Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

On-Farm Diversified Uses Review

Public Information Centre







Opportunities to Participate and Provide Feedback:

- Review the display boards
- Speak with Town staff and the Project Team
- Share your comments on a comment form or the online survey

This review is supported by funding from the Greenbelt Foundation.

Farm businesses are evolving, and the Town wants to support this.

Agriculture is central to Niagara-on-the-Lake's economy, landscape and identity. Many farmers now earn additional income from businesses on the farm.

Goal: Support farm businesses while keeping agriculture as the main use of farmland.

What is an on-farm diversified use (OFDU)?

A smaller business on a working farm that adds income for the farm.

- Farm market
- Farm tours and tastings
- Bakery, Café or Restaurant
- Retail shops, antique stores, crafts
- Home-based business

Important: OFDUs must be secondary to farming.

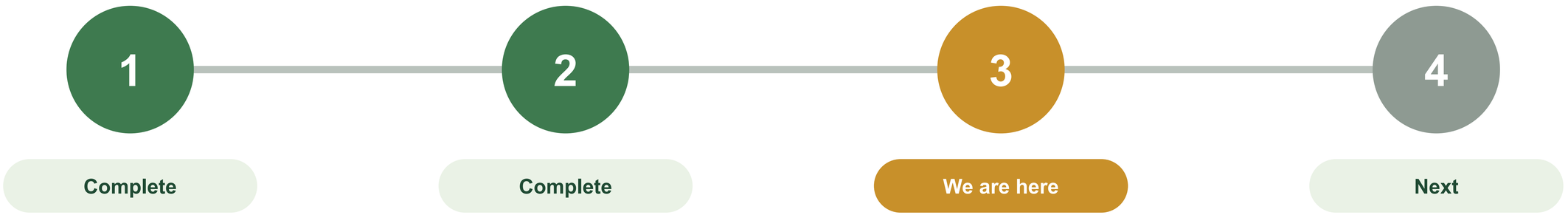
On-farm diversified use policies aim to:

Support farm income
Help farms diversify and remain viable

Keep farming first
Protect farmland and neighbouring farm operations

Make the rules clearer
Provide clear, consistent and predictable rules

The draft recommendations are now open for public review



Comments from this session and the online survey will help refine the recommendations before they go to Council.

4 **Purpose Of This Session**

Your feedback will help shape the final recommendations

The purpose of this public information centre is to present the draft recommendations and receive early feedback and input from the community. No decisions are being made today.

Today’s session is intended to:

Share

Present the draft recommendations for review and feedback

Explain

Show how the recommendations would be implemented and how they benefit the community

Listen

Receive input from the community on the draft recommendations

Refine

Review community feedback and refine the recommendations before being presented to Council

Two stakeholder workshops were held in Fall 2026 with over 20 participants, including farmers, wineries, and agri-business operators.

Participants supported on-farm diversified uses with a clear framework.

What we heard	What we are proposing	See board
Protect good agricultural land	Limits that keep businesses secondary to farming	8
Establishing a clear framework will support farmers and businesses	Clear definitions and method to measure size	8
The size and intensity of OFDUs is important	Clearer direction for events and visitor uses	9
Support farmers who are seeking to start or grow their diversified farm business	A streamlined application process	10
Make the process easier to understand	Early consultation and more information	10

The background review identifies five key opportunities

1

Protecting Farmland

The Town's framework prioritizes protecting farmland and permitting OFDUs

2

Updated Zoning

The Zoning By-laws need to be updated to align with the new Official Plan and this Study.

3

Clearer Regulations

Greater clarity regarding the scale and intensity of OFDUs is needed.

4

Streamlined Applications

A more streamlined application process is needed, with clear approvals and steps.

5

More Information

Additional information and guidance would benefit farmers who are looking to start or grow their OFDUs.

