

# Historic designation **protects** Rand Estate, mayor says

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

With Niagara-on-the-Lake councillors unanimously agreeing to designate the Rand Estate as being of historical significance, any future development of the site means historic features on the property will have to be preserved, the mayor says.

NOTL Lord Mayor Betty Disero said the move means certain features, such as the main buildings and the century-old Dunnington-Grubb landscaping, must be protected.

“(Now) there are rules and criteria that need to be followed when you’re developing that site,” she said.

Council designated two properties that make up the estate, 177 and 244 John St. E., during its final meeting of 2020 on Dec. 21.

She said it is a positive move for the town.

“And it’s something that I’ve believed since the beginning is that (if) you want to develop the site, let’s figure out what heritage, what needs to be protected and go from



An old entrance to the Rand Estate. FILE PHOTO

there,” she said.

“It’s part of our job as a council and our obligation to protect the heritage aspects in the town, and so I’m relieved that at this point that we’ve been able to designate what is special about that site and move forward.”

Developer Benny Marotta, owner of Two Sisters

Resorts Corp., which owns the properties, had planned to build a hotel and conference centre on the land.

However, after legal battles and vocal opposition from a resident group called Save Our Rand Estate (SORE), the property has been put back on the market with a pricetag of \$19 million.

Lyle Hall, a spokesperson for SORE, said the group is happy to finally see the historic designation finalized.

“SORE is pleased to see council following through on the previous council’s decision to protect the heritage assets of the Rand Estate under the Heritage Act,” Hall said.

“It’s unfortunate that

Benny Marotta delayed this by over two years by bringing spurious legal challenges to the courts and the Conservation Review Board. SORE looks forward to a successful outcome of the town’s prosecution of the Marotta companies for the outrageous clear-cutting of a large part of the Rand Es-

tate in November of 2018.”

Marotta said he had always agreed to designate the three buildings within the Rand Estate and the Dunnington-Grubb landscape features in front of the main Rand house.

“I suppose members of SORE and council needed to create some drama,” he said of the designation.

“In my opinion council has acted only to please the SORE group. It is irresponsible, incompetent and inexperienced behaviour. This is what you get when you have a politically motivated council that makes decisions out of fear of disappointing a small and aggressive group of people — at the expense of taxpayers and businesses,” he told The Lake Report.

“For a small town to have a dysfunctional council that shows its interest is not for the benefit of the municipality, something went wrong during the past election.”

Marotta said as far as a potential sale of the estate, “We have interested buyers and we are exploring our options.”

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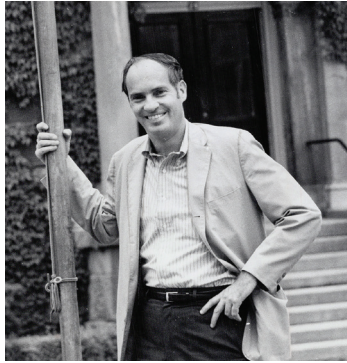


## Randwood Part 4

## Calvin Rand and the modern era

*This story is one in a series about the history of the Rand Estate, about 35 acres of land lying behind the stone wall on John and Charlotte streets, along the Upper Canada Heritage Trail and whose eastern boundary is a hedge between the properties at 176 and 210 John St.*

Elizabeth Masson  
Special to The Lake Report



Calvin Rand. SUPPLIED

After his parents' deaths, it was Calvin Rand (1929-2016) who took the most interest in the property, spending summers there in the 1950s with his wife Patricia and their five daughters.

Starting in 1961, they lived at Randwood on a permanent basis with the girls attending Parliament Oak School but by the end of 1964, it once again reverted to a summer residence.

In 1971, Calvin Rand established the Niagara Institute of International Studies at Randwood and became its first president. He modelled it after the Aspen Institute, now based in Washington, D.C., but originally founded in Aspen, Colorado, in 1949 as a think tank and forum where leaders could examine the values of society and exchange ideas.

Its offices were in the Pillar and Post Inn down John Street with Randwood being the location for seminars.

