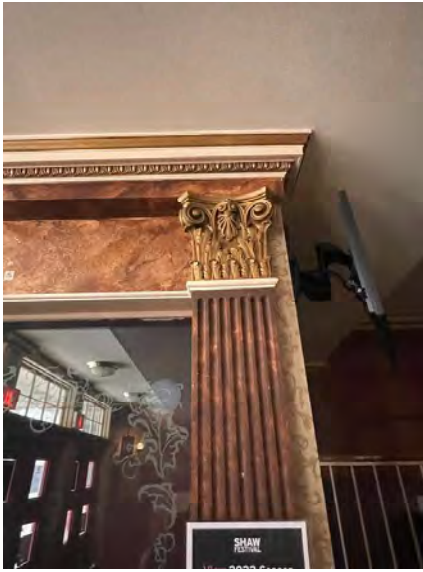


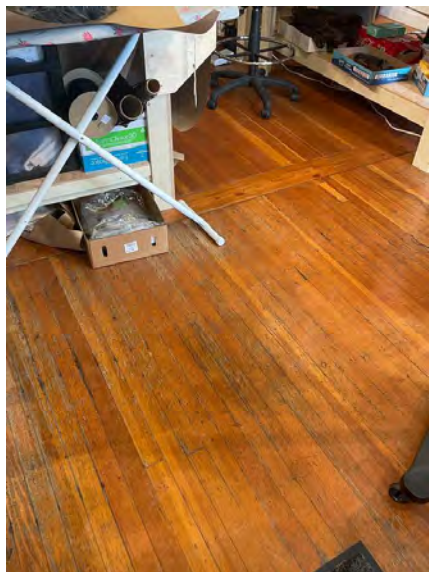
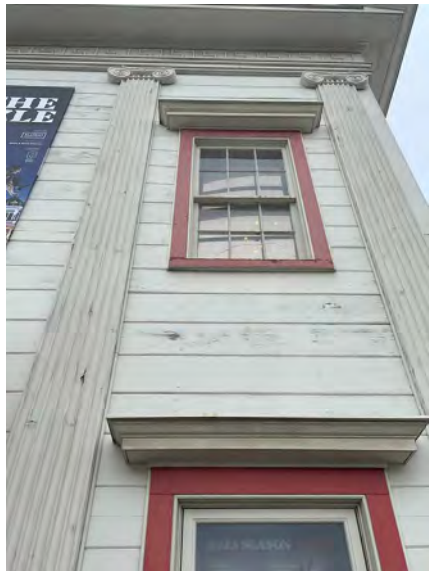


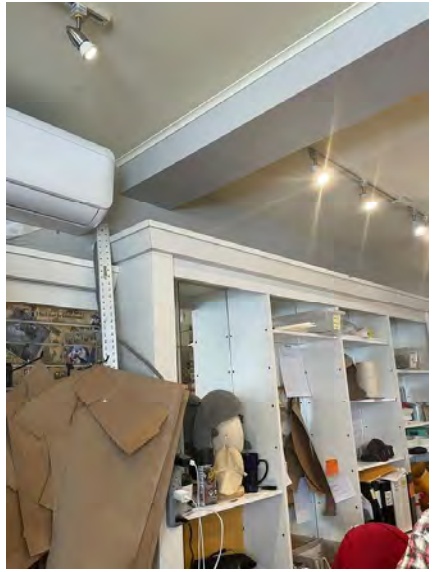
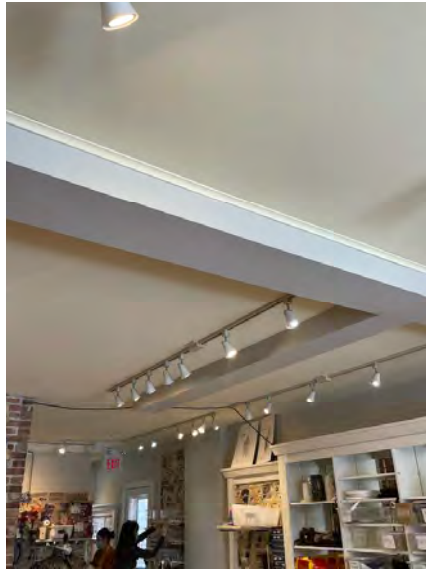