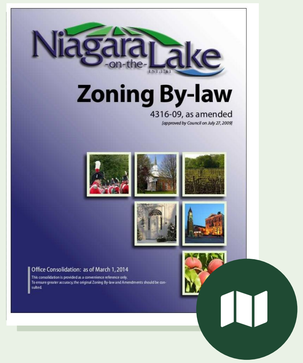
Four tools working together as one streamlined framework

The proposed framework links the Official Plan, Zoning By-law, site review and approvals, and guidance and outreach to apply a consistent framework across all farmland.



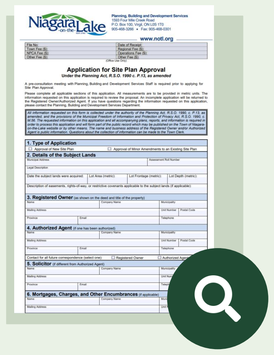
Official Plan

The Town's long-term land use plan. Recommended updates would amend the adopted 2026 Official Plan once approved by the Province, or the in-force 2017 Official Plan in the meantime.



Zoning By-law

On farm diversified uses would be permitted in the Rural (A) Zone of By-law 500A-74 (Rural Zoning By-law). Zoning By-law 4316-09 (Urban Zoning By-law) will also be updated to reflect similar regulations.



Site Plan Control

Checks site details such as access, parking and drainage. This is a required step to starting or growing an OFDU.

Guidance and Outreach

Explains the rules and the application process to applicants and the public.

8 Draft Recommendations

Clear rules on what is permitted and how large it can be

TO QUALIFY

On land actively farmed
Shown by a Farm Business Registration Number or Farm Property Class eligibility

Secondary to the farm
Farming stays the main use

Limited in size
Within the area limits below

Fits with neighbours
Does not interfere with nearby farms

Recommended Maximum Size

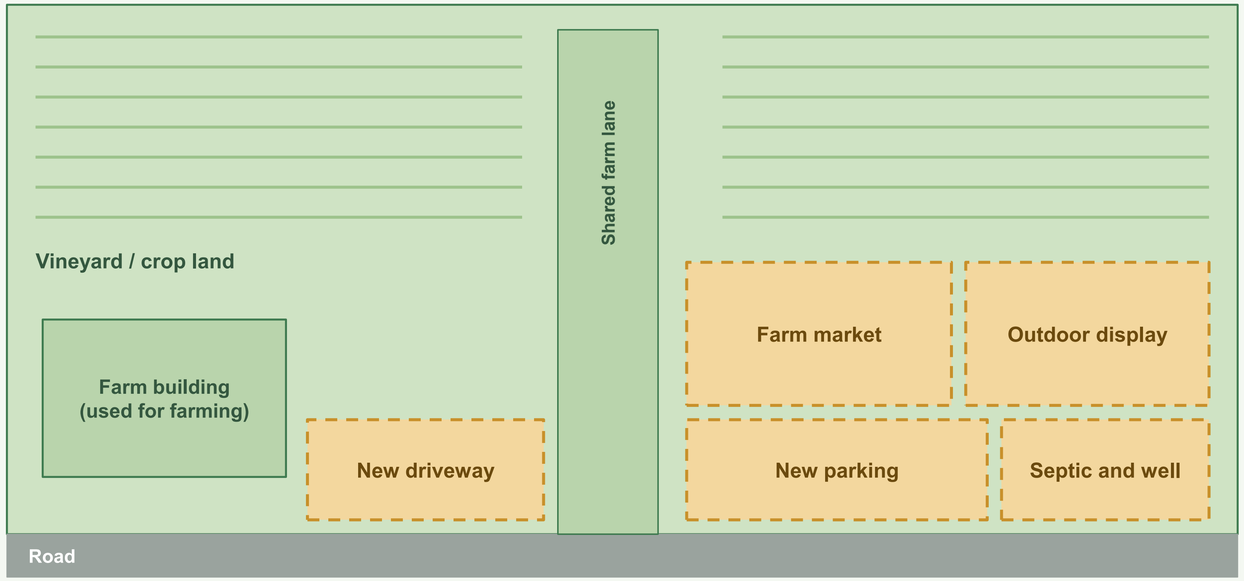
2% or 1 ha
Maximum combined business area, whichever is less

