

Sandra O'Connor 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. During the current Council's mandate, Council consulted on and approved a new Official Plan. That plan is awaiting approval from the Region, which is expected shortly after the new Regional OP is approved by the Province. 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?*

I believe that we must protect our cultural and natural assets that make us unique. Revisions of our Official Plan to align with the Region's will see us implement the concept of **variable density targets** throughout our Town. Yes, Glendale will have the highest density targets, and other settlement areas as mentioned above, will have their heritage assets protected, and increased development where appropriate.

- 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?*

Yes, particularly in environmental issues, where in my opinion, the criteria is too low and must be raised to address climate change. I proposed at Council that we implement the "Community Benefits

Tax” on large, dense developments (> 5 stories) to ensure that the funds are available to address these infrastructure issues, including firefighting resources, service infrastructure, schools, healthcare, etc, without additional burden on other taxpayers.

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?*

Character Areas and Cultural Heritage Landscape Districts includes buildings, structures, spaces, views, and archaeological sites or natural areas that are valued together. We need to develop an inventory of these buildings, areas and districts. While such identification confers no automatic protection, it would aid in our planning process.

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?*

I have shown during my term on Council that we need to defend our planning decisions and invest in the integrity of our decisions. Yes, we need to spend money to defend our planning positions, otherwise, there would be no need for plans.

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 is an important area that would impact the neighbourhoods around it – 9.

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. I voted in favor of the special character study at the Audit and Finance Committee and at Council.

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. However, we must abide by Provincial policies and timelines.

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. I observed the open houses, presentations, and read the material.

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. I have read the material presented by SORE.

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 6 below?*

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

Please elaborate.

As a current Councillor, I am restricted in giving my opinion on development matters before Council until Council has their discussion on the development. I can say that for any development, I am looking for context with the neighborhood, environmental sensitivity, watercourse management, low impact development, impact on municipal infrastructure. These are some of the issues that need to be addressed in any proposal.

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?

As a current Councillor, I support action taken by the Town under the OHA and would implement any action items permitted by the tribunal.

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?*

All access routes should be considered. Having said that, there may be restrictions on some options, such as no development within the Greenbelt, including roads for subdivisions.

10. *The Marotta/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 lands owned by/ under the control of the Niagara Parks Commission and likely impacting mature trees in that area. SORE's traffic experts believe the traffic circle will similiarly be required for the proposed Rand subdivision. Do you support the installation of a traffic circle at that location?*

No. In the Council approved Official Plan Schedule C Natural Heritage System, most of this area is designated as Provincial Natural Heritage System, and should not be destroyed to accommodate a increased traffic from a subdivision or hotel. In my opinion, this Natural Heritage System areas has significant woodlands and significant wildlife habitat components.

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