



SUSAN WHEELER + ASSOCIATES
Urban Planning Consultants

289 Victoria Street
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON
L0S 1J0
905.650.1275

susan@susanwheelerassociates.com

PLANNING JUSTIFICATION REPORT

Application for Site Specific Official Plan & Zoning By-law Amendments

+

Site Plan Approval

THE NEW ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE

79 - 83 Queen Street

+

178 & 188 Victoria Street

Now known as 85 Queen Street

Niagara-on-the-lake, Ontario

April 22, 2024

Revised to May 21, 2025

Revised to May 26, 2025

Revised to August 15, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preamble

1.0	Introduction
1.1	Project Overview
1.2	Rationale for the Redevelopment
1.3	Community Benefits
1.4	Planning Approvals
2.0	Site & Surrounding Area
2.1	Niagara-on-the-Lake Context
2.2	Royal George Theatre History
2.3	Subject Site Description
2.4	Surrounding Land Use
2.5	Neighbourhood Context
3.0	Development Proposal
3.1	Site Layout
3.2	Built Form
3.3	Internal Functionality
3.4	Development Approvals
3.5	Public Consultation Process
4.0	Policy Framework & Regulatory Context
4.1	Planning Act
4.2	Provincial Policy Statement
4.3	Niagara Official Plan
4.4	Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan
4.5	Queen Picton Heritage District Plan
4.6	Niagara-on-the-Lake Zoning By-law
5.0	Supporting Studies & Reports
6.0	Summary & Conclusions
7.0	Statements of Endorsement
	Wayne Gates, MPP, Niagara Falls
	Gary Zalepa, Lord Mayor, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

- 8.0 Appendices
 - 8.1 Draft Official Plan Amendment
 - 8.2 Draft Zoning By-law Amendment
 - 8.3 Property Index Map & Parcel Register
 - 8.4 Pre Consultation Agreement

1.0
INTRODUCTION

Preamble

An application for an Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment was submitted to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake on May 29, 2025, to support the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre. The application was deemed complete by Town Planning Staff and circulated to relevant Town departments and government agencies for review and comment. An Open House was held on June 16, followed by a Public Meeting under the Planning Act on July 6. The Municipal Heritage Committee (MHC) met on July 7 to review the proposal, which included a report from the Town's Heritage Consultant, ERA Heritage Architects Inc (ERA).

Public feedback from both public meetings—along with written submissions and recommendations from ERA and the MHC—provided the project team with valuable input on key concerns. In response, the theatre team hosted the Royal George Community Consultation Open House and theatre tour, involving the project architect as well as Shaw Festival's technical, artistic, and administrative staff, to further engage with the community.

A design charrette was held on July 29, featuring an in-depth discussion of possible solutions to issues raised by the public, the Heritage architect, and the MHC.

As a result of this comprehensive consultation process and ongoing collaboration with Town Planning Staff and heritage stakeholders, the project has undergone significant revisions to address the concerns identified.

The updated design for the New Royal George Theatre incorporates community feedback and presents a refreshed iteration of the original concept. It respects the historic Queen Street streetscape, honours the legacy of the Royal George Theatre, and enhances visual compatibility with the Victoria Street residential neighbourhood and adjacent properties.

The following is a summary of the key design updates integrated into the New Royal George Theatre.

Building Scale & Massing

A primary concern raised by both the community and decision-makers involved the scale and massing of the original design, particularly its impact on the Queen Street

and Victoria Street streetscapes. In response, the overall building area has been reduced by 1,114 square feet. To improve visual compatibility along Queen Street, the second and third floors of the façade have been further stepped back from the front face of the building by 24.5 feet and 11.5 feet, respectively.

This reduction in area results in smaller lobby spaces across all three levels and a downsized rehearsal hall. An additional 5 foot setback on Victoria Street enhances compatibility with the surrounding residential neighbourhood. Additionally, the rehearsal hall has been moved 5 feet to the south to minimize the visual impact on the neighbouring property.

Streetscape and Building Façade

Queen Street

Although the existing façade is not original to the theatre—having been constructed as a theatrical interpretation of various venues that have historically occupied the Royal George site—it has nonetheless become a recognizable visual landmark within the heart of the Heritage District. To reflect the established scale of Queen Street, a "ghost façade" has been introduced, replicating the scale and proportions of the current facade.

Additionally, the entry ramp has been relocated inside the building, reestablishing a direct, at-grade relationship between the entrance and the sidewalk. A centrally placed illuminated marquee highlights the main entrance, as in the previous design, and a small landscaped courtyard with seating will be added beside the marquee to enhance the public realm. By moving the ramping to the interior of the building, it allows the theatre to rise above the water table further back on the property.

Victoria Street

To better integrate the new façade with the residential character of Victoria Street, several design adjustments have been made. The building has been set back an additional 5 feet from Victoria Street, and the north wall of the rehearsal hall has been reduced by 5 feet, increasing its distance from the nearest residential property.

A bay window replaces the more contemporary glazing originally proposed on the street-facing façade of the rehearsal hall, allowing passersby to see actors at work. This feature supports the Shaw's educational mission and fosters engagement with

both residents and visitors. To reduce its visual impact on the scale of the building on the Victoria Street façade, the height of the rehearsal hall has been lowered by 9 feet, bringing it to 19 feet above grade, and a pitched roof has been introduced over the rehearsal hall and scenic loading dock to reflect the surrounding residential rooflines. Further, wooden louvers are being considered to minimize light spillage.

Enhanced Landscaping and Tree Preservation

Queen Street

Stepped-back terraces on the second and third floors of the Queen Street façade will be enhanced with ornamental plantings that cascade over the parapet, softening the building's appearance from the street. At ground level, the courtyard will feature ornamental trees and landscaping to further enrich the streetscape.

Victoria Street

The increased setback from Victoria Street provides additional space for landscaping that reinforces the residential character of the neighbourhood.

The scenic delivery dock will be screened from view by a decorative wrought iron fence with brick pillars, an automatic gate, and landscaping. Additional ornamental planting will soften the streetscape, and ivy will be introduced on the dock façade above the canopy—mirroring the treatment used on the fly tower on the east side of the building.

Interior Layout

The interior layout has been revised to reflect the reduced building area and updated design, while maintaining efficient circulation and a high standard of patron amenities.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Planning Justification Report is to provide the rationale and justification for the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre for the performing arts at its current location within the Queen Picton Heritage Conservation District of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The site consists of four contiguous parcels of land, now amalgamated to create a single parcel of land to accommodate the redevelopment project. The theater and box office currently located at 83 and 79 Queen Street respectively, together with additional properties more recently acquired at 178 and 188 Victoria Street make up the redevelopment site, now known as 85 Queen Street. It will be necessary to demolish the existing buildings to accommodate the construction of the new theatre complex. This report will outline the necessity for the redevelopment, assesses the impact on heritage resources and highlights the benefits of the proposed project to the community, cultural landscape and provides policy justification for the proposed development.

1.1 Project Overview

The redevelopment project aims to address the existing limitations and deficiencies of the current theatre facility while enhancing its capacity to meet the evolving needs of the community and the performing arts sector. The proposed redevelopment includes the following components:

1. Amalgamation of the four parcels of land to create one building site.
2. Demolition of existing buildings deemed unsuitable for adaptive reuse or the potential restoration of the existing theatre.
3. Construction of a new state-of-the-art theatre facility equipped with modern amenities, improved accessibility, and enhanced performance spaces.

1.2 Rationale for the Redevelopment Project:

1. Functional Obsolescence: the existing theatre facility suffers from functional obsolescence and significant structural deficiencies, with outdated infrastructure, limited seating capacity and inadequate backstage facilities together with critical limitations for accessibility. Redevelopment is essential to address these deficiencies, to improve operational efficiency and for the theatre to continue to operate past the 2025 performance season.

2. **Community Needs:** the redevelopment project aims to better serve the diverse cultural and artistic needs of the community by providing enhanced performance spaces, rehearsal studios and educational facilities. The new theatre will feature publicly accessible spaces including a café and lounge areas for community gathering and to facilitate social engagement.
3. **Economic Viability:** A modernized theatre facility has the potential to attract larger audiences, increase revenue streams, create jobs, and stimulate economic activity in the Town of Niagara-on-the-lake as well as the Niagara Region, contributing to the viability of the Queen Picton Heritage District and the commercial core of the Old Town. The new theatre complex will introduce the opportunity for winter programming, that is now currently possible.
4. **Preservation through Redevelopment:** While the demolition of buildings within the heritage district is unavoidable to accommodate the new theatre facility, the impact is mitigated by the enhancement of the cultural landscape through the creation of a modern performing arts venue that allows the theatre to continue operation beyond the 2025 season and for the next 50 years and beyond.
5. **Environmental Impact:** The redevelopment project incorporates sustainable design principles, including energy-efficient building systems, and the use of sustainable materials in construction to minimize environmental impact and promote sustainability with the goal of achieving a [net zero carbon footprint](#) and leading accessibility frameworks ([Rick Hansen Gold Certification](#)), which would be firsts in North America for a theatre venue.

1.3 Community Benefits

1. **Cultural Enrichment:** The redevelopment of the theatre will enrich the cultural fabric of the local and surrounding community by providing improved facilities for artistic expression, continued performances and associated cultural events.

2. Social Inclusion: Enhanced accessibility features and community programming will ensure the theatre remains accessible to all members of the public providing social inclusion and diversity.

3. Economic Stimulus: The revitalization of the theatre facility is expected to generate significant additional economic benefits in the range of \$70 million per annum through increased tourism, job creation, and the continued benefits to the commercial community that depend on the theatre for their economic prosperity.

In summary, the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre offers a balanced solution that addresses the limitations of the existing facility while honouring the heritage character of the surrounding district. Although the removal of buildings within the heritage district is never undertaken lightly, it is a necessary step to secure the long-term sustainability and cultural relevance of the theatre. Through the integration of sustainable design principles and the enhancement of community amenities, the project aims to make a meaningful contribution to the cultural, social, and economic vitality of both the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the broader Niagara Region.

1.4 Planning Approvals

An application is being submitted for site-specific amendments to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan and Zoning By-law, along with Site Plan Approval, to facilitate the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre. A preliminary application was submitted on May 29, and feedback from Town departments, the Municipal Heritage Committee (MHC), ERA Heritage Architects (ERA), and the public informed a comprehensive redesign of the proposal. As a result, updated documentation is being resubmitted to reflect the revised development concept.

The subject lands, now consolidated into a single parcel municipally known as 85 Queen Street, include the former properties at 79–83 Queen Street and 178 and 188 Victoria Street. The site is approximately 0.285 hectares in size and is located within the Queen-Picton Heritage District, at the core of Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is currently occupied by the Royal George Theatre and box office along Queen Street, as well as a commercial building and a residential dwelling fronting Victoria Street.

Within the Town's Official Plan, 79–83 Queen Street and 188 Victoria Street are designated *General Commercial* and zoned *Queen-Picton Commercial*. In contrast, 178 Victoria Street is designated and zoned *Established Residential*.

The proposed Official Plan Amendment seeks to redesignate the consolidated site at 85 Queen Street from *Established Residential* and *General Commercial* to *General Commercial – Site Specific* to permit a "theatre" as the sole permitted use, as defined in the amending by-law, and to allow an increase in the height of the fly tower to 19.6 metres (an increase of less than 1.8 metres).

The Zoning By-law Amendment proposes to rezone the lands from *Established Residential* (ER) Zone and *Queen-Picton Commercial* (QPC) Zone to *Queen-Picton Commercial – Site Specific Zone*, permitting a "theatre" as defined in the amending by-law and allowing for site-specific provisions as outlined in the draft amendment.

A Planning Justification Report prepared by Susan Wheler & Associates, on behalf of the Shaw Festival Theatre, supports the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments and the accompanying Site Plan Approval for the redevelopment of the subject lands as the New Royal George Theatre.