20%
Buildings limited to 20% of the business area

1,000 m²
Larger proposals need a Zoning By-law Amendment (currently it's 500 m²)

50% credit
50% of a building that is over 10 years old is discounted from the maximum area

What Counts Towards Maximum Size



Counted

Not counted: farm buildings used for farming, shared lanes, crop land in production

ALSO PROPOSED

- No severances for an OFDU would be permitted
- Use existing buildings and accesses (driveways) where possible
- Major infrastructure upgrades are not contemplated, except where septic improvements may be required
- Natural features stay protected
- All other policies and regulations would continue to apply
- Each application for an OFDU is assessed on a case-by-case basis

On-Farm Diversified Uses can support farms, but farming must come first

All agri-tourism uses would be treated as on-farm diversified uses and reviewed based on its scale.

Farm-related activities

Tours, tastings, pick-your-own

Permitted, where they meet the on-farm diversified regulations

Occasional events

Temporary events, including tents

Reviewed on a case-by-case basis through a special event permit

Regular events and event spaces

A property that operates as a venue

Limited to 200 m² of event space. Regular events or larger spaces require a Zoning By-law Amendment.

Visitor accommodations

25 m² **25 m²** **25 m²**

Up to 3 buildings, structures, or areas, clustered with farm buildings, each limited to 25m^2.

Wineries, cideries, breweries and distilleries

Mainly crops grown in the surrounding area?

- If yes, agriculture-related use rules apply
- If no, on-farm diversified use rules apply

Most of the land must remain actively farmed. All uses must be compatible with the surrounding agricultural area, including traffic, parking, servicing, noise and lighting.

The level of review should match the size and impact of the proposal

Small, low-impact ●○○

- Meets all zoning requirements
- Little or no new site work

Review: May be exempt from site plan control review

Moderate ●●○

- Some site elements to confirm, such as parking, access, or drainage
- Building permit, confirmation of servicing capacity required

Review: A scoped site plan control

Larger or complex ●●●

- Over 1,000 m²
- Higher visitor activity or intensity of the OFDU
- Potential impacts on natural features, etc.

Review: Zoning By-law Amendment and full review; may need a farm-impact study and distance from livestock barns (for example)

The Town would consider:

- Size and location
- Traffic and parking
- Servicing
- Grading and drainage
- Outdoor activity
- Hours
- Nearby farms

Making the Process Easier to Understand

Early meeting

Meet a Town planner before applying to confirm the application process

Applicant toolkit

Checklist, process chart and area worksheet

Town contact

Identify a designated contact to support information sharing and application intake

Public information

What is allowed, and where established businesses host visitors

Supporting the rules

Coordinated Approvals

Zoning, building, and public health approvals will apply

Fees

Fees that are calibrated to the complexity of the proposed use

Event and noise by-laws

Implemented to manage how events operate

Business licensing

Could be considered for event spaces and accommodation

11 Your Feedback is Important

Help Us Refine the Draft Recommendations

1. Are the proposed rules clear and easy to understand?
2. Do they strike the right balance between supporting farm businesses and protecting farmland?
3. Is the proposed way of measuring the size of an on-farm business easy to understand?
4. Is the proposed approval process clear?
5. Is anything important missing?

Please share your views on a comment form or through the online survey.

12 Next Steps

Your Feedback Will Help Shape the Final Recommendations

Next Steps in the Project:

1. Review comments from this PIC and the online survey
2. Refine the draft recommendations
3. Present to Committee of the Whole – Planning
4. Present the Final Recommendations Report to Council
5. Develop an implementation framework to support farmers in the Town

Project Contact Information

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Join the Conversation Project Webpage

On-Farm Diversified Uses Review Online Survey

Thank You for Participating!