



December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

Niagara Region  
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, P.O. Box 1042  
Thorold, Ontario L2V 4T7

Dear Esteemed Regional Councillors and Office of the Regional Clerk,

I am writing on behalf of the **St. Catharines Downtown Association (SCDA)**, Niagara's largest Business Improvement Area (BIA), to express our strong support for the **Welcoming Streets Pilot Program** in **Downtown St. Catharines**. This initiative has the potential to address critical gaps in services for vulnerable populations while improving safety and community engagement in our downtown core.

#### **Why Downtown St. Catharines?**

Downtown St. Catharines is home to a **high concentration of services** for those in need, including shelters, food banks, and mental health and addiction support. However, there remains a significant gap in real-time engagement with **unsheltered individuals** and those experiencing **mental health crises**. Current service providers like **NASO** do not have the capacity to address these needs directly, leaving a critical gap.

The **Welcoming Streets Pilot** will fill this gap by providing **proactive, peer-led outreach** and **de-escalation support** to individuals in crisis, while connecting them to essential resources. The pilot will be an important first step in creating a scalable model that could later be replicated in other Niagara municipalities.

#### **BIA's Role and Commitment**

As the region's largest BIA, the SCDA is committed to being a **collaborative partner** in this initiative. We are eager to lend our capacity to **evaluate the impact** of the program on downtown businesses, including assessing improvements to **public safety, business operations, and community relations**. Our involvement will help ensure the program aligns with the needs of the business community while achieving its broader social goals.

#### **A Collaborative Approach**

This initiative will be supported by key partners such as **Positive Living Niagara** and **REACH Niagara**, whose expertise in **harm reduction, mental health, and addiction services** will ensure the program's success. Their involvement, combined with the SCDA's support, will create a **holistic, compassionate response** to the challenges faced by vulnerable individuals in our community.

ST. CATHARINES DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

80 King Street, Main Floor St. Catharines, Ontario Canada L2R 7G1 T (905) 685-8424

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**Request for Support**

We respectfully request that Niagara Regional Council support the **Welcoming Streets Pilot** in Downtown St. Catharines. This program is a vital step toward filling a service gap, improving safety, and creating a more inclusive community. With your support, we can make a lasting impact and provide a model for other communities across Niagara.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working together to make our downtown safer and more welcoming for everyone.

Sincerely,

*Rachel Braithwaite*

Rachel Braithwaite  
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St Catharines Downtown Association  
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