Upon resubmission of the full application package, including all required reports and plans, the proposed amendments will proceed through the formal planning process. The four properties, now under common ownership by the Shaw Festival Theatre, have been formally amalgamated to accommodate the redevelopment under the new municipal address: 85 Queen Street.

The purpose of the Planning Justification Report is to provide:

- A detailed analysis of the development proposal,
- An overview of the subject property and the local context,
- A review of the applicable Provincial, Regional and Municipal planning policy and regulatory framework,
- A detailed understanding of the proposed built form, its uses and development standards,
- A summary of the supporting studies and technical reports; and,
- A discussion of the justification for the proposed planning approvals.

A Pre consultation meeting was held with Municipal and Regional staff on January 19, 2023 to provide comments on the redevelopment proposal and to establish submission requirements for the Site Specific Official Plan Amendment (OPA) and Zoning By-law Amendment (ZBA) applications and Site Plan approval. The Pre consultation agreement together with the required documents, drawings and technical reports as requested by staff have been submitted under cover.



The New Royal George Theatre – Queen Street Facade

2.0

SUBJECT SITE & NEIGHBOURHOOD CONTEXT

2.0 SUBJECT SITE + NEIGHBOURHOOD CONTEXT

2.1 Niagara-on-the-Lake Context

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake is situated at the confluence of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River at the northeasterly tip of the Niagara Region adjacent to the Canada/United States border. Originally the first capital of Upper Canada, the Old Town is known for its rich heritage and architecture, historic sites and its rural landscapes. Once a quiet rural community, the Old Town now enjoys a world class theatre, a vibrant arts scene and renowned estate wineries, drawing local and international tourists year-round.

The province designated the Queen Picton Heritage District as a heritage conservation district in 1986 and was later designated a National Historic District in 2004.

The Niagara Region is largely reliant on tourism, supported in large part by the Shaw Festival family of theatres that contribute \$300 million per annum to the local economy with spinoff benefits to local wineries and the accommodation and retail sectors. The Queen Picton Heritage District boasts a bustling commercial area featuring retail stores, restaurants and hotels bookended by four Shaw Theatre venues; the Festival Theatre, the Jackie Maxwell Studio, the Court House Theatre and the Royal George Theatre. The Shaw family of theatres offer world-class productions eleven months of the year drawing 325,000 patrons to the Town, many of whom return year after year. The Theatre buoys the local economy with patrons who support the accommodation industry as well as retail shops, restaurants and wineries, not only in the Old Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake but throughout the Niagara Region.

The Royal George Theatre is situated in the heart of the Queen Picton Heritage District that stretches from Wellington Street to Gate Street on the west to east axis and from Johnson Street to Prideaux Street on the north to south axis, encompassing the commercial core area clustered around Queen Street, as well as the historic residential neighbourhoods that surround the commercial area. Every effort has been made to diminish the migration of commercial uses into the established residential neighbourhoods. However, over time the pressure resulting from the increasing volume of tourists who visit the Town each year has led to continual migration of commercial uses into residential areas, where appropriate, and with the approval of Town Council.

2.2 Royal George Theatre History

The Royal George Theatre has long served as a cornerstone of Niagara-on-the-Lake's cultural and performing arts scene, proudly occupying its site in the heart of the town's heritage commercial district. Originally built in 1915 during the First World War as a temporary officers' training facility, the building soon transitioned into a vaudeville house and gradually evolved into a respected performance venue. Over the decades, the theatre has been adapted to meet the shifting demands of the entertainment industry and audience expectations, undergoing major renovations in 1940 and again in 1984. The Royal George stands today as a living reflection of the town's enduring theatrical heritage and its ongoing commitment to the arts.

2.3 Subject Site Description

The subject site is prominently located on the north side of Queen Street, between Victoria and Regent Streets, within the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake's heritage commercial district. Formerly comprised of four individual properties—79 and 83 Queen Street and 178 and 188 Victoria Street—the lands have recently been consolidated into a single parcel, now municipally known as 85 Queen Street, with a total area of approximately 0.285 hectares.

The existing Royal George Theatre, located at 83 Queen Street, is a three-storey structure featuring a fly tower. Adjacent to the theatre, at 79 Queen Street, is a single-storey building housing the box office and wardrobe shop. To the rear of the site, 188 and 178 Victoria Street are located directly behind the Bank of Montreal at the corner of Queen and Victoria Streets.

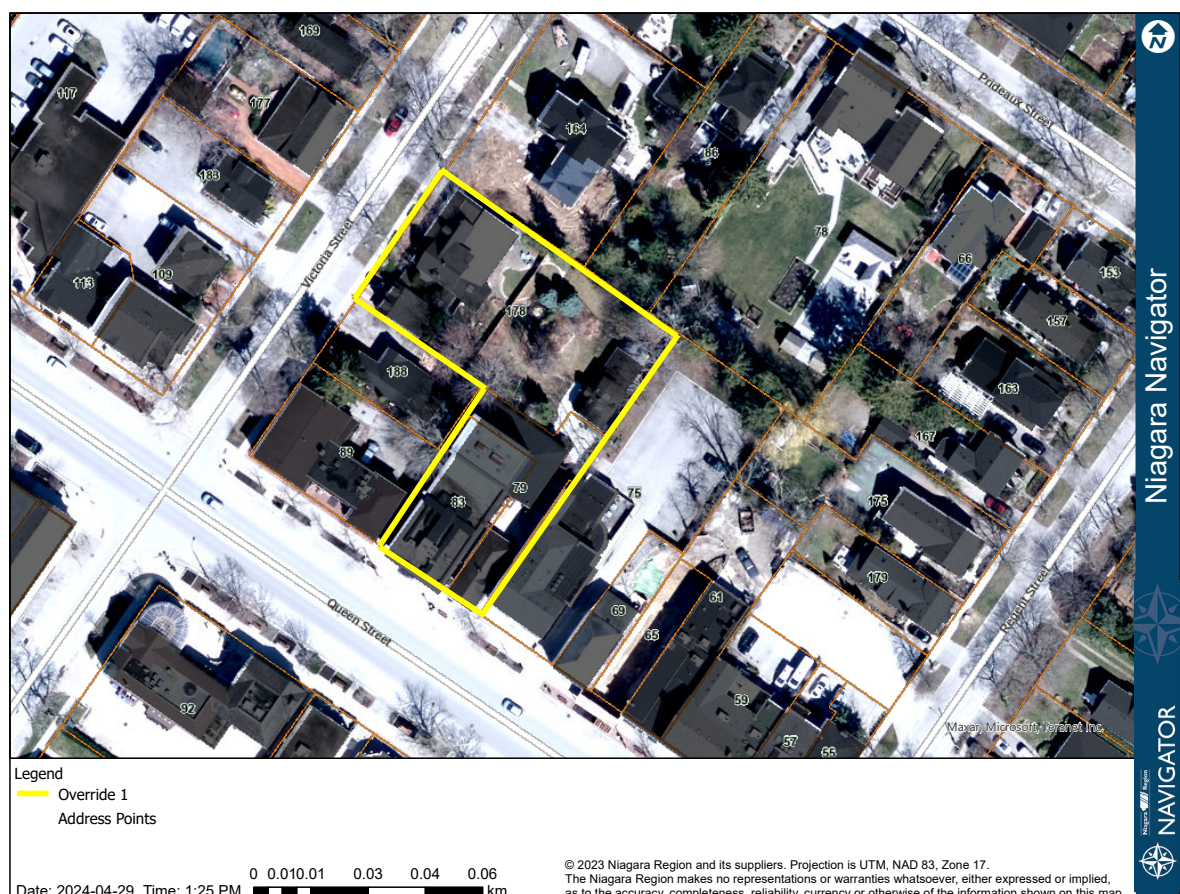
188 Victoria Street, a two-storey structure originally constructed as a single-family residence, has been converted for commercial use in recent years. 178 Victoria Street consists of a one-and-a-half-storey residential dwelling, with an accessory structure at the rear that previously functioned as a gallery and studio space for an artist in residence. Currently, both properties accommodate Shaw Festival cast and staff, while the gallery is used periodically for audience engagement events.

All existing buildings and accessory structures on the site are proposed to be removed to facilitate the redevelopment. The site is generally flat and features a frontage of 23.1 metres along Queen Street and 65.31 metres along Victoria Street.

All properties are currently fully serviced by municipal water, sanitary sewer and storm sewers. Upgrades to existing services will be required to accommodate the new theatre complex.

In 1986 Niagara-on-the-Lake Council approved the designation of the Queen Picton Streets Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD) under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) and registered the designation on the title of each property located within the boundaries of the district. The four amalgamated properties that make up the subject site are located within the Queen Picton Heritage District.

All four buildings are categorized as 'B' buildings according to the Queen Picton Heritage District Plan, prepared by Nicolas Hill, a comprehensive report identifying the heritage, architectural and contextual value of commercial and residential buildings within the Queen Picton Heritage District including their contribution to the streetscape. It should be noted that buildings designated as 'A' or 'B' buildings in the report does not necessarily confer heritage and/or architectural value to the structure but may be considered for their contextual value and their contribution to the streetscape as a whole.



Location Map



Royal George Theatre – Queen Street – Existing Façade and Box Office

2.4 Surrounding Land Use

The subject site is located in the heart of the Queen Picton Heritage District that includes both commercial properties and established residential neighbourhoods. The existing theatre and box office front onto the north side of Queen Street. Properties located on Queen Street between Gate Street to the west and King Street to the east are entirely commercial within both the northerly and southerly block face.

188 Victoria Street, located immediately behind the Bank of Montreal at the corner of Victoria and Queen Street, is a commercial property presently owned by the Shaw Theatre. 178 Victoria Street is a single-family residence with a commercial gallery at the rear of the building. Further to the north, the property located at 164 Victoria Street, abutting the rear property boundary of 178 Victoria Street, is a single-family residence operated as a guest house. The balance of the easterly Victoria Street block face consists of single-family homes.

In the westerly Victoria Street block face, two commercial buildings, formerly single-family residences, face 178 and 188 Victoria Street. The remaining buildings on the west side of Victoria Street running north to Prideaux Street are single-family homes.

2.5 Neighbourhood Context

Queen Street – North Block face

Commercial buildings fronting on Queen Street are a mix of old and new structures that form a unique and appealing streetscape providing context to the Queen Picton Heritage District. Building scale and massing, height and lot depth vary widely within the QPHD. The three buildings immediately to the west of the theatre have been constructed within the past 50 years as has the building immediately to the east.

Further to the west in the north block face, between Victoria Street and Gate Street, the buildings are a mixture of old and new and include heritage buildings as well as the contemporary architecture of the Canada Post Office.

Queen Street - South Block face

Directly across from the theatre are the Shaw's Café and an adjacent retail-commercial building, both constructed within the past 50 years. On the south side of Queen Street, between Victoria and Gate Streets, the historic McClelland Building anchors the southwest corner of Queen and Victoria Streets. The majority of commercial buildings fronting Queen Street in this southern block face are designated heritage properties.

More recently, a new hotel complex—124 on Queen—has been developed in a secondary commercial tier located behind the heritage storefronts along Queen Street. This complex comprises a mix of existing and newly constructed buildings and backs onto a well-established residential neighbourhood to the south, characterized primarily by heritage homes.

Over time, amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law have allowed for controlled commercial expansion beyond the Queen Street frontage, primarily along side streets, while maintaining the historic character and scale of the area.

