

Planning, Development & Land Use Committee

Meeting Summary — April 10, 2026

Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents' Association

1. Meeting Context & Attendance

Chair:	Lidija Biro
Committee Members:	David Jones Brian Marshall Tony Vargas Steven Gregg Gordon Stratford (via Zoom)
Board Liaison:	Peter Neame
Guest Presenter:	Steve Hardaker —Board Member, NOTLRA

Brian advised the committee he will need to step back temporarily due to personal family circumstances. He will help as available and asked to be kept in the loop. The committee acknowledged this with appreciation.

2. Housekeeping Items

- Minutes corrections: Spelling of Aimee's name was not updated on the /C2 site despite corrections being circulated. Root cause: documents are being sent to Norm for posting while still in the review loop, causing version confusion. Going forward, two members will finalize the document before it is sent to Norm.
- Delegation brief on /C2: The version currently posted still reflects old wording in Section 7 (environmental leadership). The corrected version needs to replace it.
- Working documents: CPP process charts and other materials prepared by the committee (including Claude-assisted drafts) are available on the /C2 site.

3. Glendale Secondary Plan — Presentation by Steve Hardaker

3.1 Geographic Scope

Glendale occupies the southern portion of NOTL, bounded by the Niagara Escarpment (south), Concession 7 (east), Queenston Road (north), and Homer Road (west). Lands west of Homer Road fall under the Niagara Region Glendale District Plan rather than the Town's Secondary Plan.

3.2 Planning History

- 2010: Original Glendale Secondary Plan approved.
- 2018: Niagara Region established the Glendale District Plan as a broader strategic document (which includes certain St. Catharines lands within the Glendale boundary).
- December 2024: Town Council approved the updated Glendale Secondary Plan.
- Three OLT appeals filed, all related to building height concerns.
- March 6, 2026: Ontario Land Tribunal approved the plan with revisions addressing those appeals. The plan is now in force and effect.
- A current development application is underway on Concession 7 between Queenston Road and York Road.

3.3 Growth Projections to 2051

- Population: approximately 14,000–15,000 residents, making Glendale the most populous settlement area in all of NOTL.
- Employment: approximately 9,200 jobs.
- Designated a Strategic Growth Area in the Niagara Region Official Plan, assigned high priority for intensification.
- Development framework must protect and integrate the Niagara Escarpment, creek valleys, Welland Canal corridor, and adjacent agricultural land.

3.4 Building Heights — The Transport Canada Constraint

This was the central and most contentious subject of the presentation.

Schedule 2 — Permitted Heights Without Transport Canada Exemption:

- General range of 2–5 storeys across most of the settlement area, complying with Transport Canada’s Aeronautics Act airport zoning regulations.

Schedule 2B — Enhanced Building Heights (Controversial):

- Taller heights permitted only where Transport Canada grants a permanent exemption to airport zoning regulations.
- The Town has approved developments at significantly higher densities conditional on receiving such exemptions — an approach Steve characterized as irresponsible, given that Transport Canada has indicated it does not grant such exemptions.
- St. Catharines, by contrast, strictly adheres to airport zoning limits for all East St. Catharines development.

Special Policy Areas (post-OLT revision):

- Special Policy Area X (NE corner of Glendale Ave and Taylor Rd): up to 25 storeys, with a variety of heights required for multiple towers — subject to Transport Canada exemption.
- Special Policy Area Y (east of Niagara-on-the-Green Blvd N, north of Glendale Ave): designated special policy area, heights conditional on exemption.

- Special Policy Area Z (east of Niagara-on-the-Green Blvd N, north of Glendale Ave): mid-rise, up to 10 storeys — subject to exemption.
- Without a Transport Canada exemption, all enhanced-height areas revert to 4–5 storeys.
- Implementing zoning will apply Holding (H) symbols on all enhanced-height lands, preventing construction at approved heights until an exemption is confirmed in writing.

White Oaks precedent:

- Town previously approved four towers at 17, 18, 21, and 25 storeys, conditional on an Aeronautics Act exemption. That exemption remains unresolved.
- Niagara-on-the-Green is directly across Glendale Avenue from the enhanced-height areas; transition in massing from high-density to low-density neighbourhoods will be a critical design requirement.

3.5 Provincial Context — Bill 98

- Committee noted concern about Bill 98 (the exact number was uncertain in the meeting). Former Liberal housing minister Chris Ballard, who spent four years in cabinet on housing and infrastructure, has written multiple LinkedIn posts characterizing the bill as the worst piece of legislation in Ontario history.
- The concern is that Bill 98 may constrain what the Town can include in a CPPS bylaw.
- Committee consensus: continue recommending CPPS with all desired elements while acknowledging Town staff may face provincial constraints. It was noted that CPP systems already operate somewhat outside standard zoning legislation, which may provide a practical workaround. Analysis required.

4. Final Draft Official Plan — Key Observations

The Final Draft Official Plan was released the evening prior to this meeting. All members were asked to review it before the next meeting, with particular attention to:

- Section 3.8.2 — Building height restrictions: General OP height policies include a qualifier carving out Glendale. Heights in Glendale are governed through the Secondary Plan's Schedule 2, not the general OP.
- Section 9.2.4 — Official Plan Amendments: Private initiative amendments are explicitly permitted and would proceed through the standard approval process. This gives the NOTLRA a pathway to propose future OP amendments independently — an important tool to keep in mind.
- Section 9.4 — Community Planning Permit System: CPPS is now included in the Final Draft OP. This is a significant positive development. All members asked to review this section carefully.
- Section 10 — Secondary Plans: All four community secondary plans (including Glendale) are embedded in Section 10.