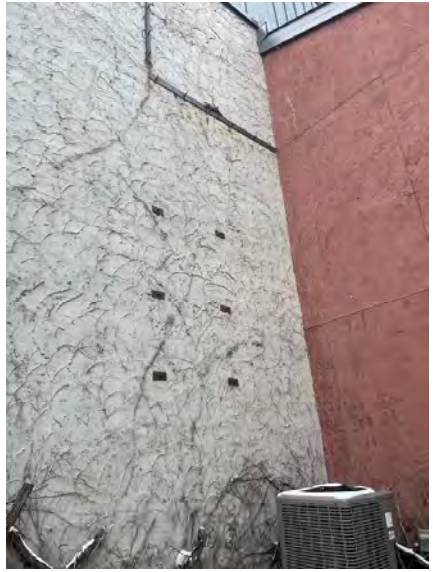
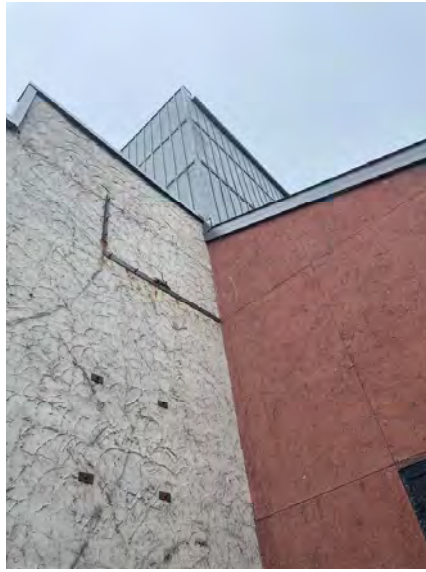






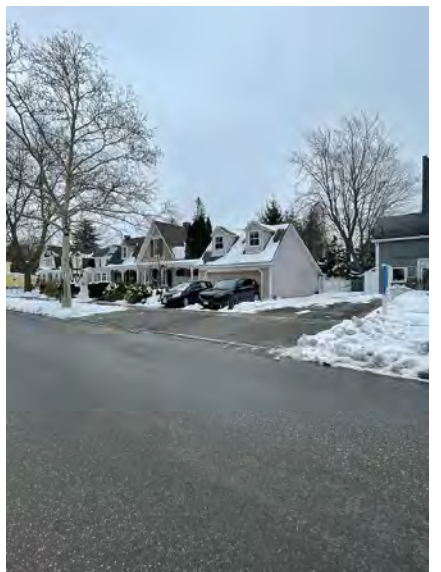
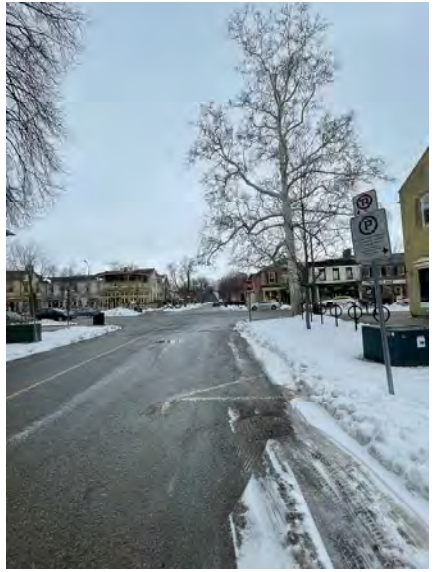














APPENDIX C: ARCHIVAL DATA



3

22

23

3

VIAGRA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONT.
MAY 1944
EXTENSION

MAY 1944
EXTENSIO

EXTENSIO.

PRIDEAUX

30

31

12

GATE

VICTORIA

SEE SHEET NO. 2

QUEEN

SCALE 50 FT = 1 INCH

39

40

15

COPYRIGHT, CANADA 1914
BY CHAS. E. SOAD CO.