The Niagara Institute proved to be a success as the executives of major corporations across Canada attended its seminars and conferences. They found the informal atmosphere of a home was conducive to reflection and discussion. The institute leased Randwood from the Rands for nine months of the year, while the family continued to occupy it during the summer.

In 1976, Randwood and the Sheets house next door were sold to the Devonian Foundation of Calgary, which continued to lease the two properties to the Niagara Institute. The foundation was named after the Devonian Shield in Alberta where its founder, Eric Harvie, had discovered a huge reserve of oil in 1948.

The Rand family, after renovating the guesthouse behind Randwood, continued to spend their summers there. In 1980, the institute, after considerable fundraising from public and private entities as well as trade unions, purchased the Randwood and Sheets House property from the Devonian Foundation.

Also, in the 1980s, the land to the north and south of the stables was sold to developers. To the north, individual houses were built on Christopher Street while a series of townhouses was built to the south, on Weatherstone Court.

The Niagara Institute, despite its continuing popularity (in 1991, with a staff of 27, it ran 95 workshops and seminars), decided that the upkeep on the Randwood and Sheets House properties had become unaffordable and put them up for sale.

The institute, incidentally, after amalgamation with the Conference Board of Canada, continues to organize executive leadership programs through its headquarters on Glendale Road.

The institute property was bought in 1993 by William Fox to house the School of Philosophy which he was running, at that point, in Toronto. The school, which has branches around the world, was started in London, England, in 1936. Originally, it was set up for the study of economics, but it was later decided that an understanding of philosophical principles was also needed.

The Foxes greatly expanded Randwood by adding a solarium, a music room, a second kitchen and putting a large addition on the back for offices and classrooms. Designs for these additions were made by Chapman Murray Architects of Niagara Falls.

Renovations were also made to the Sheets House and the Coach House. As well, the Foxes purchased the former stables at 9 Weatherstone Court, which had been divided into apartments and had it transformed into a single-family residence. The two subsequent owners of the property have made many changes to both its interior and grounds.

July 2006, Randwood, the Sheets House, the Coach House, and 13 acres of land were sold to artist Trisha Romance and her husband Gary Peterson, who lived next door in Brunswick Place at 210 John St.

Four years later, they sent a proposal to the town to develop the property into an entity they called the Romance Inn & Artistic Centre. Their plan was to add five new buildings to the existing three, which would be developed into a 106-room hotel, a restaurant seating 200, a spa, artists' studio, conference centre, special events site with a capacity of 250, as well as a parking garage. They also sought to change the zoning

to commercial from residential under the town's official plan.

The hotel plan and zoning change created a great deal of controversy in town as evidenced by the number of people who attended the two public meetings at the community centre in the fall of 2011.

The majority of residents who spoke at these meetings opposed the hotel development on the grounds that there would be insufficient parking, the adjacent streets could not handle the increased traffic, but particularly because of the expected high noise levels from the special events site.

And, of course, there was concern about the zoning change of a large piece of property that was surrounded by parkland and residentially zoned properties.

After the promise of changes to the site plan, the proposal came to a vote of the town council on Dec. 12, 2011. Four councillors were in favour and four opposed with the tie being broken by Lord Mayor Dave Eke who voted in favour of the rezoning.

However, along with the approval of official plan amendment No. 51, a number of stipulations were made: at the site plan stage, the property must be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, that new buildings and additions must be approved by the municipal heritage committee, and that a tree preservation plan must be prepared by a qualified professional.

A new site plan was never submitted for the Romance Inn. Instead, by 2017, the property owned by the Romance-Petersons, that which Calvin Rand's daughters had inherited, and the property owned by the Dingmans, were all bought by companies headed by one person: Benny Marotta.

However, after almost three years of allegations of destruction of historic features on the properties and vocal opposition to Marotta's proposals for a hotel and other amenities, he put the Randwood property that faces John Street on the market in October 2020. The asking price is \$19 million.

The final chapter in the story of the historic Rand Estate has yet to be written.

