

**Margaret and Larry Van Volkenburg**

**■ Beechwood Ave., Guelph, ON ■**

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Thursday, July 17, 2025

Re: To amend the zoning by-law  
343 Waterloo Ave, Guelph, ON.  
File # OZS25-009

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Guelph City Council,

We are writing to you today concerning the application to amend the Official Plan for 343 Waterloo Ave. (file #OZS25-009)

It is our understanding that this application is being brought forward to council under the rules set out by the Ontario provincial government as it relates to strong mayor powers and is being presented to council by Mayor Cam Guthrie. A decision on the application will be made at the hybrid City Council meeting on July 22, 2025.

In Mayor Guthrie's e-mail to Margaret on July 10, 2025, he explained that this process has been used many times over the last couple of years on other projects, specifically Princess Auto and another residential development project. He further explained that all the planning requirements of twenty days notice, distribution to the neighbourhood and advertising in the media have been met. While all of that might be true, I believe that this application is being rushed, and a full review of the application is not being granted to the public nor city staff.

As you know, most applications are brought forward to council at a Planning meeting where both council and the public get a first look at the proposal. In many cases, the developer meets with the community to gather insight and answer questions. This information is then gathered by city staff and is brought forward to council for a decision. While the meeting on July 22, 2025, allows for delegations to address either their support or concerns for the application, a decision will be made at this meeting. The allowed 20 days to prepare to speak to council is an extremely tight deadline for most people.

On the matter of public consultation, Mayor Guthrie informed Margaret that a notice on the lawn of the property is not required under this process. We again would question why council is limiting citizen participation in matters that relate to our communities and how they should grow? Apparently "advertising in the media" has been met but to what degree? We don't have any local print media in the city, and not everyone has access to the internet to read online media. A public sign on the property would ensure

true transparency of information sharing with the public. This step, should the application go through a normal planning process, would ensure that participation.

According to the online documents related to this application, the ‘concept’ of this development is for 9 rental units, 2 of which will be affordable housing. Does the rent on these two units include utilities? If not, then how can it truly be affordable? We fully support the addition of more rental housing units in the city, but we question the two “affordable housing” units as truly being affordable. They may meet what’s set out in council’s affordable housing policies and that of the province, but to us, affordable housing is actually rent-geared-to-income housing, supported by all levels of government. Margaret has well over 20 years in the non-profit housing sector and knows that without more rent-geared-to-income housing in the city we will continue to have homelessness, and our most vulnerable citizens will continue to be at risk.

The term “NIMBY” gets thrown around every time citizens voice their concerns about a proposed development. It’s used by some politicians and many developers who believe that public participation just slows things down and makes life difficult for them. But using one’s voice is a vital part of our democracy, whether in support of or opposition to. We have been involved in the process of developing non-profit housing and we have also participated as a property owners for development proposals. Community members do not go out of their way to oppose development; they want to participate and work together for the betterment of their neighbourhoods. A prime example of this is the former Lafarge lands. What started off as an application to build big box stores surrounded by asphalt, resulted in a plan for mixed-use commercial and housing, as well as city-owned land that includes walking trails, all due in part to citizen involvement. While the property still has some obstacles to overcome, the development will truly become a community to be proud of.

The Waterloo Ave. application, as it’s presented, does not address the concerns of parking. With the proposed commercial units on the ground floor and 9 units above, the 8 parking spaces will not provide the necessary requirements. Beechwood and Hearn will then likely become the much sought after spaces. We have not seen any documentation related to this proposal that addresses this issue.

We respectfully request that council push the pause button on this application and have the applicant go through the regular process where both city staff and the public can have input on its merits. We believe that using the strong mayor powers is a very slippery slope for this city. In our immediate neighbourhood, there are potentially 4 sites that could also have the same application process brought forward with very limited community involvement.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns.

Margaret and Larry Van Volkenburg