BY CHAS. E. GOAR

JOHNSON

SEE SHEET NO. 4

2

PRIDEAUX

SEE SHEET NO. 5

2

31

12

QUEEN

SEE SHEET NO. 1
GATE

VICTORIA

SEE SHEET NO. 3
REGENT

40

15

JOHNSON

SEE SHEET NO. 4

SEE SHEET NO. 4

SCALE 50 FT. = 1 INCH

50

2

PRIDEAUX

SEE SHEET NO. 5

2

NIAGARA ON THE LAKE, ONT.
JUNE 1975

31

12

QUEEN

SEE SHEET NO. 1
GATE

VICTORIA

REGENCY
SEE SHEET NO. 3

40

15

JOHNSON

SEE SHEET NO. 4

SEE SHEET NO. 4

50

SCALE 50 FT. = 1 INCH

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(INCORPORATED IN ONTARIO)

NIAGARA ON THE LAKE, ONT.
DECEMBER, 1940

SEE SHEET NO 5

PRIDEAUX

GATE

VICTORIA

QUEEN

REGENT

SEE SHEET NO 4

SEE SHEET NO 3

31

12

40

15

JOHNSON

SEE SHEET NO 4

Scale: 50 Feet to 1 Inch



APPENDIX D: HERITAGE & URBAN POLICY FRAMEWORK

This appendix outlines the applicable policy and regulatory framework guiding the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site at 85 Queen Street, located within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The proposal has been assessed against a comprehensive set of federal, provincial, and municipal policies, legislation, and best practices, including the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010), the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS, 2024), the Ontario Heritage Act, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan (2017 Consolidation and 2019 Draft), and the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan (1986).

D.1 Provincial Planning Statement (PPS), 2024

The 2024 PPS provides direction on land use planning in Ontario, including the conservation of cultural heritage. The following policies under Section 4.6 are particularly relevant:

1. Protected heritage property, including built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved.
2. Development on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential shall not proceed unless significant resources are conserved.
3. Adjacent development must ensure that the heritage attributes of nearby protected heritage properties are conserved.
4. Planning authorities are encouraged to:
 - a. Develop archaeological management plans;
 - b. Implement proactive strategies for conserving

significant built heritage and cultural heritage landscapes.

5. Indigenous engagement is required early in the planning process to protect archaeological and heritage values.

Alignment of the Project with PPS 2024

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre site aligns with the PPS 2024 through the following measures:

- **Conservation of Cultural Heritage Value:** While the proposal includes the demolition of several existing 'B'-rated buildings, the overall redevelopment is guided by a conservation strategy that acknowledges the associative and contextual heritage value of the site. The proposed new building contributes to the continuity of the District's cultural function and urban character.
- **Contextual Integration:** The revised design reflects thoughtful massing, materiality, and setbacks, responding to the surrounding streetscape and respecting the heritage attributes of adjacent properties within the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** A full Heritage Impact Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the PPS and the Ontario Heritage Act. Mitigation measures—including façade reinterpretation, landscaped buffers, commemoration strategies, and heritage interpretation—support the conservation of contextual values and historic character.
- **Archaeological Potential:** The Town and proponent have undertaken preliminary assessments to determine the potential for archaeological resources on-site. Further investigations will be undertaken, as required, in accordance

with PPS requirements.

- **Engagement:** The project has incorporated public and municipal feedback through pre-consultation, design charrettes, and meetings with the Municipal Heritage Committee. Indigenous engagement will be pursued as required should any archaeological potential be confirmed.

By aligning with these PPS 2024 directives, the redevelopment supports sustainable cultural heritage conservation while facilitating compatible intensification and improved functionality for an important cultural institution.

D.2 Ontario Heritage Act (OHA)

The subject lands at 178–188 Victoria Street and 79–85 Queen Street are designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) as part of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD). As per Section 42(1) of the OHA, any demolition, exterior alteration, or new construction within a Heritage Conservation District boundary requires heritage permit approval. Such proposals must demonstrate that they conserve the heritage attributes and comply with the intent of the HCD Plan and municipal policies.

