

Let me start by saying that I like hotels and I have no issue with more hotels. Here in NOTL or anywhere else. I've built a 35-year career advising clients on the development and operation of hotels, convention centres, resort amenities, attractions, casinos and related real estate.

NOTL is a tourist destination...whether some of us like it or not. Personally, I like the activity and the buzz. It's one of the reasons we're here and one of the reasons we enjoy living on King Street, a busy pedestrian route to the main street

I say that as background because it's important to understand the context when I say that Solmar's proposal for Randwood is just wrong. Dead wrong.

Less than a year ago, Benny Marotta was quoted in the Toronto Star saying "Niagara, for me, it's like a paradise, and I would like to make it better,"

Solmar's proposal for Randwood is not going to achieve that objective. Quite the opposite.

I can tell you from experience that what is proposed for Randwood is NOT a hotel...it's a convention centre/banquet hall/wedding factory with some overnight accommodation. And it looks like it.

Throughout the busy season, this project is likely to attract more than 1,000 people on a busy day...at most 1/3 of which will be hotel guests. The existing buildings and the landscape, no matter how Solmar intends to alter them, were neither built nor intended for this level of use. And let's not forget that Randwood's designed landscape is one of the only ones of its kind in Canada.

The staff report to the Municipal Heritage Committee recognizes many of the challenges of such an intensive development at a true heritage site. Staff should be commended on this document and should be encouraged to carry out, or have carried out, each and every one of the proposed recommendations carefully and in close consultation with this committee and the residents of NOTL including SORE.

My comments on the report focus on context.

We should remember that the Town went through a challenging and divisive debate in 2010/2011 to arrive at a somewhat controversial compromise for the Romance hotel at Randwood. But... a compromise was reached. One that respected the unique cultural heritage of the Rand Estate. In reaching the compromise, an expectation of TRUST was created with the community.

As a result, I suggest that variations from that compromise position—such as height, massing and design—should be rejected unless they are a demonstrable improvement from a heritage impact perspective. You don't need to be a heritage expert, I submit, to pretty quickly conclude that the Marotta proposal offers nothing in this regard. I would personally be astonished if our staff and our elected representatives reach any other conclusion.

With that in mind and considering the current Marotta/Solmar proposal, the staff report and eventual recommendations from this Committee to Council, could be strengthened with:

1. A more detailed comparison between what was approved in 2011 and what is currently planned...and all of the heritage implications of the changes.
2. A focus on the cultural heritage impacts to the Rand Estate in its entirety, including not only 144 and 176 John but also 200 John and 588 Charlotte. Both the staff report and the Applicant's Heritage Impact Assessment address all these lands but in a disjointed way. The Rand Estate encompasses all of these properties and the rightly-famous Dunnington-Grubb designed landscape covers most of these properties. Mr. Marotta is trying to improperly piecemeal this. It's a "death by a thousand cuts" approach. Proper impact assessment requires consideration of cumulative impacts, as Solmar conceded at the last meeting here. Let's do this properly....all at once...and including all the contiguous property.
3. A peer review of the Applicant's Heritage Impact Assessment that addresses the consistency of the Heritage Planner's conclusions in 2011—when an employee of the Town—and now, as a paid consultant for the Applicant. Difference between the conclusions in the 2010 Heritage Impact Assessment should be compared with Ms Wallace's current report.

Additionally on this topic, the degree of subjectivity in the HIA...and corresponding lack of objectivity... underlines the importance of getting any peer review done by someone with impeccable credentials and deep experience.....and operating with a very specific terms of reference.

4. Clarification of how the bylaw building height in 2011 was derived, given the Romance proposal was clearly for 3 stories. How does the 2011 bylaw—which was sympathetic to the existing buildings through a modulated, 3-storey roof line with turrets and high points—related to the monolithic, Stalinesque roof line of Solmar's proposed structure.
5. Recognition that Solmar's ultimate goal is a subdivision plan for the southernmost portions of the combined site and, therefore, assess the cumulative implications of the proposal in its totality. This includes full consideration of access points through the stone wall, across the Upper Canada Trail and throughout the Randwood site.
6. FINALLY, an immediate requirement by the Town that Mr Marotta stop all destruction and alteration....of all elements of the Dunnington-Grubb designed landscape.....on all properties he owns or controls. The Town is sitting on its hands while Solmar is walking around with chainsaws. This is just wrong. It needs to stop right now!

Leah Wallace's Heritage Impact Assessment concludes with the statement: "The question is not whether there is an impact on the properties at 144-176 John Street, 200 John Street and 588 Charlotte Street...the question is whether there are any undue adverse impacts resulting from the proposals."

The staff report raises several issues in this regard including the veracity of the HIA , the "urban feel" of the proposed building and height issues. All of these suggest the potential for undue adverse impacts.

However, from the resident's point of view the most adverse impact I see is an erosion of trust.

Oxford defines trust as a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.

"good relations are built on trust"

The approved development plan for Randwood was built on trust. That plan was the result of negotiation and compromise. This Committee was intimately involved in reaching that compromise just six short years ago. The Municipal Heritage Committee should be the defender of that plan ....and of that trust.

Thank you