

Good evening, Lord Mayor, and Members of Council.

My name is Gordon Stratford, and I am here on behalf of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association's Planning, Development and Land Use Committee, to provide comment on the Draft Official Plan which will come before you this evening.

The Draft OP you are reviewing has had a long history, leading to now having a document which gives everyone — residents, developers, and the Town itself — a shared foundation to work from. When the rules are well-defined and the vision is clearly articulated, it makes it so much easier for people to engage with the process confidently and constructively. This new Official Plan represents an enormous amount of work — by planning staff, by Council, and by the many people across this Town who have contributed towards shaping it. On behalf of our committee and the residents we represent, we want to say: many thanks.

We are happy to support this Draft Official Plan. While we, and others, would like to have seen greater use of the words “shall” and “will,” rather than “may” and “should,” we see this as a strong foundation for the whole planning process going forward.

We also applaud the inclusion in this draft of the intention to move forward with the development of the Community Planning Permit System, or CPPS. Our committee, along with others in this Town, sees this as a vital tool in the planning process, which is being adopted in many communities across Ontario. A CPPS provides clarity— for residents, for developers, and for Town staff alike. A well-designed CPPS establishes defined rules, predictable timelines, and a transparent process so that everyone who participates in shaping and preserving this community knows what to expect and when to expect it. That benefits the Town operationally, it benefits applicants, and it protects the character and heritage that make Niagara-on-the-Lake worth planning for in the first place.

Moving forward, our committee's goal is simple: to work collaboratively alongside Council and planning staff — not in opposition to them — to help streamline the planning process, reduce uncertainty, and build the kind of framework that serves this community for decades to come. Our committee has been formed by the Residents Association to serve as a constructive, informed voice between this community's residents and the Town's planning process. We are volunteers—homeowners, longtime residents, and community stakeholders—who believe that good planning outcomes require strong community engagement, and we are committed to doing so seriously. We appreciate the opportunity to be part of that conversation and look forward to supporting staff and Council in putting this Official Plan into effect.

Thank you.