Alignment of the Project with the OHA

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre complies with the requirements of the OHA by responding to the character-defining elements of the Queen-Picton HCD and undergoing a comprehensive Heritage Impact Assessment. The project includes mitigation strategies, such as a reinterpreted “ghost façade,” stepped building massing, and site-sensitive landscaping. The demolition of four ‘B’-rated buildings has been evaluated within the framework of the OHA, and the proposal demonstrates an overall intent to conserve the cultural heritage value of the District through contextual design, interpretation, and adaptive reuse of the site. Heritage permits will be obtained as required, following the statutory process under Section 42.

D.3 Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan (1986)

Adopted by Town Council and re-enacted via By-law 4362-10, the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) Plan outlines policies for conservation, alteration, and new development within the District.

- **‘B’ Buildings:** The Royal George Theatre and associated properties at 178 and 188 Victoria Street, and 79 Queen Street are identified as ‘B’ buildings. These structures are recognized for their contextual value and contribution to the cohesive heritage streetscape, although they are not individually significant for their architectural features.
- **Policy Direction:** The Plan encourages conservation of existing fabric and supports alterations and new development that are complementary in terms of scale, height, massing, and overall character. The replication of historical styles is discouraged; instead, the Plan promotes high-quality, compatible design that enhances the district’s heritage character.
- **Area Policies:**
 - o **Business Area (Queen and Picton Streets):** New construction must maintain the established rhythm, proportion, scale, and commercial character of the streetscape.
 - o **Residential Area (178 Victoria Street):** Additions or redevelopment should respect the fine-grained residential character and rhythm typical of Victoria Street.

Alignment of the Project with the QPHCD Plan

The proposed redevelopment respects the goals and intent of the QPHCD Plan by introducing a contemporary building that is compatible with its context. The design includes significant stepbacks, increased setbacks, and a reinterpretation of the former Royal George façade in the form of a “ghost façade” to maintain the Queen Street rhythm. Along Victoria Street, the design introduces massing transitions, screening, and landscape

buffers to preserve the residential character. The proposed development contributes to the cultural continuity of the District while respecting the commercial and residential patterns set out in the QPHCD Plan.

D.4 QPHCD Study Area (2025)

In February 2025, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake enacted a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Study By-law under Section 40.1 of the Ontario Heritage Act. This by-law temporarily restricts exterior alterations, new construction, and demolition within a defined study area of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District, while a review of the existing HCD Plan is underway. Importantly, the subject lands at 79–85 Queen Street and 178–188 Victoria Street are exempt from this temporary restriction. The current redevelopment proposal was submitted before the by-law came into effect and has undergone full pre-consultation with Town planning and heritage staff.

Alignment of the Project with the HCD Study Objectives

Although not subject to the restrictions of the 2025 HCD Study By-law, the proposed development reflects the objectives of the study by proactively addressing design compatibility, massing transitions, and heritage character. Through extensive revisions and engagement with Town staff, the Municipal Heritage Committee, and local stakeholders, the project supports the broader goals of the District Plan review, namely, the enhancement and long-term stewardship of the Queen-Picton HCD's contextual, architectural, and cultural values.

D.5 Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan (2017 Consolidated)

The 2017 Consolidated Official Plan (OP) outlines the Town's objectives and policies for cultural heritage conservation, particularly in designated Heritage Conservation Districts such as Queen-Picton. Section 18.2 of the OP provides the following relevant directives:

1. Protect, preserve, and restore original architectural details of buildings that have architectural and historical merit.
2. Encourage sympathetic contemporary design that complements the heritage context without imitating historical styles.
3. Prevent the demolition or inappropriate alteration of heritage resources and their defining elements.
4. Promote compatible development adjacent to heritage properties to maintain the character and cohesion of the district.
5. Support adaptive reuse of heritage assets to ensure their continued viability and contribution to the community.

