

Case Number OLT-21-001728, OLT22—002871\_Participant\_CMC\_September 2, 2022

August 18, 2022  
John Garrett  
4337 Simcoe St.  
Niagara Falls Ontario  
L2E1T5

Participant Statement:

Regarding the Proposed Official Plan Amendment to permit satellite tourist accommodations and the Zoning By-Law to permit satellite tourist accommodations for 5411 River Road Niagara Falls. I write today to express my opposition to both.

I am a lifelong resident of Niagara Falls and have owned and personally been restoring my 153 year old home in this River Road Satellite district neighbourhood since 1986, 36 years. There is much discussion worldwide of Cultural Heritage Value. This neighbourhood is a prime example. It has existed as a residential neighbourhood for well over 100 years and consists of a mix of affordable, mainly owner occupied homes, including styles ranging from gracious victorians to humble war time houses, a mix of rental units in small apartment buildings and duplexes. It has welcomed and embraced newcomers from around the world who have settled and are very proud to live here as are we. Many were attracted by the affordable prices and local amenities, the parks churches, schools and shopping to name but a few. These are all aspects and concepts of community and shared cultural heritage that we risk losing with applications such as the one before you. What has been proposed has begun to deteriorate the area and has the potential of turning the whole area into a Swiss cheese of vacant, uncared for properties adjacent to actual residents who care and are invested not just monetarily but with their families and lives.

5411 River Road was originally a single family home that became part of the application for a number of properties to be considered as satellite units of the Grandview Inn. As you may be aware, the history of that application was long and had changed many times as opposition mounted. When the Planning department recommended against that application, it was revised to this current application. I believe that this 5411 River Rd. property was and is under totally different ownership, the owners, the D'Souzas' should have been required to submit a new and separate application. As a VRU there is no guarantee that 5411 would not unofficially eventually become part of a similar scheme. An absentee owner whose property is marketed under the umbrella of a group of properties. The term ghost hotel (with their many horror stories can be found easily by a Google search) has recently come into use, and this would be a perfect example. The definition of a Ghost Hotel is "a term for an Airbnb listing that isn't owner occupied but essentially a short-term rental managed by a company and sometimes advertised under a fake profile".

Of the 20 houses on my short block extending west from River Road, in 1986 all homes were owner occupied. Some had been duplexed, six contained long term rental apartments. One was termed "Rooms for Tourists" (the precursor to the term B&B) and was owner occupied. Currently there is only one home with a rental dwelling remaining. There are now six absentee owner homes three of which are operating illegally as VRU's or B&B's or currently being converted to do so. A search of the City of Niagara Falls website shows that none of the seven currently operating B&B's/VRU's on the street are licensed. Pandora's box has indeed been opened with the approval of this application with five of them changing ownership in the past year.

City Planning Staff commented that with the approval of 5411 River Road "An undue

concentration of Vacation Rental Units is not being created” is simply not accurate. City By-Law enforcement’s new software to track B&B’s and VRU’s show more than 1000 currently in the city, this software harvests information from only two sources, Airbnb and VRBO, it does not reflect the many other reservation sources such as Trip Advisor, Hotels.com, Booking.com, Facebook or an individual property’s personal website for direct booking. There are estimates the number could be as high as 3000 in the city.

At the time of the application Staff also stated that the vacancy rates have improved to 2.3% in 2020 and that 3% is considered a healthy rate. In their article of April 21, 2021 Niagara This Week a local newspaper reported “Niagara Falls has seen vacancy rates for 3 bedroom apartments plummet to 0% downtown (this neighbourhood) and a mere .9% in the rest of the city according to the October 2020 statistics by CMHC”. The city has working groups currently addressing affordable housing in Niagara Falls. With rising housing prices, the need for rental accommodation has never been greater. To allow 5411 River Road to be taken out of this market is only exacerbating the problem.

In closing please understand that I am not at all against the use of residential property for Owner Occupied Bed & Breakfast use. I am strongly against the conversion of residential property to absentee owner commercial use in this a designated residential area.

Respectfully,  
John Garrett