*Elizabeth (Betsy) Masson has been a research volunteer at the Niagara-on-the-lake Museum for more than 15 years.*

## Obituary

## Emmajane Scott-Brown



Surrounded by her children, on January 5th, 2021, in her 81st glorious year, at St. Joseph's Villa in Dundas. Loving mother of Megan (John) of Niagara-on-the-Lake, George (Sheri) of Florida, and Eliza-Jane (Rick) of Hamilton. Adoring grandmother to Andrew, Steven, Ducolon, John, Sam, and Claire, and favourite human to her cat, Kaydee. Predeceased by her parents Gladys and Clarence Green of Lyn, ON, and her siblings, twin brother Edward, Dawn, Eileen, and Floyd, and step sons Michael and Duncan. Remembered lovingly by stepchildren Jane, Geoffrey, and Patrick. Sadly missed by many loving nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Emmajane was a pioneer in so many ways. By 28 she was a multi-rated pilot in an age when few women took to the skies. She was elected to the Lennox & Addington Board of Education and then shattered the glass ceiling by becoming the first female Board Chair. She went on to become the first female president of the Ontario Public School Trustees Association before being appointed by Premier David Peterson as Chair of The Friends of Canada Foundation. She ran as an MPP in Etobicoke before becoming a licensed real estate agent in Toronto.

Her love of adventure took her to the U.S. where she became a small business owner, a life coach, and earned her Masters of Divinity in Spiritual Psychology before returning to Canada to spend her golden years enjoying her grandchildren. It was then she finally had the opportunity to chase her truest passion, singing. She spent many years as a member and Chair of the MELOS choir, and eventually an alto in the Kingston Choral Society. Deepest thanks to her caretakers at SJV during her final months, especially Stacey, Marcia, Valoreen, and Pamela for their incredible care and compassion. Cremation has already taken place and there will be a service and interment at St. John the Baptist Anglican Church in Lyn, ON, when conditions allow.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Kingston Choral Society would be greatly appreciated in her memory at [kingstonchoralsociety.ca](http://kingstonchoralsociety.ca)



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## Rainbow crosswalk urged



Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Jordon Williams kneels at the crosswalk on the corner of King and Queen streets, where he's hoping the town will install a rainbow crosswalk to celebrate members of the LGBTQ+ community. RICHARD HARLEY

Stephanie Beattie  
Special to The Lake Report

Pride needs to be celebrated beyond the month of June in Niagara-on-the-Lake with more education and visual representation – like a rainbow crosswalk, LGBTQ+ community members say.

Jordon Williams, president of Lahava Media, a travel and lifestyle company

for the LGBTQ+ community, first broached the idea on social media in May, urging the town to install a Pride crosswalk in the heart of Old Town.

Williams suggests putting a Pride walk “right by the Prince of Wales,” at Queen and King streets.

The NOTL resident said a multicolored Pride crosswalk goes beyond the LGBTQ+ community,

representing Indigenous and other marginalized groups as well.

“We need the Pride walk, but we also need the town to partner up with businesses and organizations to promote LGBTQ+ equality, rights, economics and tourism,” added Williams, who openly identifies with the LGBTQ+ community.

With the anniversary of the Stonewall riots on June

28, Williams said even just a temporary Pride walk for the weekend would be an important start.

The 1969 riots erupted after police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City and the uprising is seen by many as the beginning of Pride movement.

“It’s honouring the past

*Continued on Page 2*



A house in St. Davids was raided by police last Wednesday. Neighbours said they heard gun shots disrupting the normally quiet neighbourhood. EVAN SAUNDERS

## Anxious neighbours watch as police raid St. Davids home

Evan Saunders  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

The sounds of gunshots, barking dogs, and smoke and stun grenades disrupted a quiet St. Davids neighbourhood as police raided a home and arrested two people on drug trafficking and gun charges last week.

Niagara Regional Police conducted the late-evening bust at 65 Kenmir Ave. on June 8 following a guns and gangs investigation that began in early 2021, investigators said.

Officers said one of the suspects fired at officers after they burst into the house. Police said they found fentanyl, one handgun and more than \$80,000 in cash in the house.

Police refused to release the address of the home, but it was confirmed by people who witnessed the take-down.

The home was being rented, said neighbours, who watched the scene unfold from their bedroom windows.

“I heard this really loud sound. They sounded like fireworks but there were a lot of them,” nearby resident Ash told The Lake Report.