These policies work in tandem with the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan (1986), offering a layered approach to managing development within the District. The proposed redevelopment aligns with these directives by replacing compromised heritage fabric with a use that supports ongoing cultural vitality, ensuring compatibility in scale, massing, and streetscape character while maintaining the theatre's long-standing civic function within Niagara-on-the-Lake.

D.6 Draft Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan (2019, Not Yet in Force)

The 2019 Draft Official Plan, although not yet in force, reiterates the Town's intention to preserve and enhance its cultural heritage resources. The subject lands are located within the Downtown Character Area, which encompasses the core of the National Historic Site and includes a high concentration of heritage buildings and streetscapes.

The plan identifies the following heritage values and attributes for this area:

- Evidence of continuous development from the Loyalist settlement period through to the present day

- A large number of well-conserved pre-1850 buildings, along with important urban design features such as the early street grid, generous setbacks, and visual corridors
- A mix of residential, commercial, institutional, and cultural uses, consistent with the historic evolution of the area
- Narrow lot frontages, limited building materials (e.g., clapboard, brick, roughcast), mature trees, and landscaped gardens
- Iconic landmarks including the Clock Tower, Court House, Apothecary Museum, and Shaw Festival Theatre

The plan recommends that new development in this area should conserve the character-defining elements of the cultural heritage landscape through:

- Contextual integration of form, massing, and materials
- Commemoration plans for sites with layered historical significance
- Height restrictions on mid-block infill to ensure compatibility with the surrounding built fabric

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre has been designed with sensitivity to these principles, contributing to the long-term integrity and evolution of Niagara-on-the-Lake's historic core.

D.7 Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010)

The proposed redevelopment follows the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada through a Rehabilitation approach—supporting the adaptive reuse of historic places while preserving their heritage value. This approach has informed the architectural strategy for the Royal George Theatre, particularly in the reinterpretation of the Peter Stokes-designed façade and the careful integration of the new structure within the historic fabric of Queen and Victoria Streets.

The following Standards are particularly applicable to this project:

- Standard 1: Heritage value is being conserved by retaining the theatre's cultural and associative significance while removing structurally and functionally compromised buildings.
- Standard 2: Minimal intervention is applied by reusing the site footprint and referencing the former theatre through a ghost façade rather than exact replication.
- Standard 5: The ongoing cultural function of the site as a theatre is maintained, allowing continuity of use with limited impact to heritage character.
- Standard 9: New design elements, including the ghost façade, materials, and massing, are visually and physically compatible with their context while remaining distinguishable from historic forms.
- Standard 11: Building additions and new construction are clearly subordinate and defer to the rhythm, proportion, and height of the district's traditional architecture.
- Standard 12: The project is designed to allow future reversibility, ensuring that essential heritage values are not compromised.

By applying these standards, the redevelopment both respects and reinvigorates the heritage character of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District, ensuring that the site continues to evolve as a living cultural landmark.



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STANDARD TERMS OF REFERENCE: Heritage Impact Assessments & Cultural Heritage Evaluation Reports

Reviewed and approved by Council: May 17, 2021

Purpose: This document sets out the minimum requirements for the submission of a Heritage Impact Assessment and/or Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report when required by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Failure to adhere to the guidelines may result in a submission being considered unsatisfactory and deemed incomplete.

1.1 Description

A Heritage Impact Assessment (an “HIA”) is a study to evaluate the impact a proposed development or site alteration will have on a cultural heritage resource and to recommend an overall approach to the conservation of the resource. The HIA will be based on a thorough understanding of the significance and heritage attributes of the cultural heritage resource, identify any impact the proposed development or site alteration will have on the resource, provide mitigation options, and demonstrate how the cultural heritage resource will be conserved in the context of the proposed redevelopment or site alteration. The conservation strategy will apply conservation principles, describe the conservation work, and recommend methods to avoid or mitigate negative impacts to the cultural heritage resource. Minimal intervention should be the guiding principle for all work.

A Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (a “CHER”) is a study to evaluate whether a property (or properties) contains cultural heritage value. If cultural heritage value is identified, the CHER provides a statement of significance and identifies heritage attributes. A CHER may form part of an HIA, especially where new cultural heritage resources are identified.