Queen Street Streetscape facing west



Queen Street Streetscape facing east



Queen Street – Block face opposite Royal George



3.0

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

3.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The Shaw Festival Theatre is proposing the redevelopment of the subject lands into a new Royal George Theatre complex that will serve both the local community and the many visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake. The redesigned, multi-functional facility will include a 360-seat theatre, rehearsal studio, café, rooftop garden, meeting rooms, administrative offices, and fully equipped production spaces to support cast and costume operations. The existing theatre currently seats 305 patrons, reduced from its original 335 seats in 2017 to improve comfort by increasing legroom.

This redevelopment aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Royal George Theatre beyond the 2025 season while reinforcing its role as a cultural cornerstone in the heart of the Queen-Picton Heritage District.

Redesign of Preliminary Concept

A preliminary application for the proposed redevelopment was submitted to the Town on May 29, 2025. In response to comments from Town staff, community members, and heritage stakeholders received through an extensive consultation process, the project has undergone a significant redesign. The revised design has been thoughtfully developed to reinforce compatibility with the Queen Street Heritage District and the surrounding residential neighbourhood, with particular attention to scale, massing, and streetscape character.

The new complex is intended to be highly accessible—welcoming to the public, community organizations, and theatre patrons alike. By integrating public spaces such as a café, rooftop garden, and courtyard, the project encourages year-round community engagement.

In addition to preserving a key cultural asset, the redevelopment is expected to generate positive social and economic impacts by supporting local businesses, attracting tourism, creating jobs, and enhancing the town’s reputation as a destination for world-class theatre and heritage.

Land Assembly and Supporting Facilities

To enable the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre, the Shaw

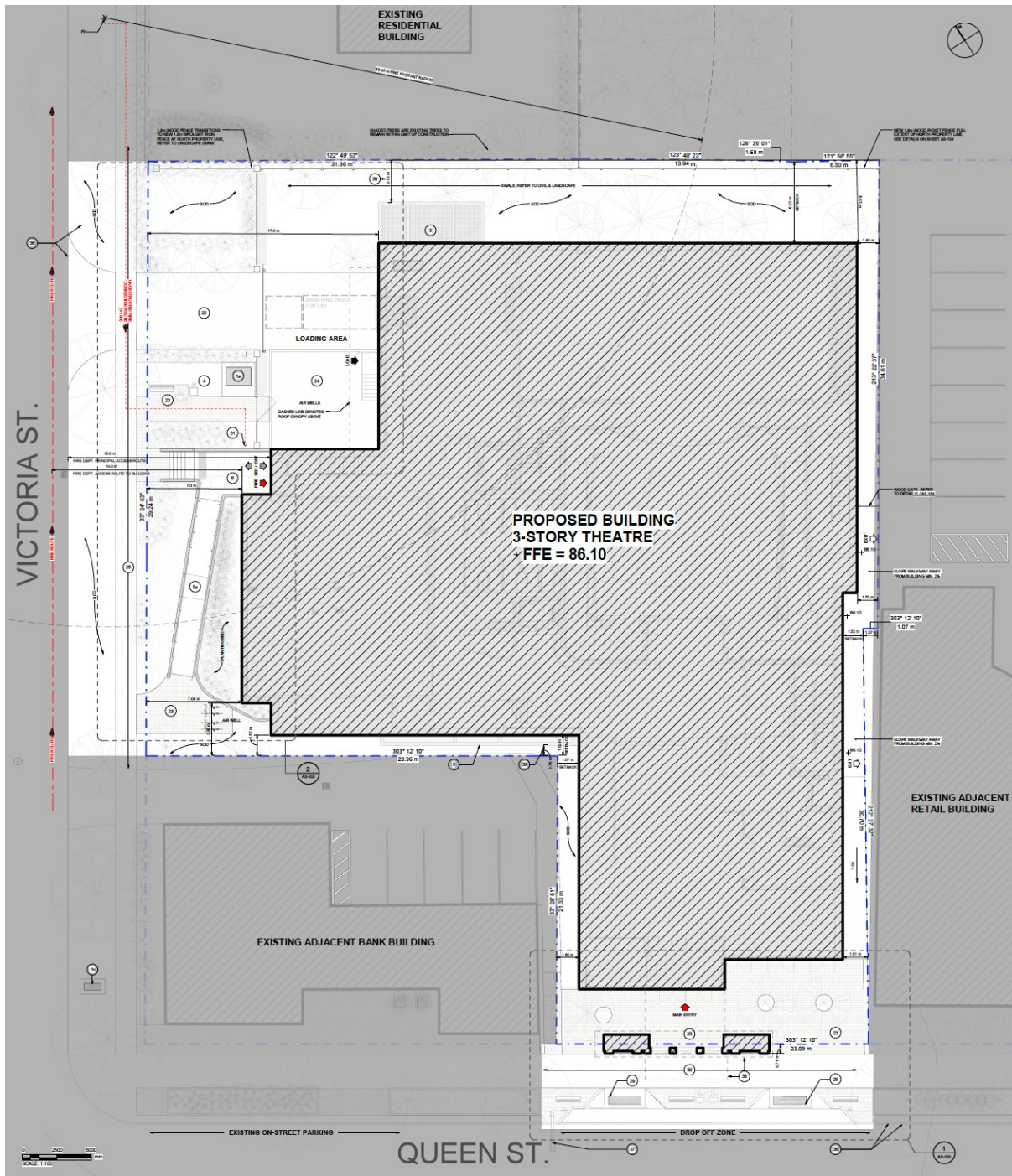
Festival has assembled and formally amalgamated four contiguous parcels, including the existing theatre and box office. These properties now constitute a single development site totaling approximately 0.285 hectares. All existing buildings on the site are proposed to be demolished to facilitate construction of the new theatre complex.

As part of a broader strategic initiative, the Shaw Festival has also acquired the former Upper Canada Lodge (UCL) from Parks Canada. This long-term care facility, decommissioned in December 2024, is being repurposed into an Artist's Village. The proposed Artist's Village will provide residential accommodation for artists and students, as well as associated support services and educational space, to serve the needs of the Shaw Festival's operations.

The UCL site is also intended to function as a key off-site support facility for the Royal George Theatre project. Preliminary planning indicates that approximately 88 parking spaces can be accommodated on the UCL property. These spaces will serve both the Artist's Village and provide much-needed supplementary parking for the Royal George Theatre, helping to mitigate potential impacts on neighbourhood parking demand.

3.1 Site Layout

The site layout maintains the theatre's presence at its current location within the Queen Street streetscape and allows for expansion onto the recently acquired rear lands to provide for additional uses and functionality to be incorporated into the redevelopment complex. The main entranceway to the theatre, box office and lobby remain at street level on Queen Street to seamlessly integrate with the existing streetscape. A secondary entrance is provided for occasional use with access from Victoria Street. Patrons, staff and performers will continue to use the Queen Street entrance as the primary access to the theatre on a daily basis. A scenic loading dock will be located at the north side of the new theatre complex with access via Victoria Street to facilitate the annual set and properties deliveries related to theatre production and performances. All other deliveries will continue to be accessed via the Queen Street entranceway. The reconfigured and expanded theater will necessitate moving the fly tower further to the north on the newly expanded development site.



Revised Site Plan (August 2025)

3.2 Built Form

Design Revisions and Integration with Heritage Context

Since the preliminary submission, the Royal George Theatre redevelopment has undergone substantial design revisions in response to feedback received through a comprehensive consultation process involving Town staff, heritage experts, and the broader community.

The revised design reduces the overall building area by 1,114 square feet. Key modifications have been made to reduce scale and massing and to better integrate the building within the QPHCD and the residential context.

On [Queen Street](#), the second and third floors of the south-facing façade have been stepped back by 24.5 feet and 11.5 feet, respectively. The overall façade has been redesigned to reflect the scale and proportions of the existing theatre, supporting a seamless fit within the Queen Street Heritage District streetscape. The public entrance has been re-centred on the façade and marked by an illuminated canopy. The exterior entry ramp previously located beside the entrance has been removed and replaced with an accessible interior solution. A small landscaped courtyard east of the entrance provides a welcoming gathering space for patrons.

On [Victoria Street](#), the building has been set back an additional 5 feet from the road allowance, and the height has been reduced by 11.5 feet. A bay window replaces the more contemporary glazing previously shown on the Victoria Street façade. The new window on the rehearsal hall will animate the façade and offer views into the artistic process, enhancing engagement with the street. The roofline has been redesigned with a pitched profile to align with the residential character of the surrounding neighbourhood.

The overall building will consist of three storeys above grade, plus a basement level. To soften the impact of the theatre's massing, traditional materials—such as limestone, brick, and wood siding, consistent with those found throughout the Heritage District—will be used throughout. These material choices, combined with the strategic setbacks and roof articulation, ensure that the new theatre visually integrates with adjacent buildings and land uses on both Queen and Victoria Streets.

The rear of the building has been set back 6.08 metres from the adjacent residential property line. To further minimize impact, the scenic dock has been repositioned farther from the property boundary by narrowing the width of the rehearsal hall. The scenic dock will be screened with a 1.8-metre-high decorative wrought iron fence, featuring brick pillars, an automatic gate, and ornamental landscaping, all designed to soften the visual impact on neighbouring properties.

The fly tower, located at the rear of the building, will have a height of 19.6 metres—an increase of 1.8 metres over the current structure. To soften its visual impact on the adjacent residential property, the north façade of the fly tower will be enhanced with cascading ivy. A similar green treatment will also be applied to the scenic dock façade, contributing to a more natural and visually appealing interface with neighbouring properties.



Queen Street & Victoria Street Facades showing Scale & Massing

3.3 Internal Functionality

Enhancing Functionality, Accessibility, and Community Experience

The redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre introduces significant improvements to the building's overall functionality, benefiting both patrons and theatre production personnel. A key feature of the new design is an expanded lobby that integrates public gathering areas and cafés, while improving accessibility throughout the facility. The enlarged lobby allows for smoother circulation during peak times, reduces congestion, and offers more comfortable waiting areas—all while meeting and exceeding modern building codes for accessibility and public gathering spaces. With the recent reduction in the overall size of the theatre the lobbies on all three levels have been reduced in size.

The inclusion of new gathering spaces and cafés further enhances the theatre experience by creating opportunities for pre-show, intermission, and post-show socializing, as well as educational and community engagement activities. These features foster a deeper sense of connection among audience members and the broader community. Accessibility remains a central focus of the redesign, with features such as ramps, elevators, and designated seating areas ensuring that the theatre is fully inclusive and welcoming to patrons of all ages and abilities.

Supporting Artists and Production Efficiency

Beyond audience experience, the redevelopment significantly enhances backstage functionality and support for artistic personnel. A new rehearsal hall will provide dedicated space for cast and crew to rehearse in a professional and well-equipped environment—improving both efficiency and the quality of productions. Additional facilities, including dedicated costume, wig, and workshop areas, will give production teams the resources they need to create and maintain high-quality visual elements.

Performer-focused improvements include the addition of a green room and modernized dressing rooms designed for comfort, safety, and accessibility. These spaces offer private, well-appointed environments for cast members to relax and prepare before performances. The updated dressing areas are equipped with accessible features to accommodate performers with diverse needs.

New accessible grids, catwalks, and support systems—paired with elevators and enhanced backstage infrastructure—ensure equitable access to all production spaces. These upgrades support Shaw’s commitment to being a leader in inclusive workplace practices within the performing arts sector.

A Vibrant, Inclusive Cultural Hub

Overall, the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre transforms it into a more vibrant, equitable, and dynamic cultural hub. It not only elevates the patron experience but also enhances artistic production, reinforces accessibility and inclusivity, and deepens the theatre’s role as a community gathering space in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre brings substantial improvements to its functionality, greatly enhancing the overall experience for patrons and theatre production personnel alike. The larger lobby space, incorporating public gathering areas, cafes and the enhancement of accessibility throughout the building are key elements contributing to the improved functionality for patrons. The increased lobby space allows for smoother flow of foot traffic, reducing congestion during peak performance times and provides more comfortable waiting areas for patrons while meeting and exceeding modern codes for gathering and accessibility.

