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# The Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Information Report to Council

**SUBJECT:** Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Study – Phase 1 Update  
**DATE:** 2025-01-08  
**REPORT #:** CDS-24-190  
**PREPARED BY:** Candice Bogdanski, Senior Heritage Planner  
**DEPARTMENT:** Community & Development Services

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (“HCD”) was established in 1986 to protect the heritage character of the commercial core of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Old Town area (“Old Town”).
- Updating the HCD Plan and considering an expansion of the HCD was identified as a priority through the Town’s Planning for Progress initiative (2021).
- The Town has awarded the contract for the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Study (the “HCD Study”) to Cultural Spaces, an Ottawa-based heritage consultancy firm.
- The Town provided Cultural Spaces with the findings of the surveys conducted by the HCD Study Working Group (“Working Group”).
- During the week of November 18, 2024, the Cultural Spaces team visited Niagara-on-the-Lake (“NOTL”) to conduct fieldwork in support of the HCD Study.
- On November 18, 2024, the Cultural Spaces team also met in-person with Town Staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Municipal Heritage Committee (“MHC”), the Town Historian, and board members from the Niagara Foundation and Niagara-on-the-Lake Conservancy.
- Section 40 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* provides that Council of a municipality may undertake a study of any area of the municipality for the purpose of designating a heritage conservation district and may pass a by-law establishing an HCD study area for a period of one year.
- Based on their initial research, Cultural Spaces has recommended a geographical boundary to define the Study Area (**Appendix 1**).
- Council may also pass a by-law prohibiting or setting limitations on alterations to property within the HCD study area for the period of one year.
- Cultural Spaces is preparing a draft Phase 1 Report summarizing their findings, which will be presented to the MHC in February 2025, and included in the MHC Agenda package to Council for feedback.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District (“HCD”) was enacted in 1986 to protect the commercial core of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Old Town area (the “Old Town”). As early as 1990, the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake (the “Town”) revisited ways to protect, preserve, and celebrate Old Town with proposed policy updates and studies aimed at updating the HCD Plan. Updating the HCD Plan was also indicated as a priority through the Town’s Planning for Progress initiative (2021) and Council’s Strategic Plan (2022-2027).

Prior to the commencement of the formal awarding of the contract and launch of the project, Town Heritage Staff established a Working Group with 18 volunteers associated with the MHC, the Town Historian/NOTL Museum, and the Niagara Foundation. This group offered expertise in architectural history, the historical settlement of NOTL’s Old Town Village, military history, genealogy, archaeology, cultural landscape studies, landscape architecture, restoration, and arborist studies, among other specializations. The Working Group represented local members of the community who are committed to preserving and celebrating the historical fabric of Old Town.

The exercise provided an opportunity for varied perspectives to assist with shaping the HCD Study with insight into priorities, concerns, and feedback. The Working Group conducted twelve two-hour walking tour sessions in Old Town and completed Built Heritage Surveys that were subsequently provided to the successful consultant team as part of an information package.

### Cultural Spaces

The Town has retained the services of Ottawa-based heritage consultancy firm Cultural Spaces to undertake the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Study (the “HCD Study”). Cultural Spaces is a multidisciplinary and bilingual team of specialists in heritage, sustainable development, and planning. They prepared the following description of their firm, which highlights the breadth of their work, expertise, and ethos as heritage consultants:

*We are a firm that combines heritage conservation and sustainable development strategies. We help manage change to preserve what matters. We combine expertise in heritage planning, urban planning, historical research, and architectural analyses.*

More information about the Cultural Spaces team can be found on their website: [www.culturalspaces.ca](http://www.culturalspaces.ca).

### HCD Study Area

Based on preliminary desktop and field research, Cultural Spaces has recommended a proposed study area boundary for the HCD Study (**Appendix I**). It includes the existing Queen-Picton HCD boundary and a surrounding area, for which further study and consideration will be given to expanding the HCD boundary.

The boundary of the Study Area has been developed based on a review of the following information:

- Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District Plan, 1986;
- HCD Boundary Expansion By-law 2279-91, 1991;
- Secondary Plan Character Study, 2009;

- Downtown Character Area, Official Plan, 2019;
- Planning for Progress Initiative, 2021;
- Unpublished reports and research from the Town’s archives;
- Extant architectural evidence; and
- Additional research (primary and secondary sources).

The Study Area is representative of extant historic architecture and its correlation to meaningful periods in the historic evolution of the Old Town from c.1814 to c.1914.