“But then I heard yelling and dogs barking. Then I started looking and there was like a whole bunch of cops running around,” Ash said.

According to another witness, there were about seven

*Continued on Page 3*

## Coyote attacks blamed on easy access to food

Evan Saunders  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A coyote expert says culling is ineffective, but preventive measures – like sealing garbage cans – are essential to curb coyote aggression, something the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake says it is already doing.

A farm worker was bitten Friday night on a grape farm near Virgil, adding another violent example to the increasing incidents of

coyotes being reported in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Jamie Slingerland said an employee on his company’s farm was bitten while sitting on his porch around 8 p.m. on Friday, June 8. The coyote approached the worker and bit him twice on the leg before running off.

The employee has since been treated for rabies and is recovering well.

The town has launched a coyote sighting form for residents to help the town track the animals’ locations. To access the form and the

town’s resource page on coyote safety go to [www.notl.org/coyotes](http://www.notl.org/coyotes).

Slingerland said he has lived in NOTL for 60 years and has never heard of coyotes attacking or chasing individuals before.

Dr. Simon Gadbois, who studies canid psychology and behaviour at Dalhousie University in Halifax, said when coyotes grow comfortable around people “it’s almost always the same reasons and it has a lot to do with food.”

That means “either direct

feeding or indirect feeding,” he said in an interview.

Direct feeding is when people leave out food or toss scraps to hungry coyotes. But indirect feeding is a more serious issue because it is more prevalent, Gadbois said.

It could be “something as simple as having an apple tree on your property. Apples fall down and you’re not picking them up.”

For years, Gadbois has been working with govern-

*Continued on Page 10*

## Residents criticize plans for Rand development

Evan Saunders  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A subdivision proposed on the historic Rand Estate drew heated comments and pointed questions from residents during a virtual open house Tuesday night.

Concerns over Solmar (Niagara 2) Inc.’s proposed number of housing units, destruction of woodlands, environmental changes and

protection of heritage features dominated the three and a half hour meeting.

Paul Lowes of SGL Planning and Design and members of his team represented developer Benny Marotta, whose company has proposed development of a tightly packed subdivision on the Rand Estate.

One of the main concerns of residents was the incompatibility of the plan with

*Continued on Page 9*



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# NOTL a flurry of activity as patios and stores reopen

Evan Saunders  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Queen Street was as busy as Queen's Royal Park on Saturday as visitors and locals thronged together to enjoy the first step of Ontario's reopening plan.

Business owners were excited to see life flowing back into Niagara-on-the-Lake's empty pandemic streets.

"It's been super exciting," Gail Cunningham, owner of The Butterfly Gallery on Queen Street, told The Lake Report.

"Everybody's just thrilled to be here and they're anxious to get the shopping done that they haven't been able to do."

Cunningham noticed one specific trait reflected in all her shoppers: "Everybody's in such a good mood."

She wasn't the only person who noticed the positivity in the air.

"Everyone seems very positive and patient and happy to be out," said Amy Gibbs, general manager of the Gate House.

She said people were enthusiastic to be able to dine on a patio again.

"It's that energy that we feel today. It makes our jobs easier and it makes it even more enjoyable to be here and more pleasant," Gibbs said.

John Wiens, part-owner and general manager of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club's restaurant, said he was as excited to have the restaurant open again as he was to have all his staff back.

"It's nice to have the kids back at work. We're really excited about that, and to get the kitchen staff going again," he said.

**Read the full story online at [niaganow.com/news.phtml/5740](http://niaganow.com/news.phtml/5740)**



Customers eat on the patio at the Gate House restaurant. EVAN SAUNDERS

# Rand Estate plans draw criticism from residents at open house

*Continued from Front Page*

surrounding housing because of its density.

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Robert Bader noted a recent development in the area has added "32 dwellings in a space which is roughly one-third of the area onto which Mr. Marotta proposes will accommodate 191 dwellings."

"How does a Mississauga/Brampton-style subdivision in any way constitute compatibility with the 200-year-old estate and surrounding low density neighbourhoods?"