1.2 What is a Cultural Heritage Resource?

As defined in the Town’s 2019 adopted Official Plan, a Cultural Heritage Resource means: built heritage resources, protected heritage properties, cultural heritage landscapes, historic sites, paleontological resources, monuments, archaeological resources and/or areas of archaeological potential that have been determined to have cultural heritage value or interest for the important contribution they make to our understanding of the history of a place, an event, or a people.



1.3 Policy Context

An HIA is intended to determine if a proposed development is compliant with heritage policies, and to assist staff with analysis of the development application and preparation of a recommendation to Council regarding the development application. The rationale for requiring a HIA/CHER arises from the following policy documents, as amended:

- The *Ontario Heritage Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18
- Section 2(d) of the *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13
- Section 2.6 of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) 2020
- Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan, 2017 Office Consolidation
- Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan, 2019 (adopted)

HIA/CHERs will be based on accepted conservation principles and guidelines, including the following guidance documents as amended:

- The Parks Canada Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, Second Edition, 2010 – Parks Canada
- The Ontario Heritage Toolkit and other guidance documents – Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
- Eight Guiding Principles in the Conservation of Historic Properties – Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
- Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Provincial Heritage Properties – Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
- Well-Preserved: The Ontario Heritage Foundation's Manual of Principles and Practice for Architectural Conservation, 2003 – Ontario Heritage Trust
- The Appleton Charter for the Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment, 1983 – International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

1.4 When is an HIA/CHER Required?

An HIA/CHER may be required by Staff to inform the review of an application that may impact a cultural heritage resource or affects a property that is adjacent to a cultural heritage resource. With respect to cultural heritage resources, **adjacent** means: not only contiguous or abutting properties but also any property upon which a proposed development and/or site alteration may have a known or potential impact upon the heritage attributes of a cultural heritage resource.

An HIA/CHER may be required for any application including, but not limited to:

- Official Plan Amendment
- Zoning By-law Amendment
- Plan of Subdivision/Condominium
- Site Plan Approval



- Consent / Boundary Adjustment
- Minor Variance
- Building Permit
- Heritage Permit
- Demolition Permit

In accordance with the policies in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2020, an HIA/CHER may be required when there is a proposed alteration, demolition, or development involving or adjacent to any cultural heritage resource including, but not limited to:

- Properties designated under Parts IV, V or VI of the *Ontario Heritage Act*;
- Properties listed on the Niagara-on-the-Lake Municipal Register of Properties of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest;
- Properties that fall within a National Historic Site of Canada or otherwise listed on a Federal Register;
- Properties contributing to a cultural heritage landscape;
- Properties adjacent to a cultural heritage resource;
- Properties identified within the Town's Official Plan as cultural heritage resources; and
- Any yet unidentified cultural heritage resource(s) found as part of a site assessment.

Depending on the proposed project, an HIA/CHER may be scoped or waived at Town Staff's discretion in certain circumstances.

Where there is the potential of impacting archaeological resources, an Archaeological Assessment will be required as an additional study. Areas of archaeological potential have been identified within the Town's Archaeological Master Plan.

1.5 Who can prepare an HIA/CHER?

An HIA/CHER will be prepared by a qualified heritage consultant such as a professional heritage planner, heritage architect, or heritage landscape architect with appropriate qualifications, demonstrated knowledge of heritage conservation principles, and who has previously undertaken historical research and evaluation of cultural heritage resources.

Heritage consultants must be members in good standing of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals (CAHP). Consultants who are not CAHP members but who hold equivalent qualifications may be considered at the discretion of Staff. The background and qualifications of the heritage consultant(s) must be included in the HIA/CHER. The consultant preparing the HIA/CHER must also be independent from the planning, consulting or engineering firm making the development application or working on behalf of the applicant.



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In addition, any archaeological component of the assessment must be carried out by a licensed professional archaeologist as required by Provincial law and must follow Provincial Standards and Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists, 2011, as amended.