3.4 Development Approvals

Planning Framework and Required Amendments

The properties located at 83 and 79 Queen Street (the theatre and box office) and 188 Victoria Street are currently designated General Commercial in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan and zoned Queen Picton Commercial (QPC) according to Zoning By-law 4316-09. The adjacent parcel at 178 Victoria Street is designated and zoned Established Residential.

To facilitate the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre, an Official Plan Amendment is required to redesignate the consolidated site as General Commercial – Site Specific. This amendment will formally permit a ‘theatre’ as the sole use, as defined in the Draft Official Plan Amendment, and will also recognize the proposed fly tower height of 19.6 metres, a modest increase of 1.8 m.

A corresponding Zoning By-law Amendment is required to rezone the amalgamated property from Established Residential (ER) Zone and Queen Picton Commercial (QPC) Zone to Queen Picton Commercial – Site Specific Zone, permitting a ‘theatre’ as the sole permitted use and recognizing the following site-specific provisions:

- Lot coverage
- Front yard, rear yard, interior and exterior side yard setbacks
- Building height
- Number of loading bays
- Lot frontage and depth
- Parking standards

Site Plan Approval will be sought at a later stage, following approval of the policy and zoning amendments.

Under the current QPC zoning provisions, key development standards such as lot frontage, depth, height, lot coverage, and rear and exterior side yard setbacks are determined by averaging the existing conditions within the applicable block face. Notably, there are no minimum front yard or interior side yard setback requirements within the QPC zone.

The proposed site-specific Zoning By-law Amendment will recognize:

- An increase in overall building height to accommodate accessible design features within the fly tower.
- Increased lot coverage.
- Tailored setback and dimensional standards for the unique configuration of the site and theatre use.

Additionally, relief will be sought to reduce the required number of loading bays from three to one, reflecting the operational needs of the theatre, the nature and frequency of deliveries, and the size and turning movements of service vehicles.

Parking Considerations

Section 6.39 of the Town’s Zoning By-law requires that a Commercial Entertainment Establishment or Theatre provide parking at a rate of one space per six seats, or one space per 18.5 square metres of gross leasable floor area, whichever results in the greater number of spaces.

The Shaw Festival Theatre campus currently includes four venues: the Festival Theatre, the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, the Court House Theatre, and the Royal George Theatre. The Festival Theatre and Jackie Maxwell Studio are governed by a separate, site-specific zoning framework established at the inception of the Shaw Festival. As such, these venues are not included in the parking assessment for the Royal George Theatre redevelopment.

The proposed redevelopment will increase the Royal George Theatre’s seating capacity from 305 (previously 335 seats) to 360 seats. This modest change is not expected to generate significant new parking demand.

Importantly, beginning in the 2029 season—after construction of the new Royal George is complete—the Court House Theatre will be repurposed as rehearsal space, thereby freeing up parking located at the rear of the Court House. These spaces will be reallocated to support the Royal George Theatre.

Additionally, Shaw has recently acquired the former Upper Canada Lodge (UCL) property, which will be redeveloped as an Artist’s Village, offering residential accommodations, educational space, and production amenities. The UCL site is anticipated to provide sufficient parking for the Artist’s Village and approximately 88 parking spaces in total, a portion of which will be made available as off-site parking for the Royal George Theatre.

3.5 Public Consultation and Agency Engagement

The public consultation process for the Royal George Theatre redevelopment began with a pre-consultation meeting on January 19, 2023, involving Town and Regional staff. This meeting provided preliminary feedback, outlined the documentation required for a complete application, and guided the preparation of the forthcoming planning submissions.

A subsequent pre-consultation session was held with heritage planning staff, offering early input on the proposed redevelopment and outlining key next steps in the heritage approval process. Recommendations from these initial meetings were incorporated into the original design concept to ensure alignment with municipal expectations and heritage considerations.

As the project progressed, Town planning staff were invited to two site visits, which included tours of the existing Royal George Theatre and the three adjacent properties that now form the consolidated site. Following each tour, a presentation was delivered to illustrate the design evolution and provide an opportunity for open dialogue with staff on various components of the project.

Throughout the development process, Mr. Tim Jennings, Executive Director/CEO of the Shaw Festival, has remained actively engaged with Town planning staff and local councillors, providing regular updates to ensure transparency and maintain momentum. Mr. Jennings has also taken a proactive approach to community outreach, meeting with neighbouring property owners to share information about the proposed redevelopment and address questions or concerns as they arise.

In response to feedback from the earlier consultation process, the redevelopment concept was revised to improve compatibility with the surrounding residential neighbourhood, better integrate with the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (QPHCD), and enhance the building façade in a manner consistent with the historic streetscape.

More recently, an application for an Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment was submitted to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake on May 29, 2025. The application was deemed complete by Town Planning Staff and circulated to relevant Town departments and government agencies for review and comment. An Open House was held on June 16, followed by a Public Meeting under the Planning Act on July 6. The Municipal Heritage Committee (MHC) met on July 7 to review the proposal, which included a report from the Town's Heritage Consultant, ERA Heritage Architects Inc (ERA).

Public feedback from both public meetings—along with written submissions and recommendations from ERA and the MHC—provided the project team with valuable input on key concerns. In response, the theatre team hosted the Royal George Community Consultation Open House and Theatre Tour, involving the project architect as well as Shaw Festival's technical, artistic, and administrative staff, to further engage with the community.

A design charrette was held on July 29, featuring an in-depth discussion of possible solutions to issues raised by Town Planning staff, the public, the Heritage architect, and the MHC.

As a result of this comprehensive consultation process and ongoing collaboration with Town Planning Staff and heritage stakeholders, the project has undergone significant revisions to address the concerns identified.

The updated design for the New Royal George Theatre incorporates community feedback and presents a refreshed iteration of the original concept. It respects the historic Queen Street streetscape, honours the legacy of the Royal George Theatre, and enhances visual compatibility with the Victoria Street residential neighbourhood and adjacent properties. Please refer to the 'Development Proposal' section of the report.

4.0

POLICY FRAMEWORK+REGULATORY CONTEXT

4.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK + REGULATORY CONTEXT

Overview

The following sub-sections of the report provide an overview of Provincial, Regional and Municipal planning policies that inform the development of the subject site. This discussion will demonstrate how the proposed development is consistent with those policies and provide justification for the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre.

4.1 Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13

The Planning Act identifies matters of Provincial interest that Council shall have regard to in carrying out its responsibilities and provides the legislative framework for land use decisions of Council.

Section 2 of the Planning Act outlines matters of Provincial interest that approval authorities must have regard to when carrying out their responsibilities. Matters of Provincial interest that apply to the proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre include:

- d) The conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archeological or scientific interest.

The cultural merit of the Royal George Theatre is derived from its rich history of performance arts in the heart of the heritage district, its contribution to the community and to the economic prosperity of the Town and the Niagara Region. Although the building itself lacks architectural merit, it contributes to the character of the Queen Picton Heritage District through its historical and contextual significance. The building is structurally compromised and has become functionally obsolete as a venue for the performing arts. The redevelopment of the theatre will ensure the continuation of this cultural icon at the centre of the heritage district for years to come.

- f) The adequate provision and efficient use of communication, transportation, sewage and water services and wastewater management systems.

The existing buildings on the four, now consolidated, properties are currently served by multiple water and sanitary sewer services. The existing municipal services are deemed to be inadequate and new connections will be required, appropriately sized, to accommodate the requirements of the new theatre.

Queen Street is a well-travelled collector road and Victoria Street is considered a local road, both fall under the jurisdiction of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. No change is proposed to either municipal road allowance as a result of the redevelopment of the theatre as no on-site parking is proposed. The provision of a loading bay on Victoria Street, where one does not currently exist, will result in a modest increase traffic seasonally at prescribed times of the day. It is anticipated that any potential impacts to surrounding properties will be mitigated by the hours of use and the number of deliveries each day and the decorative fencing and landscaping.

h) The orderly development of safe and healthy communities:

The redevelopment of the Royal George theatre contributes to complete and healthy communities by providing cultural opportunities for people of all ages and abilities and disabilities in a pedestrian-friendly environment in the heart of the heritage district. The redevelopment project will generate approximately 850 skilled jobs and will continue to contribute to the prosperity of the Queen Street commercial area and the Niagara Region.

h) 1) The accessibility of persons with disabilities to all facilities, services and matters to which the Act applies.

In its present condition it's not possible for the theatre to conform to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), provincial legislation that sets standards to remove barriers for people with disabilities, both patrons and artistic and technical staff. The new theatre will achieve accessibility in all areas and at all levels of the building providing elevators to upper and lower levels, technical catwalks and grids, accessible washrooms, an expanded lobby and accessible amenities including café and lounge facilities. The main entranceway on Queen Street leading to the front lobby and box office has been redesigned to be at street level for full accessibility. Theatre seating on both the main level and the balcony has been redesigned and will now be fully accessible to patrons of all abilities. A dedicated drop-off area is provided on Queen Street in front of the theatre to accommodate buses and private vehicles to drop off theater goers. Shaw intends the new theatre to be Canada's first Rick Hansen Gold Certified accessible theatre facility.

i) The adequate provision and distribution of educational, health, social, cultural and recreational facilities.

The redevelopment proposal will ensure the continuation of the theatre in

the heart of the heritage district to serve the community and patrons alike. The building has been designed to engage the public at large providing educational opportunities by providing viewing galleries, and opportunities for social engagement in the cafe and lounge area.

- k) The adequate provision of employment opportunities.

It is anticipated that approximately 850 new skilled jobs will be created in the core area of the Old Town as a result of the new theatre redevelopment. The revitalization of the theatre will contribute to the economic prosperity of surrounding retail and commercial businesses and the vibrancy of the Queen Street heritage area. Longer term, it is expected that staffing increases to the theatre could generate dozens of new, full-time roles for the Shaw and increased retail and restaurant jobs on Queen Street.

- l) The protection of the financial and economic well-being of the province and its municipalities.

The Shaw Theatre has a profound impact on the local and regional economy generating \$300 million per year in economic benefit of which \$70 million is derived from the current Royal George to surrounding businesses. It is anticipated that the revitalization of the Royal George theatre will create new employment opportunities and bring more visitors to the Old Town to support the Niagara economy and increase annual impact by as much as \$30 million/annum. The Shaw is the Town's major tourism driver and the Niagara Region's largest cultural charity.

- p) The appropriate location of growth and development;

The Royal George theater has existed harmoniously within the commercial and residential heritage district for more than a century. The redevelopment of the theatre is critical to allow the theatre to continue to operate past the 2025 performance season. The loss of the theatre would have an enormously negative impact for the Queen Street retail/commercial area as well as the restaurant and accommodation sectors consisting of hotels and short-term rentals located throughout the community.

- q) The promotion of development that is designed to be sustainable, to support public transit and to be oriented to pedestrians;

The building will use sustainable materials, roof top gardens, solar panels

and a green wall on the fly tower with the objective of achieving Canada's first net zero carbon footprint theatre complex. The main entrance and façade of the building will continue to be oriented toward Queen Street. Patrons will arrive and depart the theater by coach, shuttle bus or on foot. The absence of on-site parking will reduce vehicular congestion on surrounding streets and contribute to the Queen Street pedestrian-friendly environment.

- r) The promotion of built form that is well designed, encourages a sense of place, and provides for public spaces that are of high quality, safe, accessible, attractive and vibrant.

The theatre has been redesigned to blend with the existing streetscape on both Queen Street and Victoria Street as a result of feedback from the community consultation process. The façade of the building emulates the existing theatre in architectural style, scale and massing. The height of the building is stepped back from both Queen Street and Victoria Street to visually integrate with surrounding land uses. The building provides a increased landscaped setback to the Victoria Street facade of the building to blend with the residential community immediately to the north. The Royal George with its rich history of performing arts has become a landmark in the centre of the heritage district. The new theatre will enhance public engagement within the theatre with a large open lobby, café and performance viewing areas and accessible amenities.

The redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre aligns closely with the objectives of the Planning Act having regard to Provincial interests outlined in Section 2 of the Act and conforms to Provincial policy statements and Regional and local Official Plan policy as discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

4.2 Provincial Policy Statement, 2024

The Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) 2024 is a consolidated land use planning policy framework that replaces the previous Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2019. The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) sets the foundation for regulating the development and the use of land by providing policy direction on matters of Provincial interest. All planning decisions must be consistent with the PPS in accordance with Section 3(5) of the Planning Act.

Policy 2.1.6. Planning for People and Homes

Planning authorities should support the achievement of complete communities by:

- a) accommodating an appropriate range and mix of land uses, housing options, transportation options with multimodal access, employment, public service facilities and other institutional uses (including schools and associated child care facilities, long term care facilities, places of worship and cemeteries), recreation, parks and open space, and other uses to meet long-term needs;

- b) improving accessibility for people of all ages and abilities by addressing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society; and

- c) improving social equity and overall quality of life for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes, including equity-deserving groups.

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George theatre makes a significant contribution to the achievement of a complete community by providing a world-class theatre for the enjoyment of both the local community and visitors. The building of the new theatre will provide 850 new jobs and contribute economically to the many commercial and retail businesses that rely on the business that is generated by the theatre. Designed to be fully accessible to individuals of all ages, abilities and disabilities, the theatre has incorporated viewing galleries and meeting places to serve both the public and theatre audiences.

2.3.1 General Policies for Settlement Areas

1. Settlement areas shall be the focus of growth and development. Within settlement areas, growth should be focused in, where applicable, strategic growth areas, including major transit station areas.

2. Land use patterns within settlement areas should be based on densities and a mix of land uses which:

- a) efficiently use land and resources;
- b) optimize existing and planned infrastructure and public service facilities;
- c) support active transportation;

3. Planning authorities shall support general intensification and redevelopment to support the achievement of complete communities, including by planning for a range and mix of housing options and prioritizing planning and investment in the necessary infrastructure and public service facilities.

Focusing growth and development within Settlement areas is of particular relevance for the Town of Niagara-on-the-lake. Surrounded by Lake Ontario and the Niagara River to the north and east, and situated in the heart of the prime agricultural area it's imperative to contain growth and redevelopment within the settlement boundary. More efficient use of individual parcels of land and increased density ensures a more efficient approach to land use and resources, including infrastructure and public services. Redeveloping the theatre at its present location achieves these objectives.

The theatre continues to support active transportation in part due to its location in the central core of the heritage commercial area and as a result of the absence of on-site parking. Patrons are typically dropped off by buses and coaches in front of the theatre or may park on surrounding side streets. Theatre goers generally have a longer length of stay than tourists who are occasional day trippers, staying overnight in local hotels and short-term rental accommodation, eating at local restaurants and shopping on Queen Street.

The redevelopment project demonstrates a modest intensification in use on the amalgamated site and makes a positive contribution to complete communities by maintaining a cultural presence within the designated heritage area.

2.8.1 Supporting a Modern Economy

1. Planning authorities shall promote economic development and competitiveness by: a) providing for an appropriate mix and range of employment, institutional, and broader mixed uses to meet long-term needs;

b) providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses;

The theatre provides a range of opportunities for talented and skilled artists that provide creative and technical support in addition to the performance arts. It is anticipated that the redeveloped theatre will create 850 new job opportunities with economic benefits that spillover into the local economy.

The Shaw is the province's second largest theatre charity and the largest driver of economic benefit of any non-Crown arts organization in Canada due largely to its 325,000 repetitious, overnight attendees, 86% of whom are from beyond the Niagara/Hamilton area.

3.1 General Policies for Infrastructure and Public Service Facilities

1. Infrastructure and public service facilities shall be provided in an efficient manner while accommodating projected needs.

3.6 Sewage, Water and Stormwater

1. Planning for sewage and water services shall:

a) accommodate forecasted growth in a timely manner that promotes the efficient use and optimization of existing municipal sewage services and municipal water services and existing private communal sewage services and private communal water services;

8. Planning for stormwater management shall:

a) be integrated with planning for sewage and water services and ensure that systems are optimized, retrofitted as appropriate, feasible and financially viable over their full life cycle;

b) minimize, or, where possible, prevent or reduce increases in stormwater volumes and contaminant loads;

c) minimize erosion and changes in water balance including through the use of green infrastructure;

d) mitigate risks to human health, safety, property and the environment;

e) maximize the extent and function of vegetative and pervious surfaces;

f) promote best practices, including stormwater attenuation and re-use, water conservation and efficiency, and low impact development; and

g) align with any comprehensive municipal plans for stormwater management that consider cumulative impacts of stormwater from development on a watershed scale.

The consolidated site is presently served by municipal water, sewerage and stormwater services. Although the properties are presently served by multiple water and sanitary sewer services both from Victoria Street and Queen Street, it is not anticipated that these connections are adequate to accommodate the new theatre. It is therefore proposed to install new water and sewer services sized to serve the requirements of the new theatre.

The site has been divided into seven catchment areas for the purpose of stormwater management. The Functional Servicing report states "Peak post-development flow for the 100-year storm event, when combined with proposed groundwater discharge, shall be restricted to the pre-development 5-year peak flow rate, and any detention required to achieve this to occur on site." Please refer to the Functional Servicing Report for a more detailed analysis.

3.7 Waste Management

1. Waste management systems need to be planned for and provided that are of an appropriate size, type, and location to accommodate present and future requirements, and facilitate integrated waste management.

A dedicated area for annual industrial (wood/steel, etc.) disposal and pick-up is located immediately adjacent to the loading bay on the west side of the building on Victoria Street. Normative waste collection will be privately contracted and will continue to be from Queen Street, as currently exists.

4.6 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

1. Protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved.
2. Planning authorities shall not permit development and site alteration on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential unless the significant archaeological resources have been conserved.
3. Planning authorities shall not permit development and site alteration on adjacent lands to protected heritage property unless the heritage attributes of the protected heritage property will be conserved.
4. Planning authorities are encouraged to develop and implement:
 - a) archaeological management plans for conserving archaeological resources; and
 - b) proactive strategies for conserving significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes.

The four consolidated properties that make up the Royal George theatre site are located within the Queen Picton Heritage District and are designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. Although the theatre building lacks architectural merit, it has contextual value and contributes to the QPHD streetscape. It has been established that the building is no longer structurally sound and is functionally obsolescent. The new theatre will emulate the façade of the existing Royal George

(created by Shaw in 1981 to cover the Spanish style facade that had previously existed) to maintain its iconic presence in the Queen Street streetscape.

The design of the Royal George redevelopment adheres to the principles of good urban design and built form. The project incorporates setbacks, height transitions and architectural elements that complement the scale and character of the surrounding heritage district and contribute to a cohesive and visually appealing streetscape. By incorporating green building technology into the building design, the project aims to minimize its environmental footprint.

A Stage 1 and 2 Archeological assessments have been conducted on all four properties that make up the overall redevelopment site and no significant archeological finds were discovered. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming have reviewed the reports and provided a Letter of Clearance.

4.3 Niagara Official Plan, 2022

The Niagara Official Plan (NOP) is the Regional Municipality of Niagara's long-term, strategic policy planning framework for managing growth in Niagara. The NOP builds on the PPS and the Growth Plan to provide a long-range community planning document to guide physical, economic and social development within the Niagara Region.

The four pillar statements of the NOP promote well-planned, high-quality development in appropriate locations; a wide mix of housing types and employment opportunities to serve all ages and incomes; a prosperous agricultural industry and employment areas for jobs; and, biodiversity that will mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The subject site is located within the Urban Area Boundary of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and is a Designated Built-up Area according to Schedule B – Regional Structure. Built-up Areas are to be the focus of growth and development over the long term throughout the Niagara Region. The NOP promotes more efficient use of urban serviced lands, the preservation of cultural heritage resources, supports the creation of complete communities, promotes development that achieves a compact built form, the provision of employment opportunities and promotes active transportation and accessibility.

Key considerations to achieve the aforementioned goals that apply to this project are outlined in policy statements (Policy 2.2.1) that:

- Manage growth by ensuring development in urban areas is integrated with land use and infrastructure planning;
- Support a compact built form, a vibrant public realm, and a mix of land uses, including residential uses, employment uses, recreational uses, and public service facilities, to support the creation of complete communities;
- Promote social equity for people of all ages and abilities;
- Provide a range of transportation options including active transportation;
- Promote built form and land use patterns that minimize land consumption and reduce infrastructure servicing costs;
- Support the conservation or reuse of cultural heritage resources.

As demonstrated in the analysis provided in previous policy sections of this report, the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre will revive an important cultural landmark within the heritage district, providing accessibility for people of all ages and abilities throughout the theatre complex. The compact built form consolidates four existing properties to maximize land use efficiency and the use of existing public services. The provision of off-site parking, and limited audience increase can promote a pedestrian oriented environment while minimizing vehicular congestion in the busy commercial core. The Shaw Festival Theatre is one of the largest employers in the Niagara Region with a staffing compliment of 600 employees. It is anticipated that the redevelopment project will contribute 850 new jobs within the community. The proposal is consistent with the policy objectives of the NOP.

4.4 Niagara-on-the-Lake Official Plan, 2017 Consolidation, as amended

This section of the report addresses the existing Official Plan (OP), currently in force and effect. The Plan sets out policies that deal with legislative and administrative concerns, policies to guide physical growth, and policies to express a wide variety of social, economic and environmental concerns. The OP is intended to enhance and interpret provincial and regional policy documents as they apply to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The subject site is located within the Urban Boundary and Built-up area of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The four parcels of land consisting of 79 and 83 Queen Street and 188 and 178 Victoria Street have been amalgamated to facilitate the redevelopment project. The municipal address of the amalgamated parcel is now 85 Queen Street.

The Royal George Theatre at 83 Queen Street and adjoining box office at 79 Queen Street are designated General Commercial according to Schedule 'B' of the Town's Official Plan. The property at 188 Victoria Street is designated General Commercial, and 178 Victoria Street is designated Established Residential. An Official Plan amendment is proposed to redesignate 85 Queen Street as General Commercial – Site Specific to permit the theatre as the sole permitted use and to recognize the height of the fly tower at 19.6 m.

"Theatre" shall mean a building or structure, or parts thereof, used for the purpose of providing access to live performing arts, directly and through their associated support systems, to the public. This includes, but is not limited to, live stage performances such as plays, musicals, concerts, dance, and other live entertainment, but can include the exhibition of films (cinema). A theatre may be used periodically for community-based or charitable events. Accessory uses may include the sale and service of food and beverages or sale of associated merchandise, subject to applicable regulations. It may also host charitable fundraising events, patron centred events, educational workshops, artistic workshops or other non-profit events that advance or support the live arts or other charitable or related endeavours. Beyond the theatre venue itself, there may also be an artistic practice halls, lobby areas, technical and artistic preparatory spaces, education spaces or other support areas needed to conduct the theatre operations."

The Official Plan seeks to optimize the use of land and infrastructure by making lands within the Urban Boundary and the Built-up Area the focus of future development. This will allow the municipality to maintain its current Urban Boundary without the need for future expansion in accordance with provincial and regional policy.

Official Plan policies support infill and intensification within the Built-up area. In commercial areas, infill and intensification often takes the form of demolition of older buildings and underused structures for redevelopment or the repurposing of existing buildings.