Lowes' defence of the level of housing density pointed to the provincial government and the Region of Niagara.

"The region's calling for an even greater mix of housing types in the area. That is the new provincial direction and our agreement meets this compatibility."

Lowes was referring to the province's "A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe," which addresses such issues as housing density.

The provincial plan seeks to address growing issues of affordable housing by promoting "in particular, higher-density housing options that can accommodate a range of household sizes," the document says.

The plan also suggests low-density housing makes people more dependent on using their automobiles, at a time when obesity, diabetes

and other health issues are on the rise.

Lowes repeatedly referred to the provincial plan as a reason for the style of subdivision proposed.

The proposed subdivision would have an average of 34.3 units per hectare, with 125 single-detached homes and 66 semi-detached homes.

NOTL resident Daniel Kelly, an interior designer, also pushed the planning team on the proposed density. He said that when he was in first year at Ryerson University his professors would challenge the students to pack as many houses onto a property as possible.

"Why was there not more thought given to a creative layout? The concept of low-density seems to be irrelevant. This is not low-density," Kelly said.

"I just wonder where the good planning is in this development, because I don't see it in any aspect."

Lowes offered much of the same answer that he gave Bader. "This is the reality of development in the Greater Golden Horseshoe now," he said.

"We have to meet those requirements of density."

Residents asked about the impact the development will have on the historic aspects of the Rand Estate.

Some were frustrated that the open house and upcoming public meeting (scheduled for July 15) are taking place before the plan

is reviewed by the Conservation Review Board, which oversees the impact development has on heritage sites.

Lowes stressed that no details regarding heritage sites are finalized until the Conservation Review Board has approved them. A hearing is scheduled for July 19.

SGL Planning and Design said it is working to conserve several key aspects of the Rand Estate. The brick pillars and walls along John and Charlotte streets will be restored and maintained. The fence along the Upper Canada Heritage Trail also will be restored.

But NOTL resident Lauren Goettler took strong issue with what she saw as the town's relaxed attitude toward the protection of the Rand Estate compared with the response she got when buying her home on Ricardo Street.

"You called us into a meeting, which was more like a lecture, about the historical relevancy of our house, particularly the 10-by-10 square foot landscaping done by Lorrie Dunnington-Grubb," Goettler said.

"How did you go from being so important that you'd call us in for a meeting to being such a turncoat and working for Benny and destroying it?"

Leah Wallace, whom the comments were directed at, is the former heritage planner for NOTL. She now consults with the town and did the assessments of the

Rand Estate for Solmar's development.

"The Lorrie and Howard Dunnington-Grubb landscape – the bathhouse, pavilion and the surrounding landscaping – will be conserved and restored," Wallace answered.

But residents had little faith in such promises after Solmar cut down dozens of mature trees on the property in 2018, a move that has drawn widespread criticism.

The continued destruction of old oak trees on the property was a source of concern for many who attended the open house.

Resident John McCullough drew attention to two particular oak trees on the property, one is 250 years old and the other 175. He pressed landscape architect David Waverman about the probability they will survive.

Waverman said the development team is still waiting for detailed engineer drawings that will help them understand the full effect of the development on the surrounding area.

"The consulting team will work as an integrated team so that the landscape architects, civil engineers and arborist work together to protect these trees as best as we can," he said.

One detail came as a surprise to attendees and planner Lowes.

This was news, unveiled by resident Derek Col-

lins, that the development would gradually slope upward to the southwest before plateauing 10 feet higher than the surrounding homes along the Promenade.

"It's news to me that we're raising the site by 10 feet," Lowes said.

Residents were concerned this will result in houses in the development looking down on existing homes and could create a potentially damaging water run-off situation.

Fedor Tchourkine, a senior engineer with Schaeffers and Associates, an engineering consulting firm, told residents the land needs to be raised to accommodate storm and sewage drainage, because existing infrastructure is not deep enough for the development.

He said the site would gradually increase in height toward the southwest corner and that the height difference would be seamless.

Backyards would still be level with the surrounding area, meaning most homes at the high points of development would have walk out basements. Residents complained the houses could be upward of 40-feet high because of this.

Tchourkine also addressed concerns about water run-off problems from the development.

