

Wendy Cheropita

1. Do you think it possible to finalize a new Official Plan within the first year of the new Council's term? What, in your view, should be the key elements of a new Official Plan that differ from the existing Official Plan?

The Official Plan must be completed and considered a #1 priority for the new council. I believe that the new Council should schedule time to complete the Official Plan within the first 6 months of holding office. I would like to see the team consist of Town staff, the Mayor, Councillors and members of the public to participate in the process. It would be great to have a broad range of skill sets at the table including a lawyer, an engineer, an urban planner, a respected small developer, a transportation expert and an ecologist and a transportation expert for example. There is a wealth of talent in this Town and to date we have not leveraged this strength enough.

The Official Plan should include a comprehensive, clear framework for present and future development. I would like to see the addition of prescriptive design controls and building codes. All methods available to protect our heritage, historic elements and design features, including green space policies to protect our neighbourhoods and lifestyle standards for all the communities within Niagara on the Lake.

2. What is your ten-year vision for the communities that comprise NOTL (Glendale, Old Town, Queenston, St. David's and Virgil) with respect to residential and commercial development?

I believe the vision should be created in consultation and with input from the residents, with representation from all communities. Once the vision is established, a strategic plan must be created as a road map to reach our desired vision. The strategic plan should include identifying the goals, key priorities and action plans, including milestone dates and assigned responsibility to ensure proper accountability to the residents.

I would like to see significance placed on preserving and protecting buildings and land that depict our rich history, heritage and architectural charm in Old Town, St. David's and Queenston. Attracting smaller developers to all our communities, developers that are willing to work within stricter architectural standards would be a better option than big Toronto developers that are more interested in mass, high density development which does not fit here.

Growth will happen, but it should be managed and be compatible with the existing architectural design standards. It is critically important that we maintain and grow our green spaces and design walkable communities with attractive streetscapes and lifestyle amenities to suit the residents needs.

Residents of Virgil, Glendale and St. David's deserve vibrant communities where families and retirees can live in harmony and have access to the recreational facilities and services they need most. Short and long-term urban plans must be considered to create communities where people can live, work and shop in walkable, bicycle friendly areas with integrated green spaces and conveniences to enhance their lifestyle.

3. Is the current proposal for Randwood (the most recent revised plan submitted by the Marotta group) appropriate for this site and neighbourhood given its significant cultural heritage value and its location in an established residential neighbourhood? Why or why not?

I am pleased to see that 4 significant heritage properties have been designated historically significant and will be protected. That's the good news but otherwise the hotel is too large, the height exceeds the bylaws and the planned suburban like development density is too high for the space and will be detrimental to the privacy and lives of the homes on the abutting residential streets.

I would like to see the new council take a fresh look at the proposal and prepare a plan to negotiate with this developer and hold him to higher standards and strict controls.

4. What consideration should be given, in your view, to the various matters specified in OPA51 (the Official Plan amendment in 2011 that permitted Randwood to be changed from residential to commercial for the Romance Inn) when deciding whether the Marotta group proposal should be approved?

I believe that the decision in 2011 to allow a hotel on the property was made as a compromise by both negotiating teams. It is important to hold this developer to the highest standards of design, hold them to the height restrictions (3 stories) as stated in OAP 51 and protect the residential communities abutting the property to the specific guidelines listed in the amendment such as set backs, landscape, buffers and outdoor terraces restricted to interior walls only. The residents on the abutting streets must be consulted and their lifestyles protected.

5. What would you do to ensure the preservation and sensitive use of other heritage buildings and lands within each of the communities that comprise NOTL?

It may make sense to build a historic registry of places, properties and buildings that we want to protect over the long term. A public consultation on this topic would be an asset.

6. How will you ensure appropriate public input into planning decisions affecting high-profile sites such as Randwood (e.g. encouraging staff to accommodate delegations, location of Council and committee meetings on matters of great public interest such as Randwood)?

I have met and had conversation with many residents that are former CEO's, architects, engineers, city planners and other talented professionals, most of them retired and interested in helping out. I see this as an untapped resource. I would suggest building a plan, to attract these talented people to participate on advisory committees, consult on key decision-making processes and the Official Plan rewrite. We have an opportunity to utilize this immense expertise within our own community; while strengthening community participation. It is my goal to make this a reality.

On major decisions of great public importance like the Randwood project, residents should be given the opportunity to participate such as attending Town Hall type public meetings. A venue like the Community Centre is perfect for large crowds. In that space residents can hear and see presentations on planned projects and to be invited to submit input before projects are finalized.

7. Under what circumstances, if any, would you support the expansion of the current NOTL urban boundaries into agricultural land or the Greenbelt.

I think that preserving and protecting our Greenbelt and agricultural land is critical. Full stop.