A *Planning Impact Analysis* is required to justify any Official Plan and/or Zoning change to determine the appropriateness of the proposed change and to identify mitigating measures for reducing any potential adverse impacts on surrounding land uses. Policy 6.23 provides guidance on the Official Plan criteria to be addressed in providing justification for the proposed development.

Key to any discussion of *infill and intensification* within the heritage district is *compatibility* of the proposed use with surrounding land uses and how the proposed development impacts the character and stability of the surrounding neighbourhood. Land use compatibility encompasses a range of components that may include:

- Appropriateness of the location to accommodate the proposed (re)development,
- Built form,
- Landscaping and buffering,
- Noise and Lighting attenuation,
- Impact on the streetscape,
- Parking, loading and traffic generation,
- Urban design

Location

The Royal George Theatre has been a landmark in the Town's heritage district since its inception in 1915. The theatre has served the cultural and arts community providing world-class performing arts continuously for more than a century. The Shaw family of theatres draws 325,000 patrons a year that provides critical support to the local economy. Its location within the core commercial area is key to its success as a cultural hub at the centre of the community and to its contribution to the prosperity of the surrounding retail stores, restaurants, hotels and short-term rental accommodation. The theatre has existed harmoniously with surrounding commercial and residential land uses for over a century.

Built Form & Impact on Streetscape

The built form of the new theatre has been thoughtfully redesigned to integrate seamlessly with the existing [Queen Street](#) streetscape. The updated façade reflects the architectural style, scale, and massing of the current structure, using materials that are consistent with those found throughout the Heritage District. A stepped-back design approach maintains the existing building height at street level to preserve the character of the streetscape.

The current box office and wardrobe shop at 79 Queen Street have been incorporated into the new building design, while the main theatre entrance remains in its original street-level location on Queen Street. An illuminated entrance marquee will serve as a welcoming focal point, connecting directly to the expanded main lobby.

As outlined in previous sections of this report, the [Victoria Street](#) façade has been redesigned to better integrate with the residential character of neighbouring properties. The building has been set back an additional 5 feet from Victoria Street, and the north wall of the rehearsal hall has been narrowed by 5 feet, increasing its distance from the nearest residential property.

A bay window replaces the more contemporary glazing originally proposed on the street-facing façade of the rehearsal hall, allowing passersby to see actors at work. This feature supports the Shaw's educational mission and fosters engagement with both residents and visitors. To reduce its visual impact on the scale of the building on the Victoria Street façade, the height of the rehearsal hall has been lowered by 9 feet, bringing it to 19 feet above grade, and a pitched roof has been introduced over the rehearsal hall and scenic loading dock to reflect the surrounding residential rooflines.

Decorative wrought iron fencing with an automatic gate and enhanced landscaping will screen the scenic dock from the property to the north. An ivy wall will soften the dock façade mirroring the wall of cascading ivy on the fly tower

The re-envisioned building will consist of three storeys above ground level stepped back from both Queen Street and Victoria Street to mitigate the impact of its scale and massing on surrounding buildings and the Queen and Victoria Street streetscapes. The use of traditional building materials that reflect the heritage buildings in the Old Town, both commercial and residential, will ensure that the new building will visually integrate with its surroundings.

[Landscaping & Buffering](#)

A detailed Landscape Plan and Arborist Report have been prepared showing the location and general intent of the proposed landscape features.

Landscaping has been carefully planned to create a buffer between the theatre and nearby residential properties, while also softening the appearance of the building façades along Queen and Victoria Streets. Cascading ornamental plantings on the second- and third-floor terraces enhance the building's integration with the Queen Street streetscape. In addition, the north wall of the fly tower and the scenic dock

will be treated with a green wall of ivy, while a decorative wrought iron fence and landscaped brick pillars will help visually screen the scenic dock and further reduce its impact on neighbouring views.

The Arborist report identifies 38 trees on the subject lands grouped according to ownership and recommended action regarding their retention, removal or protection with an associated replanting plan.

Parking & Loading & Traffic Generation

Off-street parking areas and loading facilities in accordance with Policy 6.21, shall be provided for the applicable uses as required by the implementing Zoning By-law. Access points to parking areas and loading areas shall be limited in number and designed in a manner which will minimize the danger to pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the immediate area and compatible with abutting properties.

The Royal George Theatre at its present location has been a centre for the performing arts for more than a century. Since that time, there has never been on-site parking associated with the theatre, and the present day is no exception. Theatre goers typically arrive by bus or coach and are dropped off and picked up at the front entrance to the theatre on Queen Street. The buses currently park at the Fort George parking lot, owned and operated by Parks Canada, for the duration of the performance.

The Court House Theatre, and its adjacent parking area, have also been actively used by the Shaw since its opening in 1962 and with this redevelopment will aim to reduce usage of that location to seasonal rehearsal usage after the new Royal George opens, effectively removing one of the two 300 seat+ theatres on Queen Street and opening up additional parking at the Court House location.

It is proposed to create additional off-site parking to be located at what is now known as Upper Canada Lodge, recently acquired by Shaw, and located immediately west of the Festival Theatre. Implementing off-site parking for the new Royal George Theatre could mitigate any potential impact of parking demands and traffic congestion along Queen Street and Victoria Street particularly during peak performance times. Shaw has operated two to three performances per day, six days a week throughout the theatre season since 1981 and the new facility would only increase available seating by less than 10% per performance over the normative

levels. By providing off-site parking facilities within a designated radius of the theatre, the project effectively manages vehicular traffic, reduces congestion, and minimizes disruption to both the heritage district and residential neighborhoods. This approach not only enhances accessibility for theatre patrons but also preserves the historic character and livability of the surrounding community, aligning with the principles of sustainable urban planning and heritage conservation.

At present the Royal George has no dedicated loading area and no vehicular access to the building for deliveries. Theatrical equipment, sets and wardrobe are now off loaded onto the municipal sidewalk in front of the theatre on Queen Street and manually carried down a narrow (42 inch) footpath to a loading door at the side of the building. From a functional perspective, this is no longer sustainable.

One new loading bay is now proposed on the north side of the building to serve the theatre with access via Victoria Street, as there is no opportunity to provide loading facilities from Queen Street. Reducing the number of loading bays from three to one, as required according to the Zoning By-law, creates a balance between the preservation of the Queen Picton Heritage District and reduces the impact on the residential neighbourhood while improving the functionality of the theatre. Because of the historical significance of the district and its architectural importance, minimizing the visual impact of modern infrastructure such as loading bays is crucial to maintaining the district's character. A decorative wrought iron fence and ornamental plantings will be provided on either side of the loading bay to buffer its appearance from the street and from neighbouring properties. Fewer loading bays will help to alleviate traffic congestion associated with multiple loading bays in the busy heritage district and tourist area, in proximity to an established residential neighbourhood. Innovative solutions such as scheduled delivery times and the efficient use of the proposed infrastructure will compensate for the reduced number of loading bays while still meeting the operational needs of the theatre. Most loading occurs in the early spring, when sets and properties are delivered, and in October, when they are removed and changed over for holiday shows. Costume management is weekly for dry cleaning and involves the use of a panel van.

Urban Design

The new Royal George Theatre has been designed to blend seamlessly within its context in the core heritage district consisting of both commercial and residential buildings.

The new construction will be sympathetic to, but distinguishable from the existing building and at the same time maintaining the historic character of the district through transitional height, scale and massing and the use of traditional building materials.

The core commercial area is the centre of community life for both the residents and tourists alike. The theatre has been designed to engage the community and the public at large by providing gathering spaces in the front of house and viewing galleries that are open to the public. Both the Queen Street and Victoria Street façade of the new theatre will feature a bank of windows at street level allowing for visual engagement and inviting the public into the theatre.

Archeology

In accordance with OP policy 6.1, a Stage 1 and 2 Archeological Survey has been conducted on each of the four properties by ASI Archeological Services and no significant archeological artifacts were discovered. In the case of 79 and 83 Queen Street it was determined that the cultural material discovered was out of context and the subject properties had previously been subject to widespread disturbance and therefore does not constitute an archeological site. Similarly, it was discovered during the Stage 2 survey that a significant portion of both 188 and 178 Victoria Street have been subject to extensive disturbance, 95% and 80% respectively, and no further archeological assessment is therefore required. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming has issued a letter of clearance for the four, now consolidated properties.

Site Servicing

Quartek Group has prepared a Functional Servicing Report that assesses the existing municipal services and demonstrates how servicing the redevelopment of the theatre will be achieved.

Although the four properties are presently served by multiple water and sanitary sewer services both from Victoria Street and Queen Street, it is not anticipated that these connections are adequate to accommodate the new theatre. It is therefore proposed to install new water and sewer services sized to serve the requirements of the new theatre. Two fire hydrants are located in close proximity to the subject site to adequately accommodate fire-fighting demands. No additional hydrants are deemed to be necessary.

Stormwater Management

According to the Functional Servicing Report: "Peak post-development flow for the 100-year storm event, when combined with proposed groundwater discharge, shall be restricted to the pre-development 5-year peak flow rate, and any detention required to achieve this to occur on site".

Existing hydro, gas, cable television and telephone services located in adjacent road allowances are expected to be adequate to service the subject site. Waste disposal will be provided by private contractor.

Tree Preservation

Policy 6.33 of this Plan states that existing trees must not be unnecessarily removed and that wherever possible existing trees should be preserved and protected. In urban areas where it is unavoidable that trees be removed the following shall apply.

“As a condition of any development or redevelopment where it is unavoidable that trees must be removed. The proponent shall plant trees of a similar or comparable species having a minimum caliper acceptable to the Town elsewhere on the site and the Town may require the proponent retain the services of a qualified arborist or similar professional. Where no other reasonable location exists on the site the town may require the owner to contribute to the town sufficient money to replant an equal number of new trees on public lands identified for reforestation by the Town.”

An Arborist Report has been prepared by Arborwood Tree Service and provides an inventory of existing trees on the subject site and an assessment of the condition of each tree. The majority of trees on the amalgamated site are situated on the property at 178 Victoria Street that historically has been used as a residential dwelling. Of the 38 trees identified, 20 are on private or public property, 28 are recommended for removal, 11 are classified as weed trees in accordance with the Towns by-law.

New plantings will be introduced in accordance with the revised Landscape Plan. Additional landscaping is provided on the north side of the building as a buffer to the abutting residential property. Existing trees along the property boundary will be protected and preserved.

Building Height

Policy 6.4 states that Niagara-on-the-Lake generally consists of low-rise structures in a small town setting with a large number of historic buildings. Generally, the building height has not exceeded 11 metres (36 feet). It is the intent of the Official Plan to limit building height accordingly.

According to the Comprehensive Zoning By-law the height of any building in the Queen-Picton Commercial Area shall be the average of the existing buildings heights within the same block face. The height of existing building that includes the fly tower currently exceeds the block face average. The redevelopment of the theatre will necessitate an increase in the height of certain sections of the building.

The street facing walls on both Queen Street and Victoria Street at 8.259 m falls below the 11 m threshold established by the Town. The central area of the building that houses the lobby and the theatre seating will be 13.430 m and the fly tower at the rear of the building will be 19.6 m a modest increase of 1.8 m to accommodate modern requirements on accessibility and theatre safety standards.

When evaluating the appropriateness of the height of the building, it is important to recognize that the operational requirements of the modern performing arts theatre, such as stage rigging, lighting and sound equipment together with the need for sufficient seating capacity and accessibility requirements like elevators and accessible catwalks. The increased height allows for optimal spatial design to enhance the functionality of the theatre together with the achievement of accessibility for individuals of all ages and capabilities. The architectural design of the theatre utilizes a stepped back approach from both Victoria and Queen Street and utilizes traditional building materials to visually address the scale and massing of the building.