"Roofs will be directed towards the road and collected by storm system catch basins," Tchourkine said.

"It's all calculated and we've ensured that the stream won't get flooded and existing properties as well."

The development has a proposed park on its western side, south of Weatherstone Court. Underneath the park will be a massive storm water tank to collect water run-off and slowly distribute it into a stream south of Weatherstone. The water will then flow into One Mile Creek.

Solmar is proposing a single entrance to the subdivision off John Street. Residents were concerned that the increase in traffic wouldn't be manageable and wondered why a roundabout that was previously proposed has been removed from the development plans.

The roundabout was "mainly submitted in support of the hotel proposal," said Kelsey Waugh, transportation engineer at LEA Consulting.

Solmar has withdrawn plans to build a hotel on the estate, resulting in the removal of the roundabout.

Comments from residents were collected by town planner Mark Iamarino to be considered by staff as the proposal is assessed.

The July 15 public meeting will once again allow residents to voice their concerns following an update from Lowes.

A recording of Tuesday's meeting is available online at [livestream.com/notl/events/9717322](http://livestream.com/notl/events/9717322).



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## Marotta unveils 191-home subdivision plan for Rand Estate

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Developer Benny Marotta has submitted new plans for his controversial development project on the historic Rand Estate.

His company, Solmar (Niagara 2) Inc., wants to build 191 units on the 26-acre property, comprising 125 single-family dwellings and 66 semi-detached homes.

Marotta said he is hopeful the town will agree to his

proposal, noting there are no townhouses included in his draft plan.

Compared to some other developments in town, notably one on the main entrance to Niagara-on-the-Lake, he said he feels

the number of homes is appropriate.

A resident group that's been vocal in opposing Marotta's plans for the Rand Estate at every step, Save Our Rand Estate (SORE), takes issue with the latest

plan, saying it is "completely inappropriate."

Lyle Hall, a spokesperson for the group, called it a "high-density development that would leave almost every square inch of the back half of this iconic property

covered with houses."

SORE considers the Rand Estate to be "the most important heritage estate property in NOTL," he said in response to questions

*Continued on Page 7*

## 'Idiotic' parking bylaw frustrates Niagara on the Green resident



Daniel St-Jean stands outside of his Niagara on the Green home, where he and his wife have both received tickets for parking on the street. He says they only have one driveway spot and the area is far from amenities. RICHARD HARLEY

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Glendale resident Daniel St-Jean and his wife Laurel aren't happy they have received two tickets for park-

ing their vehicle on the street outside their home for more than 12 hours.

St-Jean said he thinks the bylaw that allows cars to be ticketed for parking on the road unjustly affects some

residents of Niagara on the Green, where he lives on Keith Crescent.

"It's not really a matter of whether I should have gotten a ticket or not. The bylaws are there. The problem is that

they are idiotic, stupid by-laws," he said in an interview at his home.

The parking bylaw is not always enforced and he

*Continued on Page 2*



AstraZeneca vaccine. FILE/JESSICA MAXWELL

## Pharmacies run out of vaccine, with no promise of more to come

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

And then there was none.

Pharmacies in Niagara-on-the-Lake that had been busy inoculating patients against COVID-19 have been forced to stop.

They have all run out of vaccine, with no promises yet from the provincial health ministry about when the supply might be replenished. Or if it will be replenished.

However, Niagara Region public health plans two more clinics at the NOTL Community Centre, on May 15 and 16.

Sean Simpson said his Apothecary in Old Town ran out Saturday and the phar-

macy in Old Town delivered its final shots on Monday.

In all, Simpson's Pharmacy distributed about 1,500 doses since April 5, he said.

"We don't anticipate getting any more" right away, he said, and it's been suggested it could be two or three weeks. Or not at all.

Fortunately, his pharmacy only booked enough appointments for which it had vaccine, so no one's shot got cancelled. But that still leaves more than 2,000 names on the Simpson's waiting list, he said Tuesday.