1.6 Required Minimum Content

The content of an HIA/CHER will include, but is not limited to, the following required information (the Director of Community and Development Services reserves the right to request that additional content be included in the HIA/CHER, beyond the minimum standards identified here):

1. Introduction to Subject Lands / Development Site

- A location plan clearly indicating subject lands;
- A concise written and visual description of the subject lands identifying all significant features, buildings, landscape and vistas;
- A concise written and visual description of the cultural heritage resource(s) contained within the subject lands identifying significant features, buildings, landscape, vistas and including any heritage recognition of the property (including but not limited to Parks Canada National Historic Sites of Canada, and/or Canadian Register of Historic Places) with existing heritage descriptions as available;
- A concise written and visual description of the context including adjacent heritage properties and their recognition (as above), and any yet unidentified potential cultural heritage resource(s); and
- Present owner contact information.

2. Background Research and Analysis

- Comprehensive written and visual research and analysis related to the cultural heritage value or interest of the subject lands (both identified and unidentified): physical or design, historical or associative, and contextual;
- A development history of the subject lands including original construction, additions and alterations with substantiated dates of construction; and
- Research material to include relevant historic maps and atlases, drawings, photographs, sketches/renderings, permit records, land records, assessment rolls, fire insurance maps, etc.

3. Statement of Significance



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- A statement of significance that identifies the cultural heritage value and heritage attributes of each cultural heritage resource (both identified and unidentified). This statement will be informed by current research and analysis of the site as well as pre-existing heritage descriptions. This statement is to follow the provincial guidelines set out in the Ontario Heritage Tool Kit;
- The statement of significance will be written in a way that does not respond to or anticipate any current or proposed interventions. The Town may, at its discretion and upon review, reject or use the statement of significance, in whole or in part, in crafting its own statement of significance for the subject lands; and
- Professional quality record photographs of the cultural heritage resource in its present state.

4. Assessment of Existing Condition

- A comprehensive written description and high-quality color photographic documentation of the cultural heritage resource(s) in its current condition.

5. Description of the Proposed Development or Site Alteration

- A written and visual description of the proposed development or site alteration; and
- Description of how the proposal meets the policies and objectives of the Town's Official Plan.

6. Impact of Development or Site Alteration

- An assessment identifying any impact the proposed development or site alteration may have on a cultural heritage resource both on site and adjacent to the subject lands.
- Negative impacts to a cultural heritage resource including, but not limited to, those outlined in the Ontario Heritage Tool Kit.

7. Alternatives and Mitigation Strategies

- An assessment of alternative development options, mitigation measures, and conservation methods to avoid and limit the negative impact on any cultural heritage resource including, but not limited to, methods outlined in the Ontario Heritage Tool Kit.

8. Conservation Strategy



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- The preferred strategy recommended to best protect and enhance the cultural heritage value and heritage attributes of any cultural heritage resource including, but not limited to:
 - A mitigation strategy including the proposed methods;
 - A conservation scope of work including the proposed methods; and
 - An implementation and monitoring plan.
- Recommendations for additional studies/plans related to, but not limited to: conservation; site-specific design guidelines; interpretation/commemoration; lighting; signage; landscape; stabilization; additional record and documentation prior to demolition; and long-term maintenance.
- Referenced conservation principles and precedents.

9. Appendices

- A complete bibliography listing all source materials used and institutions consulted in preparing the HIA/CHER.

1.7 Review of HIA/CHER

HIA/CHERs will be reviewed by Staff and the Town's Municipal Heritage Committee. The HIA/CHER will form part of the public record as part of a development application and be available for review by the public.

1.8 Peer Review

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake reserves the right to request an independent peer review of the HIA/CHER, at the cost of the property owner/applicant, if a peer review is deemed necessary by the Director of Community and Development Services, generally after consultation with the Town's Municipal Heritage Committee. Peer reviews will evaluate the information and assessments provided in the submitted HIA/CHER. Peer reviews must, as a minimum standard, address inconsistencies, factual errors, discrepancies, omissions, misrepresentations, the application of recognized standards, and the appropriateness of the recommended conservation strategy in consideration of recognized standards.