Other items noted from the draft:

- Virgil / Mori Gardens: The OP references future planning work for Virgil, appearing to reference the Marotta-owned Mori Gardens lands. Almost entirely agricultural at present (one small commercial parcel near the old store). The committee does not expect re-designation but notes this is a large strategically significant holding, and provincial appetite for urban boundary expansions creates uncertainty.
- Parliament Oaks was raised as a cautionary example: a major zoning change pushed through as a minor amendment, with required follow-on planning steps that were never completed. CPPS would have been a safeguard against that outcome.

5. CPPS Strategy — Research Approach & Staff Engagement

Extended discussion on how the committee can add tangible value to Town staff's CPPS development work. Key themes:

- The committee's role is to make things easier for Town staff, not to direct them. Tone and framing of any materials presented to Aimie and Nick must reflect a partnership posture.
- Proposal: Use AI tools (Claude) to survey existing CPPS bylaws across comparable Ontario municipalities and synthesize best practices into a draft framework tailored to NOTL's community areas (Old Town, Virgil, Glendale, St. Davids/Queenston). This would give staff a substantive starting point rather than asking them to build from scratch.
- Specific near-term step: Compare the Final Draft OP CPPS content against prior committee research and prior Claude-assisted work to identify gaps — and frame those gaps as contributions the committee can offer to fill.
- Community design guidelines identified as a key deliverable the committee could develop collaboratively with staff. Brian has previously compiled a list of CDG documents from comparable Ontario municipalities.
- Green building standards discussed: The Ontario Association of Architects has stated green standards are not causing development delays. Standards add 2–8% upfront cost but generate long-term energy savings for occupants. Federal and provincial grant programs exist to help offset developer costs, including a newly announced solar panel grant. The committee supports incentive-based approaches over regulatory mandates in the CPPS context.

6. April 14 Committee of the Whole — Delegation

6.1 Strategy

The committee agreed on a deliberate two-step approach:

- Step 1 — April 14 delegation (10 minutes, strictly enforced): Keep it brief. Introduce the NOTLRA Planning Committee. Commend Town staff on the quality of the Final Draft OP. Express support for the inclusion of CPPS. Signal that the committee has been doing substantive research and would welcome the opportunity to work with staff going forward.

The primary audience is the planning staff in the room — Nick will be on the dais and is a key relationship to establish. The goal is bridge-building, not lobbying.

- Step 2 — Follow-up staff meetings: After April 14, pursue separate meetings with Nick (Director of Planning) and Aimee. Present the committee’s working documents and CPP research, offer to be a resource. Frame as a partnership in which the committee absorbs research burden to help an overloaded planning department move forward.

6.2 Presenter

- Gordon agreed to present at the April 14 delegation (subject to calendar confirmation).

6.3 Logistics

- David to draft the delegation brief and circulate to all members by end of day Saturday (April 12) for comments by Sunday night (April 13).
- Delegation registration form available on Town website — search “delegate to Council Niagara-on-the-Lake.” David to submit the form.
- Form must be submitted to the Town Clerk by noon Monday (April 14).

7. Action Items

Who	Action
David	Draft April 14 delegation brief (introductory tone, ≈2 minutes of speaking time). Circulate to all members by end of day Saturday April 12.
All members	Review draft delegation brief and provide feedback by Sunday night April 13.
David	Register NOTLRA committee as a delegation with the Town Clerk for the April 14 Committee of the Whole.
Gordon	Confirm calendar availability for April 14, 6:00 p.m. delegation. Advise David.
All members	Review Section 9.4 (CPPS) of the Final Draft Official Plan before next committee meeting.
All members	Review CPP process charts on /C2 site. Be prepared to select preferred version at next meeting.
David / [Minutes lead]	Finalize minutes corrections (Aimee’s name; Section 7 wording) and send corrected final version directly to Norm for posting — do not circulate through the group loop first.
David	Use Claude to compare Final Draft OP CPPS section against prior committee research. Identify gaps to shape staff engagement strategy.
Committee	After April 14, pursue separate meeting requests with Nick (Director of Planning) and Aimee to present research and CPP framework work.

8. Next Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for Thursday, April 24, 2026 (two weeks from today). Hybrid format (in-person + Zoom/Teams for Brian and others as needed). Venue TBD — options include the community centre boardroom, NOTL Arena meeting room (no charge), or NOTL Public Library (fee applies). David to confirm venue and circulate details. Timing to be adjusted if a staff meeting with Aimie is arranged before then.

9. Additional Notes

- The NOTLRA currently cannot host candidate meetings in Town-owned facilities due to election-related restrictions on political content. This applies only to election candidate events, not planning or community meetings. Alternative venues for future candidate evenings are being explored.
- The committee's planned AI-assisted CPPS research synthesis was characterized as a potentially powerful lever to move staff forward — presenting a draft framework drawn from comparable Ontario municipalities, rather than asking an already resource-constrained planning department to build from scratch.