Julie Dyck, owner of Stone Road Pharmacy in Virgil, also ran out of vaccine after administering about 300

*Continued on Page 3*

## Neighbours fight Queenston Mile's bid for zoning change

Evan Saunders  
The Lake Report

Queenston Mile Vineyards argued its case for a town zoning bylaw amendment Monday to allow the winery to install commercial cooking equipment it

says will be used for wine tastings.

But a group of nearby residents and vineyard owners is fighting the request, accusing the vineyard of trying to covertly operate as an events space and saying it is not producing wine on

the grounds.

The issue was debated at Monday's committee of the whole planning meeting and council will make a decision on the application at a later date.

"This is not an easy subject," Lord Mayor Betty

Disero said in an interview Tuesday. "There was a lot of information provided last night."

Angry residents presented a unified front against Queenston Mile's proposal,

*Continued on Page 10*



An industrial-size kitchen at Queenston Mile. FILE/2019

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# Marotta says subdivision is 'low-density'

Continued from Front Page

from The Lake Report.  
“It’s far worse than Mr. Marotta’s original subdivision plan that he showed the community at the public meeting in early 2018. By our count he’s added approximately 30 more houses. He made a big deal out of claiming that he was misunderstood and just wanted to make NOTL even more beautiful. This is a bizarre way of showing that.”

However, Marotta said SORE is “misinformed” and that the plan is in fact considered low-density based on the number of units per acre. He believes the plan is more appropriate than several other townhouse developments being built around town, noting his project calls mainly for single-family houses.

“It really doesn’t matter what someone proposes in Niagara-on-the-Lake. SORE will object to everything,” Marotta said, adding the initial proposal to the town had 20 more units.

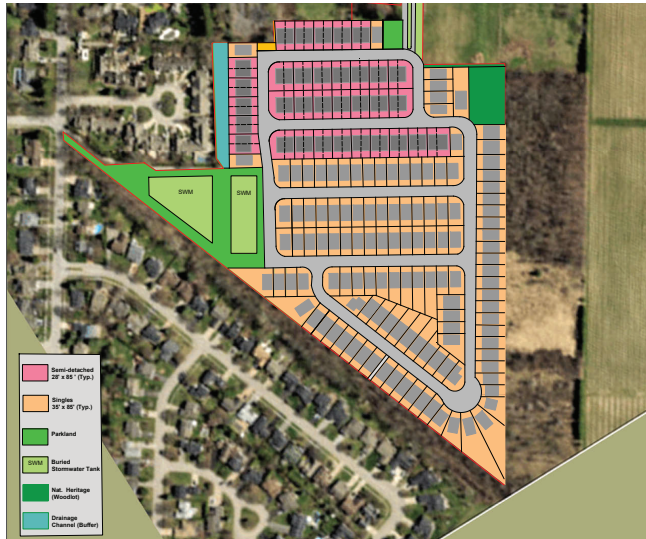
He said the province’s mandate for these types of developments is to offer more housing and is encouraging townhouse-style homes, which are more affordable for buyers. He said he purposely didn’t include townhouses in the development because it wouldn’t complement the Old Town.

“At this point, I’m hoping that the politicians will work with the town staff, who are experts ... to take their advice and make sure that the proper planning is done, and I will work with them on the best solution for the development,” Marotta said.

Hall said the plans are “even more dense than the Cannery Park development in St. Davids” and said the issue is not about single-detached homes versus townhouses.

“Regardless of whether Mr. Marotta is now proposing semi-detached houses or townhomes, the issue we are focused on is whether his proposal represents good planning in the context of the surrounding neighbourhoods, adjoining land uses and the cultural heritage significance of the Rand Estate.”

He did not say what the group considers to be an



A superimposed image of Marotta’s plans on a map of the area by SORE. SUPPLIED

appropriate land use, but noted the group isn’t opposed to housing on the land — which is zoned residential.

“We’ve never said ‘no houses.’ We never said ‘no hotel’ either. But in both cases we’ve said the development undertaken must be respectful of the heritage pedigree of the site, the protected cultural heritage assets located throughout the site and the surrounding land uses, including other heritage properties, as well as established neighbourhoods,” Hall said.

Marotta maintains the development is more suited to NOTL than other recent developments.

