

Gary Burroughs responses to SORE 2022

Development has and will continue to be a challenge in Niagara-on-the-Lake given the unique heritage character of Old Town and the mix of multiple urban areas and agricultural land. There is enormous development pressure on Old Town NOTL in particular given its world-renowned character and charm. The Rand Estate occupies a central and important place in Old Town as one of the last estate residential properties and is an essential part of the Town's cultural heritage history.

- 1. Do you agree with the statement that intensive residential development should be directed to Glendale and those areas of Old Town, Virgil, St Davids and Queenston that do not compete with or require compromising the Town's cultural heritage assets?*

Growth is inevitable and necessary. We should seize the opportunity to direct most of the residential development out of the Old Town to Glendale, and other communities in the Town. However, this should not be a default decision. Bad development, no matter where, is still bad development. We need to ensure all development meets the needs of our residents and is appropriate and compatible in each neighbourhood.

- 2. Do you agree that large-scale residential developments should be required to thoroughly assess the planning merits including compliance with the new NOTL OP, heritage, servicing, traffic and environmental matters (including watercourses) before any development application is made?*

I agree. The first of my publicly stated priorities is Controlled and Compatible Development. I state that we must encourage developers to listen to and work with us. If they have multiple projects, we must have a consolidated view of their vision for our community. All aspects of a development must be considered together. I would also add that the new Zoning Bylaw (when complete) must be considered.

- 3. Do you support character studies to identify, the cultural heritage attributes of sites and their surroundings before development applications are made in Old Town?*

Yes.

One of my election priorities is to include streetscapes in the new Zoning Bylaw. Considering contextual zoning the visual elements of a street, including the road, adjacent and adjoining buildings, sidewalks, street furniture, trees and open spaces that combine to form the street's character. This is a critical issue for the Town.

4. *Are you in favour of spending money to defend planning integrity in our community? Do you agree that funds spent to assess and oppose questionable/unsuitable development applications in Niagara-on-the-Lake is money well spent? If not, what approach would you take to uphold our Official Plan and the Ontario Heritage Act when faced with aggressive and litigious developers and problematic development proposals?*

Council does not want to needlessly spend taxpayers' money, but it is critical to defend our heritage properties. As I indicated above, we must encourage developers to work with us, and follow our revised OP and Zoning. Failing that, we cannot allow ourselves to be bullied. We should never back down from litigation. Among, other considerations, it would set an untenable precedent.

With respect to the Solmar/Marotta group proposals for the Rand Estate:

1. *On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being most important, how critical do you think getting the Rand Estate right is for the future of Old Town NOTL.*

It's a strong 10. Randwood is one of my stated election priorities. This project will set a precedent for heritage properties for years to come.

2. *Do you support completion of the special character area study for the Rand Estate required by the new NOTL Official Plan before any decisions are made concerning appropriate land use at Randwood?*

Yes.

As recommended, the character area study will provide both guidance to the developer, and inform our residents of the issues that we are trying to protect

3. *Do you think the front and back half of the Rand Estate need to be comprehensively assessed before any redevelopment applications are approved rather than piecemealing the Estate into individual parcels?*

Yes.

As indicated in my priorities above, if developers have multiple projects, we must have a consolidated view of their vision for our community. Considerations like access, traffic and heritage features must be considered together.

4. *The Marotta group has proposed plans for the back half of the Rand Estate which vary between 170 and 190 residential units, and which would remove substantially all of the remaining cultural heritage attributes of 200 John and 588 Charlotte. Are you familiar with the Marotta plans?*

Yes

5. *SORE has published a conceptual plan for the back half of the Rand Estate showing how it could be repurposed for residential use in a manner sensitive to both the Estate and the surrounding residential neighbourhood while conserving the cultural heritage attributes of Randwood. The SORE plan contemplates a mix of approximately 70 residential units and includes public access to this very important cultural heritage asset. Are you familiar with the SORE plan?*

Yes.

6. *If you are not familiar with either the SORE or Marotta plans, can we send them to you so that you can respond to question below?*

Not necessary, I am fully aware of both plans. However, if you have an accurate plan (map) of the driveway at 200 John St, showing the existing trees, I would definitely appreciate receiving a copy. I don't believe that an accurate map exists for this critical entrance to the property.

7. *Do you believe the SORE or the Marotta plan is preferred for the back half of the Rand Estate? Please elaborate.*

The Marotta plan, as it currently stands, is unacceptable, especially regarding density, grading, road widths, storm water management and emergency access. I consider the SORE plan to be acceptable, and is an excellent "starting point" for further discussions with the developer.

8. *The Town is currently prosecuting the Marotta companies under the Ontario Heritage Act for the November, 2018 clear cutting of a vast portion of the Rand Estate. If the prosecution is successful the Town is entitled to reinstate any illegally destroyed heritage landscape at the owner's expense. Do you support such reinstatement*

Yes.

I can only hope that reinstatement is possible. There does have to be severe penalties for this obvious abuse.

9. *Do you think Solmar/the Marotta group should be required to critically assess all access alternatives to access the Rand Estate, including adjacent land owned by the Two Sisters Winery.*

Yes

During the assessment, the existing developments like the expanded Pillar & Post, and the existing challenges of the John Street intersection with the Niagara River Parkway, and of course the needs of emergency vehicles must be considered. This project may not be feasible.

10. *The Marrotta/Solmar proposal for a hotel/convention centre on the front half of the Rand Estate required a large traffic circle at the intersection of John St E and the Parkway using land owned by/under control of the Niagara Parks Commission and likely impacting matured trees in that area. SORE's traffic experts believe the traffic circle will similarly be required for the proposed Rand subdivision. Do you support the installation of a traffic circle at that location.*

Conceptually, I'm not adverse to traffic circles. I am far from convinced that it is appropriate in the proposed location. Firstly, it will be a decision of the Niagara Parks Commission, and it is also about maintaining the history and heritage of our Parkway. As stated above, these properties need to be considered together, and may not be able to proceed.