



## Report

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**Report to:** Mayor and Council  
**Date:** February 28, 2023  
**Title:** **2023-2027 Strategic Plan**

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### Recommendation(s)

1. Council adopt the three preliminary 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Pillars of Sustainability (Financial, Social, and Environmental), Customer Service 2.0, and Economic Diversity and Growth, that will form the basis of the Strategic Plan.
2. Council direct staff to initiate a Strategic Plan planning session for Council and staff, as well as public consultation.

### Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a proposed process and timelines for development of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, scheduled to be completed in spring 2023, and for Council to approve the Strategic Pillars for the term.

This strategic planning process provides Council with opportunity to work together to confirm their priorities for the 2022-2026 term, enabling staff to develop an implementation plan to deliver on those important issues/areas.

### Background

For each 4-year term of Council, the City of Niagara Falls sets a new strategic plan with key goals and initiatives that will move the community forward. The Strategic Plan is adopted by Niagara Falls City Council and provides direction to City Staff about areas of focus as the organization works toward achieving its vision.

The current Strategic Plan was approved by Council in 2019. In August 2022, Staff presented a document to Council that provided a final update on 2019-2022 Strategic Priorities and identified initiatives that should continue into the next Council term.

The new strategic planning process commenced with the November 18, 2022, Educational Session with the 2022-2026 Council, where the proposed Strategic Pillars were introduced by staff:

- Sustainability (Financial, Social, and Environmental)
- Customer Service 2.0

- Economic Diversity and Growth

Staff had previously undertaken a review of election campaign material, other public input as well as an internal and external environmental scan of key issues and challenges facing the city.

The proposed Strategic Pillars are described in more detail in the attachment to this report, and if adopted by Council, will form the foundation for this Council's term.

Public engagement will take place from March 3rd to 24th, 2023 on the City's Let's Talk engagement platform to ensure that the areas of focus defined by the pillars reflect the needs and expectations of the community.

Staff are recommending that a strategic planning session be conducted in April to provide members of Council the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion, guided by the Strategic Pillars and the results of the public engagement, to form a consensus on priorities/high-level direction for the Council term. Staff are recommending that members of the Senior Management Team attend the strategic planning session to answer questions and provide clarification/support.

Once Council has established the strategic direction, staff will develop an implementation plan for subsequent Council approval.

The suggested strategic planning schedule is as follows:

- Council Educational Session – November 18, 2022, included:
  - Division/Department Overviews; and
  - Candidate Platforms (Council members' experience of door-to-door campaigning during the recent election).
- Strategic planning process report and confirmation of Strategic Pillars – February 28, 2023.
- Public engagement - March 6-27, 2023.
- Strategic planning session based on Strategic Pillars (Council and Senior Staff in attendance - open to the public) April 2023.
- Staff prepare the implementation initiatives needed to address the approved Pillars.
- Council approves final Strategic Plan with initiatives - April/May 2023.
- Staff will develop on-going monitoring and updates to Council on the action plans and strategic plan accomplishments.

### **Strategic/Departmental Alignment**

Preparation of the Strategic Planning document for the 2023-2027 Council term.

### **Contributor(s)**

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**List of Attachments**

[Attachment 2023-COMMS-02 2023-2027 Strategic Plan](#)

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**Status:**

Approved

- 21 Feb

2023

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- 22 Feb

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## **Proposed 2023-2027 Strategic Pillars**

### **Strategic Pillar – Sustainability**

- **Financial Sustainability**

Financial sustainability refers to the ability of the City of Niagara Falls to effectively manage its financial resources to meet its current and future obligations, without relying on external sources of funding, and without sacrificing its ability to deliver essential services to its residents.

This involves having a balanced budget, having adequate reserves, and maintaining a stable and predictable revenue stream, as well as effectively managing debt. Financial sustainability is essential for ensuring the long-term viability and stability of the City and for maintaining the trust and confidence of residents and taxpayers. Simply put – the City's goal is to deliver the right services, at the right time, at the right cost.

- **Environmental Sustainability**

Environmental sustainability refers to the practices and policies that the City of Niagara Falls implements to ensure the health and well-being of the environment for current and future generations.

This involves implementing policies that reduce waste and pollution, conserve natural resources, and promote clean and renewable energy sources. It also means that City-owned and operated facilities and infrastructure is designed and maintained to support sustainable development and protect the environment. Environmental sustainability is vital for mitigating the impacts of climate change, preserving biodiversity, and improving the quality of life for residents in the community.

- **Social Sustainability**

Social sustainability refers to the policies and initiatives that the City of Niagara Falls implements to address the community's social and economic issues, promoting residents' quality of life and well-being.

The City of Niagara Falls works in partnership with the Niagara Region to ensure that all constituents have access to basic needs such as affordable housing, health and mental health care, education, and social services, ensuring that Niagara Falls is a livable, inclusive, and supportive community for all residents.

### **Strategic Pillar – Customer Service 2.0**

The City of Niagara Falls prides itself on fostering a culture that prioritizes customer service. The City will continue strategizing around the development of tools and

modernizing processes required to make Customer Service efforts more effective and efficient, with attention to the following key elements:

- Omni-Channel - Omni-channel customer service is a seamless, integrated, and consistent customer experience across all channels and touchpoints of the City of Niagara Falls' communication with residents. This includes online, mobile, phone, in-person, and other interaction methods. The goal of omni-channel customer service aims to provide customers with a unified and cohesive experience, regardless of the channel they choose.
- Proactive - The City of Niagara Falls takes the initiative to address the potential needs of residents before they have questions or issues. This involves anticipating the community's needs and providing solutions or information before residents even ask for it. Proactive customer service aims to enhance a resident's experience by reducing the need for reactive customer support. Examples of proactive customer service include support through website chatbots and providing transparent updates on projects and initiatives.
- Customer Centric Experience -A customer-centric approach puts City of Niagara Falls residents at the center of all business decisions and actions. The goal is to create a positive experience by understanding and prioritizing the community's needs, wants, and preferences. This can be accomplished by regularly collecting and analyzing data, two-way communication, and training and education.
- Continuous Improvement - Continuously improving customer service requires a commitment to listening and learning from residents and taking action based on that feedback. The City's resident engagement platform 'Let's Talk Niagara Falls' is an important tool in establishing a resident-first culture.

### **Strategic Pillar – Economic Diversity and Growth**

Economic Diversification & Growth in the City of Niagara Falls emphasizes having a balanced and sustainable local economy, achieved by expanding and diversifying the types of industries and businesses operating within the community. This involves attracting new businesses, supporting existing industries, and spurring innovation and entrepreneurship.

Economic Diversification & Growth also refers to investing in infrastructure, workforce development, and educational initiatives to create a favourable environment for economic growth. This results in increased financial stability and resilience, new jobs and an increased tax base.