It should be noted that the Study Area is not the proposed boundary for a revised or updated Queen-Picton HCD, but rather, a boundary encompassing properties that *may* be included in the final HCD geographical area. Per the requirements of Bill 23, the “*More Homes Built Faster Act*” (2022), the *Ontario Heritage Act* (“OHA”) and regulation was amended to require that at least 25% of properties within a defined geographic area, comprising a HCD, meet the “Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest” (Ontario Regulation 9/06). As such, the proposed HCD boundary will represent a refinement of the Study Area boundary to ensure that the properties within meet this minimum threshold, as well as other relevant criteria developed by the consultant.

The geographical boundary proposed as the Study Area (**Appendix I**) will inform a Staff recommendation to Council, by by-law, to “designate the area specified in the by-law as a heritage conservation study area for a period of up to one year” (OHA, Section 40.1).

#### HCD Study Phase 1: The Study Phase

In accordance with Part V of the OHA, the HCD Study is divided into two phases: the “Study Phase” and the “Plan Phase.” The goals of the first phase are outlined in Section 40 (2) of Part V of the OHA:

- Scope of study:** (2) *A study under subsection (1) shall,*
- examine the character and appearance of the area that is the subject of the study, including buildings, structures and other property features of the area, to determine if the area should be preserved as a heritage conservation district;*
  - examine and make recommendations as to the geographic boundaries of the area to be designated;*
  - consider and make recommendations as to the objectives of the designation and the content of the heritage conservation district plan required under section 41.1; and*
  - make recommendations as to any changes that will be required to the municipality’s official plan and to any municipal by-laws, including any zoning by-laws. 2005, c.6. s.29.*

Currently, the HCD Study is in the Study Phase, during which the Cultural Spaces team is conducting desktop research and fieldwork studies. In addition to information gathered by the Working Group, the Consultants have reviewed extensive documentation provided by the Town, completed their own primary and secondary research, and conducted in-person fieldwork. Their research is ongoing, and they have begun creating mapping layers to articulate the evolution of Old Town over the hundred-year span between c.1814 and c.1914.

#### Consultation

A significant component of this HCD Study is the emphasis on engagement with local heritage

experts, advocates, and researchers. This commitment was first demonstrated with the Working Group and the twenty-four hours of walking tours, data collection, and additional feedback that launched the HCD Study with NOTL's engaged heritage community represented at the outset of this project.

On November 18, 2024, Town Staff arranged for two in-person consultation sessions. These sessions provided further opportunities for this project to be informed by community members that are knowledgeable in local history and heritage priorities. The first meeting included Town Staff representatives from Heritage Planning, the Town Historian / NOTL Museum Curators, and MHC Chair and Vice-Chair. This session included an introductory meeting and walking tour of the Queen-Picton HCD and surrounding area. The second meeting included representatives from respected heritage advocacy organizations, the Niagara Foundation and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Conservancy.

### **NEXT STEPS/CONCLUSION**

Consultation with the MHC is required under Section 40(3) of the OHA. As part of the Study Phase, Cultural Spaces will present a draft report with their initial findings to the MHC in February 2025. At that time, the Committee will have an opportunity to provide feedback directly to the consultant team; as part of the Agenda package, Council will also be able to provide feedback that will be communicated to Cultural Spaces.

Subsequently, Cultural Spaces will revise the report in response to feedback from the MHC and Council, and bring the final report to the MHC and Council to obtain direction for Phase 2 of the Study.

If directed by Council, the Plan Phase will include additional requisite public consultation as outlined in Section 41.1(6) of the OHA. More information about the Plan Phase, and the related development of policies, guidelines, and procedures to help manage change in the future District will be forthcoming.

Information about the HCD Study will be posted on a project page hosted through the Town's website. This page will be actively updated as new information is available.

Feedback regarding the HCD Study can be communicated at any time to Candice Bogdanski, Senior Heritage Planner, via email at [candice.bogdanski@notl.com](mailto:candice.bogdanski@notl.com) or via telephone to 905-468-3266 ext. 268.

### **Related Reports**

- Heritage Conservation District Study – Volunteer Working Group – [CDS-24-131](#)
- Heritage Conservation District Study Volunteer Group – Summary of Findings and Next Steps – [CDS-24-164](#)

### **APPENDICES**

- **Appendix I** – Old Town Heritage Conservation District Proposed Study Area