Noise & Light Attenuation

Noise

It is not anticipated that there will be significant change in existing noise levels as a result of the redevelopment of the theatre. The new theatre will have significant acoustic partitions which should reduce ambient noise in both directions. With the incremental increase in theatre seats from 305 to 360, vehicular traffic generated by the new theatre will remain substantively the same. Buses and coaches will continue to drop off theatre goers at the designated area on Queen Street in front of the theatre and there will be no on-site parking provided.

The main entranceway to the theatre will remain at its current location on Queen Street at the front of the building providing access for pedestrian traffic. Mechanical units and utilities are located within the building or situated on the rooftop on the fourth level. Deliveries of production equipment to the single loading bay are normally carried out in the early hours of the morning or off season to avoid traffic conflicts in the busy Old Town heritage district.

Lighting

Exterior lighting fixtures are wall mounted as shown on the building elevation drawings. Lighting fixtures on the Queen Street façade are located on the column elements and will be directed upwards to highlight building features not past the second floor of the building. The marquee at the main entrance to the theatre will be illuminated as shown on the architectural drawings. The balance of exterior lighting is mounted such that the light is directed downward or will use a shield to ensure there is little or no light spillage onto the street or adjacent properties.

Commercial Area

Section 10 of the OP addresses seven separate and distinct commercial areas within greater Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Old Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, where the theatre is situated, currently has the most extensive commercial area, consisting of the downtown core on Queen Street between Gate Street and Wellington Street. This area serves primarily tourist needs with some local serving commercial uses.

Policy 10.2 provides the stated goals and objectives for commercial areas recognizing the Queen Picton area as the focus of tourist serving commercial uses and encourages this area to be maintained as it reflects the character of the QPC that is of historical importance to the area and its surroundings.

The importance of minimizing the impact of commercial development on adjacent land uses especially residential areas is emphasized together with the necessity to limit the impact on the traffic carrying capacity of adjacent roads.

The Goals and Objectives of the OP relevant to this application are outlined in Policy 10.2:

- (3) To maintain in tourist-serving commercial areas, a character which is consistent with the historical importance of these areas and their surroundings.
- (4) To recognize the Queen Picton Street area as the focus of tourist serving commercial uses in the Old Town of Niagara.
- (6) To minimize the impact of commercial development on adjacent land uses.
- (7) To minimize the impact of commercial development on the traffic carrying capacity of adjacent roads.
- (8) To prevent the intrusion of commercial uses into residential areas.
- (10) To recognize the existing commercial structure of the Town as an important part of the municipality that should be protected from any significant impact from future proposals for major commercial development.

The Royal George theatre has served the community at its present location in the heart of the tourist commercial area of the Old Town for more than a century and has made a significant contribution to the character and economic stability of the Queen-Picton District over time. The continuation of the existing theatre through redevelopment will contribute to the ongoing prosperity of the Queen Street commercial area and the community at large. The provision of off-site parking will reduce traffic congestion in the core area and promote a pedestrian-friendly environment. The redevelopment project necessitates the expansion of the new theatre complex onto the adjoining residential property at 178 Victoria Street located to the rear of the existing theatre. This dwelling has undergone significant alterations over time undermining the original heritage value of the building. In recent years a new gallery building was constructed at the rear of the property to provide the artist in residence with a dedicated studio and retail venue for her artwork. A portion of this property was previously used as a parking area for the Canadian Mime Theatre, the previous owner of the Royal George. The parking area was sold to the then owner of 178 Victoria Street and amalgamated with the residential property in approximately 1981. The location of the property on Victoria Street is consistent with the migration of commercial uses into the residential area as witnessed in the westerly block face at 109 and 183 Victoria Street immediately opposite to the subject property.

Heritage Conservation

Section 18.3 of the Town's Official Plan delineates the heritage policies related to the designation of heritage districts and individual buildings and provides criteria for assessing new development proposals.

As stated in 18.3.(4): Where a planning application has been received that proposes new development in the municipality, the Planning & Development Services Department of the Town shall include LACAC (now the Municipal Heritage Committee) as a commenting agency to be given the opportunity to review the application and provide comments. The comments from all circulated agencies shall form part of the required planning report prepared by the Town. The review of LACAC shall address the following:

- a.) the impact of the proposed development on existing heritage resources,
- b.) the effect of the building design on the historic character of abutting properties and the streetscape.

General Heritage Conservation Policies, relevant to this application, as outlined in Policy 18.4 (2), encourage the preservation of buildings and sites having historical and/or architectural value.

The theatre at its current location has long been an iconic landmark within the heritage district. Although the building has no architectural merit, the facade makes a significant contribution to the Queen Street streetscape. Its cultural value derives from its long history as a venue for the performing arts and its contextual value as a cultural landmark within the heart of the core commercial area.

Potential impacts on adjacent land uses will be mitigated by the articulation of urban design and built form that uses transitional building elevations stepped back from the two streets and utilizes traditional building materials that emulate the existing historic structures and landmarks within the community.

A Heritage Permit and a Demolition Permit will be required for the removal of the existing structures on the amalgamated site.

4.5 Heritage Conservation District Plan

The designation of Heritage Conservation District was approved by Town Council in 1986 under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Queen Picton Heritage District Plan (HCDP) was prepared by Nicolas Hill in the same year. The HCDP provides a detailed analysis of commercial, residential and institutional buildings and structures within the heritage district and rates each on its historical/architectural and cultural merit, assigning an 'A', 'B' or 'C' classification for each building.

The four existing buildings that make up the amalgamated redevelopment site, 79 and 83 Queen Street and 178 and 188 Victoria Street, are classified as 'B' buildings. The stated objective of the Plan as set out in Policy 5A.3 is to conserve and complementarily alter, where appropriate, buildings designated as 'B' buildings. These buildings are primarily of contextual value to the district and although they may not have significant historical or architectural value, they contribute to the visual integrity of the district streetscape and support the character of the district.

New building is encouraged on vacant sites or where buildings have been destroyed or demolished. New building should be looked upon as an opportunity to embellish the streetscape compositions. It is not the intent or desire that new

building should reproduce past building styles but rather that it should be of good compatible design and complementary to the height, proportion, scale and character of the district.

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George will necessitate the demolition of the existing buildings and structures on the amalgamated subject site. The redevelopment of the theatre will ensure that this important historic landmark will remain within the heritage district. The new construction has been designed to be sympathetic to the original theatre in built form and urban design and will continue to contribute to the Queen Street streetscape.

Compatibility with surrounding land uses is achieved through the use of stepped-back transitional heights along both Queen Street and Victoria Street, helping to reduce the perceived scale and massing of the building. Traditional building materials—such as those commonly found on heritage buildings throughout Niagara-on-the-Lake—have been selected to further reinforce the connection to the historic context.

Landscaping has been carefully planned to create a buffer between the theatre and nearby residential properties, while also softening the appearance of the building façades along Queen and Victoria Streets. Cascading ornamental plantings on the second- and third-floor terraces enhance the building's integration with the Queen Street streetscape. In addition, the north wall of the fly tower and the scenic dock will be treated with a green wall of ivy, while a decorative wrought iron fence and landscaped brick pillars will help visually screen the scenic dock and further reduce its impact on neighbouring views.

4.6 Niagara-on-the-Lake Zoning By-law 4316-09

Zoning By-law 4316-09 governs land use, development standards, and building requirements within the municipality, ensuring that development and redevelopment projects are compatible with the surrounding built environment and contribute to the overall character and quality of the community.

An Official Plan Amendment is being sought to redesignate 85 Queen Street to General Commercial – Site Specific to permit a 'theatre' as the sole permitted use, as defined in the draft amending by-law and to acknowledge the height of the fly tower at 19.6 m.

A Zoning By-law amendment is required to rezone the subject lands as Queen Picton Commercial – Site Specific Zone to permit a ‘theatre’ including accessory uses as the sole permitted use with site specific provisions for:

- Front yard, rear yard, interior and exterior side yard setbacks
- Building height
- Lot coverage
- Number of loading bays
- Lot frontage and depth
- Parking standards

The following definition of theatre will form part of both the Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments:

“**Theatre**” shall mean a building or structure, or parts thereof, used for the purpose of providing access to live performing arts, directly and through their associated support systems, to the public. This includes, but is not limited to, live stage performances such as plays, musicals, concerts, dance, and other live entertainment, but can include the exhibition of films (cinema). A theatre may be used periodically for community-based or charitable events. Accessory uses may include the sale and service of food and beverages or sale of associated merchandise, subject to applicable regulations. It may also host charitable fundraising events, patron centred events, educational workshops, artistic workshops or other non-profit events that advance or support the live arts or other charitable or related endeavours. Beyond the theatre venue itself, there may also be an artistic practice halls, lobby areas, technical and artistic preparatory spaces, education spaces or other support areas needed to conduct the theatre operations.”

The amalgamated site will be subject to Site Plan Control.

Existing Queen Picton Commercial Zoning

Section 7.7 of the Town’s Comprehensive Zoning By-law 4316-09 identifies “Commercial Entertainment Establishment or Theatre” as a permitted use in the Queen Picton Commercial (QPC) Zone, defined in Section 5 as follows: “the use of a building or structure, or portion thereof, for a fee, for the provision of entertainment or amusement without the necessity of active participation by the

user and shall include such uses as a cinema, playhouses, bingo hall, dance hall, and other assembly halls, but shall not include an adult entertainment parlour, an adult entertainment store, a body rub parlour, an amusement arcade or an amusement park.”

Section 7.7.3 of the By-law stipulates that the required lot frontage and depth, building height (for new buildings), lot coverage and rear yard setbacks within the QPC shall be derived from the block face average. No front yard or interior side yard setback requirements apply within the Queen Picton Commercial Zone. Where an interior side yard or a rear yard abuts a residential zone, a strip of land adjacent to the adjoining lot line a minimum of 1.54 m shall be used as a buffer strip.

Block face averages vary widely in the Queen Picton Commercial area. Unity Design has prepared a Streetscape Study that provides a comparison of lot area, lot frontage, front, rear and side yard setbacks as well as additional site and architectural detail. The table includes both the Queen Street north and south block face between Victoria and Regent Street and the Victoria Street east and west block face between Queen Street and Prideaux Streets.

Block face comparisons are not entirely useful or informative as each property demonstrates significant variations in lot area, frontage and depth. Individual buildings have been constructed over a time period that spans 100 years or greater. Further the comparison of block face averages on Victoria Street includes a combination of both commercial and residential buildings and structures.

The proposed new Royal George has been designed to fit into the existing streetscape on both Queen Street and Victoria Street providing generous setbacks and decorative landscaping along the rear property line to mitigate impacts on the neighbouring property and along Victoria Street to blend seamlessly with the surrounding residential neighbourhood.

Loading Bays

Based on the square footage of the building three loading bays would normally be required according to section 6.21 of the Zoning By-law. It is proposed to provide one new loading bay on the north side of the building where no loading bays currently exist. The one loading bay is deemed to be adequate to meet the operational needs of the theatre and restricted delivery times will assist to mitigate

any potential impacts on surrounding land uses. Limiting the number of loading bays in the heritage district will contribute to maintaining the heritage character of the Queen Picton Heritage District and reduce traffic congestion in the commercial area that experiences heavy vehicular traffic and congestion throughout the tourist season.

Parking Requirements and Strategy

Section 6.39 of the Town's Zoning By-law stipulates that parking for a theatre must be provided at a rate of one space per six seats, or one space per 18.5 square metres of Gross Floor Leasable Area (GFLA), whichever is greater.

The Shaw Festival campus currently includes the Royal George Theatre, Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, Court House Theatre, Festival Theatre, and the recently acquired Upper Canada Lodge (UCL) property. Historically, the Royal George Theatre has never provided on-site parking. The Court House Theatre is supported by a municipal parking lot located directly behind the building, while the Festival Theatre includes approximately 118 on-site parking spaces. The Festival Theatre is subject to a separate site-specific Zoning By-law.

