



# **St. Catharines Official Plan Final Draft**

## **A Presentation to City Council**

**Prepared by the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce**

**June 7, 2010**

**Good evening Mayor McMullan, members of City Council and City staff, my name is David DiFelice and I am the Chair of the Board of Directors of the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce. I am joined by the Chamber’s Policy Coordinator Kithio Mwanzia.**

**We are here this evening representing the St. Catharines – Thorold Chamber of Commerce. As you well know, the Chamber is a member-driven business organization. With a current membership of more than 1,150 businesses. We are the voice of business for St. Catharines – Thorold – Niagara, we are one of the largest business organizations in the Greater Golden Horseshoe**

**The Garden City Plan is truly innovative and it will set St. Catharines apart from similar jurisdictions in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Tonight, we are presenting the Chamber’s input into the final public discussion on the City’s Official Plan.**

**First, let me say that the Chamber has participated extensively in the consultation process that has shaped the Garden City Plan over the last three years and as such our comments will be brief.**

**The Chamber’s participation included:**

- Internally conducted surveys and questionnaires to members of the Municipal Affairs Committee – a committee that is now called the Government Affairs Committee**
- Chamber Staff consultation with planning staff**
- Chamber Staff participation in public meetings**

**As the Plan has been developed, the Board has followed its progress through updates provided by Kithio as he has participated in the various open houses that the city has hosted.**

**The Garden City Plan is based on a vision that will guide the growth of the city for the next decade and beyond. The process in developing the plan has been inclusive and informative – and as a Chamber - we now have a better understanding of how the city views its growth opportunities moving forward.**

**We'd like to thank and congratulate city staff for a rigorous consultation process. Given the importance of an official plan on by-law, public works, land use and development policy, it was critically important that the process be inclusive and extensive.**

**The Garden City Plan sets out land use strategies for all types of development across the city. It affects how the city will look in the future, how neighbourhoods will function, and the manner in which people will live, work and play. Given the importance of such a plan in impacting the way a municipality grows, the Chamber is pleased to see that issues we raised over the past three years have been addressed and included in the final draft.**

**As this is the final public input session for the Garden City Plan, there are a few additional points that we would like to draw attention to as a means to ensure the documents success moving forward.**

**Number One - A major concern of the business community is the potential for increased municipal red tape. It is encouraging to see that the Garden City Plan Draft emphasises integrated decision-making. Integrated decision-making reduces compliance time and costs for businesses. These will be important considerations as relevant businesses will now have to be compliant with the Garden City Plan, Urban Design Guidelines and various zoning regulations. If St. Catharines is to be considered 'Open for Business' it must effectively address how businesses will be able to move efficiently through these regulatory policies. Upon approval of the Garden City Plan – it is important to immediately ask senior management to develop a strategy and process for integrated decision-making that involves all key planning regulations.**

**Number Two- The Chamber discussed and proposed that innovation zones be included in the official plan as part of a new innovative city design model. In the Mayor's speech to the St. Catharines – Thorold business community he indicated that the city was going to proceed with the creation of an innovation zone as part of the official plan process. He used the area around the new state of the art hospital as an example of an area that can be zoned for very specific uses. We encourage city staff and council to develop strategies to further leverage areas in the city that can be identified as industry specific zones. Following that marketing plans should be developed to accompany any area that is zoned for specific uses – and this function can be undertaken by the Economic Development Office.**

**We thank you again for providing us the opportunity to speak this evening and we look forward to your questions.**

**Thank you**