The UCL site, acquired by Shaw to support the new Artists Village, offers a total of approximately 88 parking spaces—some existing, others to be developed. Of these, approximately 50 spaces will be allocated to serve the needs of the Artists Village, with the remaining 38 spaces available to support off-site parking for the new Royal George Theatre.

The redesigned Royal George proposes a modest increase in seating capacity, bringing the total to 360 seats across the main theatre and balcony levels. A Vehicle Parking Assessment, prepared by BA Group, analyzes the parking requirement using both the seat-based and GFLA-based methodologies outlined in the Zoning By-law. The assessment also evaluates scenarios with and without the inclusion of the Court House Theatre, which is expected to transition to rehearsal use only beginning in the 2029 season.

Based on the seat-based calculation—and accounting for the removal of active theatre use at the Court House—the assessment identifies a surplus of approximately 19 parking spaces, resulting from the net loss of seating. Using the

GFLA-based method, the report estimates a requirement for 10 additional spaces. If needed, these spaces can be readily accommodated at the UCL site, ensuring that the redevelopment meets parking requirements without placing added pressure on existing infrastructure.

5.0

SUPPORTING STUDIES + REPORTS

5.0 SUPPORTING STUDIES + DOCUMENTATION.

The following documents have been prepared in support of the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre. Due to the number of documents and the volume of data, all documents will be forwarded to Town Planning staff under separate cover.

- Planning Justification Report, prepared by Susan Wheler & Associates
- Streetscape Study, prepared by Unity Design Studio
- Block Face Analysis, prepared by Unity Design Studio
- Parking Impact Analysis, prepared by BA Group
- Archeological Assessments, prepared by ASI Archeological Services
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, Archeology, Letter of Clearance
- Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment, prepared by McCallum Sather
- Arborist Report, prepared by Arborwood Tree Service
- Functional Servicing Brief, prepared by Quartek Group
- Stormwater Management Report, prepared by Quartek Group
- Urban Design Brief, prepared by SvN Architects + Planners
- Landscape Plan, prepared Basterfield & Associates
- Preliminary Site Plan, Floor Plans & Building Elevations, prepared by Unity Design Studio
- Photometric Plan, prepared by Smith + Anderson – to be submitted with the final Site Plan
- Lot Grading & Drainage Area Plan, prepared by Quartek Group
- Draft Official Plan Amendment, prepared by Susan Wheler & Associates
- Draft Zoning By-law Amendment, prepared by Susan Wheler & Associates
- Property Index Map & Parcel Register, Service Ontario
- Heritage Permit, to be issued by Municipal Heritage Committee
- Municipal Heritage Committee Report, prepared by ERA Architects Inc.
- Cost Estimates for all on-site and off-site works, to be provided with final Site Plan
- Shadow Study, prepared by Unity Design Studio
- Structural Assessment, Lea Consulting Ltd.
- Property Index Map and Parcel Register, Service Ontario
- Endorsement by Wayne Gates, MPP Niagara Falls
- Endorsement by Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa Niagara-on-the-Lake

6.0

SUMMARY + CONCLUSIONS

6.0 SUMMARY + CONCLUSIONS

The proposed redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre represents a thoughtful and well-integrated response to the functional, cultural, and contextual needs of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s historic core. Grounded in a collaborative consultation process with Town staff, heritage professionals, and the local community, the revised proposal demonstrates a clear commitment to preserving the unique character of the Queen-Picton Heritage District while delivering a modern, inclusive, and sustainable cultural facility.

Key objectives of the redevelopment have been achieved through:

- **Enhanced Accessibility:**
The new theatre will fully conform to AODA standards, providing universal access to all levels and amenities, and ensuring an equitable experience for all patrons and performers.
- **Improved Functionality and Urban Integration:**
The redesigned theatre blends seamlessly with the surrounding built form through appropriate massing, setbacks, and material selection. Interior improvements—such as increased lobby space, new rehearsal facilities, and improved circulation—enhance both patron experience and production capabilities without compromising the scale or heritage values of the area.
- **Sustainability:**
With a goal of achieving net-zero carbon performance, the project incorporates sustainable building practices, promotes pedestrian-friendly access, and introduces off-site parking solutions, reducing reliance on local traffic and preserving the pedestrian character of the neighbourhood.
- **Cultural and Heritage Preservation:**
While the redevelopment involves the removal of existing structures, the revised design carefully respects and reflects the scale, rhythm, and materiality of the heritage streetscape. A “ghost façade” and thoughtful landscaping elements contribute to a sensitive and contextually appropriate design outcome that honours the legacy of the Royal George Theatre.
- **Economic and Community Benefits:**
As a vital cultural anchor, the new Royal George Theatre is poised to enhance tourism, support local businesses, and provide year-round employment opportunities. The expanded performance capacity, enhanced

public amenities, and integration with the larger Shaw Festival campus—including the new Artist’s Village at Upper Canada Lodge—will contribute to the continued cultural and economic vibrancy of the Town and the broader Niagara Region.

In conclusion, the redevelopment of the Royal George Theatre aligns with the goals and objectives of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Official Plan and contributes positively to the long-term vitality of the community. The proposed amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law are appropriate, justified, and necessary to enable this important cultural infrastructure renewal. The project strikes a careful balance between heritage preservation, contemporary functionality, and sustainable design, ensuring that the Royal George Theatre remains a cherished and accessible landmark for generations to come.

7.0

STATEMENTS OF ENDORSEMENT

7.0 STATEMENTS OF ENDORSEMENT

Wayne Gates, MPP, Niagara Falls

Let's work together to support Royal George revitalization



Wayne Gates
MPP, Niagara Falls riding
Special to The Lake Report

On Feb. 13, I celebrated the 10th anniversary of my election to represent Niagara-on-the Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie as your Member of Provincial Parliament.

It has been the honour of a lifetime to represent this community for four terms — and one of the privileges of my time has been to be the provincial voice of a community as unique, historic and beautiful as Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Niagara-on-the-Lake has

so much to offer visitors and residents alike: dining in the “Culinary Capital of Canada,” our wineries, breweries and cideries, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, historic attractions like Fort George, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club, the Apothecary and, of course, the Shaw Festival.

These unique elements of our community not only do so much to support our local economy and good jobs — they also form the basis of the unique character of this town and our people.

As your MPP, it is my role to work together with all stakeholders, from all levels of government, business owners, workers and residents alike, to ensure Niagara-on-the-Lake and all its features are supported in a culturally sensitive manner.

One example of how we have accomplished good things for our community

was the important win we got late last year on common-sense reforms for our wine industry.

The elimination of the basic 6.1 per cent tax on Ontario winery retail sales was a major win for winemakers, workers, and residents alike.

Niagara is the biggest wine-producing region in the country, and it contributes over \$1 billion to Canada's GDP.

The elimination of this basic tax will help Niagara's economy and create more jobs for residents.

I was proud to introduce legislation to eliminate this tax three times since 2018 — and by working together with winemakers, workers and industry experts, we got a major win that will support the tourism industry and job creation right here in Niagara.

Now, we have another opportunity to make smart

investments to support local industry and our cultural heritage.

We need to work together to ensure we protect the Shaw Festival's Royal George Theatre.

One of the Shaw's three main venues, the Royal George attracts more than 100,000 annual attendees, who bring over \$70 million annually in revenue to surrounding businesses.

However, it was built a century ago as a temporary building and its clay foundation has been dissolving for decades.

The Shaw has been mitigating this for years, but without a crucial investment from the provincial and federal governments, the Royal George will be forced to close at the end of 2024.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the Shaw and the Royal George to our community.

The Shaw Festival is the

second-largest theatre company in Canada and is one of the top 20 employers in the Niagara region, directly supporting over 2,500 jobs.

The Shaw is also the largest generator of economic impact of any arts and culture charity in Ontario, generating more than \$238 million in annual tourist spending.

The Shaw averages 800 to 900 performances a year, and 90 per cent of performance attendees cite the Shaw as their primary reason to visit.

They also attend many other activities during their multi-day stays, helping to support other crucial provincial industries, such as viticulture, restaurants and retail.

In fact, every \$1 spent at the Shaw generates about \$7 or more in additional spending in the local economy.

The Shaw has already made incredible fund-

raising efforts toward saving the Royal George — another example of the innovation and leadership shown by its executive director, Tim Jennings, and its senior leadership team, like how they kept 600 employees working full-time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But we need the provincial government to do its part to assist in revitalizing their Royal George.

And investing in the Royal George project will yield enormous benefits — including creating 850 new jobs in Niagara and an additional \$80 million in annual GDP.

Let's continue to work with all levels of government to make the right investment to protect the Royal George — supporting a key local industry in Niagara as well as an important element of our shared cultural heritage.

Gary Zalepa, Lord Mayor, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Province and Ottawa need to **help fund** repairs to Royal George Theatre



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa
Special to The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival is an integral part of our community.

It is not only the cultural centre of Niagara-on-the-Lake, in the Region, but also an economic force that generates over \$250 million of economic impact per year for our Town and the Niagara Region.

As a patron and Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake, I am keenly aware of how vital The Shaw is to our collective prosperity, which is why rebuilding the Royal George Theatre is so important.

On a recent tour of the Royal George, I saw firsthand how this building, built a century ago as a temporary lecture and training centre for the army, is now well past its best before date.

The clay foundation has been dissolving for decades, leading to regular severe flooding. The Shaw teams have done the best they could over the years to mitigate the deteriorating foundation, but its current condition is now jeopardizing the operations of The Shaw at its iconic theatre on



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa hopes people, and upper levels of government, will support the Shaw Festival in its efforts to revitalize the Royal George Theatre on Queen Street. FILE

Queen Street in Old Town.

The Shaw's use of The Royal George Theatre has made it the beating heart of Queen Street for the last 43 years. 100,000 people see shows there every season, bringing over \$70 million annually in revenue to our surrounding businesses. Despite not being a heritage building, its iconic status on Queen must not be lost.

Rebuilding the Royal George will be a significant undertaking. It will require investment from private donors and from all levels of government. We must all come together to support Tim Jennings and Tim Carroll's ambitious vision.

I am confident it will create a new venue that captures the heritage feel of the current Royal George and renews the spirit of The Shaw in ways that those who founded the theatre in 1962 could never have imagined.

The new vision for the

Royal George is to keep the feel of the theatre that we all love so much while rebuilding it as North America's first net zero and Rick Hansen Gold Certified performing arts building - blazing a trail that will combine heritage aspects with modern amenities, green investments and the highest level of accessibility.

It has been calculated that this rebuild and Shaw's programmatic expansions will create 850 new, skilled jobs and generate an additional \$80 million per year in GDP growth for Niagara.

We all have fond memories of the Royal George Theatre. My father-in-law was an usher there when it was a movie theatre over 60 years ago, and he spoke fondly of his time there. Many community members have a personal connection to the space and I've lost count of how many people have shared with me their own stories

and memories.

But we are at a crossroads. We need both the Ontario and federal governments to step up and fund their share of this investment at the Royal George. Without this funding, economic benefits can not be gained, job losses will occur and our historic downtown will be in a position that could be very hard to recover from at a time when we are all working so hard to put the pandemic behind us.

The Royal George Theatre is a critical part of who we are as a community. I hope to see it rebuilt and continue to entertain audiences from here and around the world while contributing to our community's economic and cultural wellbeing.

Together, we can leave a lasting legacy for future generations of residents and tourists to enjoy.

Gary Zalepa is lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

8.0

APPENDICES

- 8.1 Draft Official Plan Amendment
- 8.2 Draft Zoning By-law Amendment
- 8.3 Property Index Map & Parcel Register
- 8.4 Pre consultation Agreement
- 8.5 Application for Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment

*Appendices to be provided under separate cover