“It’s a hell of a lot better than what has been developed in the last few years within the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, whereas they’re mainly townhouses.”

“It’s a lot more suitable for the quality of Niagara-on-the-Lake than what’s been built in the last few years within the town. Because we could have built 300 townhouses in there.”

Hall said Marotta should engage with the town planners and SORE to address their concerns.

“If Mr. Marotta had made even the slightest good faith effort to address these concerns the discussion might be different. Mr. Marotta has made almost no effort to engage SORE or, from what we know, the town for most of the last three years. Instead, he has attempted to bully his way through tribunal and courtroom to get his way, and so far lost at every turn. SORE will be ready as

required to present its vision in the appropriate forum at the appropriate time.”

Asked what SORE thinks are the chances the development will be approved as is, he said “none.”

“Mr. Marotta has served up a proposal so egregious he has widened support for SORE in our defence of the Rand Estate and responsible development in NOTL. We are being flooded with messages of encouragement and support by NOTL residents.”

The group would not comment on how Marotta’s plan is different than the many tightly packed developments popping up elsewhere in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Hall said there is no real mission to advocate for responsible development in all of NOTL, only specifically the Rand Estate — which borders on the properties of some SORE members.

“SORE’s corporate mandate is the responsible care, maintenance and use of the Rand Estate,” Hall said.

“It’s outside of SORE’s corporate mandate/purpose as set out in our incorporating documents to tackle development issues elsewhere.”

Asked if he would consider adding more green space and making the project more of a legacy project, Marotta said he thinks there is already a lot of green space around the area.

“The front is set within green space. On the north side we have the Rand (Estate). That’s 14 acres all green. On the east side it’s all vineyards and empty land now that we’re going to be planting for vines, so it’s within a green space

setting.”

He said he’s open to suggestions from the town, “if it makes sense on a planning level.”

Hall said the next step for SORE is to continue monitoring the situation and attending legal matters surrounding the estate.

“The next step is the Conservation Review Board in July. Mr. Marotta’s companies are challenging the notices of intent to designate 200 John St. and 588 Charlotte St. issued by the town under the direction of the previous council in August of 2018. That challenge is finally going to the (Conservation Review Board) in July and SORE is a party to that hearing and will be presenting evidence,” he said.

“From there, the heritage designation question will go back to council for a final decision. After that, the Marotta companies need an official plan amendment, a zoning bylaw amendment and approval of a subdivision plan to proceed with this proposal.”

He said SORE has no plans to back down in its attempt to stop what it believes to be an inappropriate proposal for the site.

“SORE will continue to defend the integrity of the Rand Estate and of Old Town NOTL. We’ll be only too happy to see Mr. Marotta at the Conservation Review Board, the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal and in the courts, if needed. We know what we’re doing, we have lined up and continue to use a team of leading experts to assist us ... and we haven’t lost a court or tribunal challenge yet to Mr. Marotta. Mr. Marotta should know we are not going away.”

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she could not comment on the subdivision plans before a public meeting is held.

A virtual open house regarding the project is set for June 15 and an online public meeting has been scheduled for July 14. Full details of the project, including conceptual drawings, subdivision layout and a heritage impact study are on the town’s website at <https://www.notl.org/content/public-notice-under-planning-act>.



NOTL Community Centre set up for vaccines. FILE

## Two more NOTL vaccine clinic dates available

Staff  
The Lake Report

Niagara Region public health has announced two more dates for Niagara-on-the-Lake COVID-19 vaccine clinics.

The clinics will be held May 15 and 16 at the NOTL Community Centre.

Bookings are now open to anyone 55 years old or older, and can be booked in any municipality.

**Other clinic dates are:**

May 9 and 10 – Fort Erie, Leisureplex

May 16 to 22 – Pelham, Meridian Community Centre

May 23, 26 and 27 – Port Colborne, Vale Health and Wellness Centre

May 24, 25 and 28 – West Lincoln, West Lincoln Community Centre

May 29 – Niagara Falls, MacBain Community

Centre

Anyone 45 or older in 2021 with a postal code starting with “L2G” can also book an appointment through the portal. Pregnant individuals, as well as highest-risk individuals with health conditions, plus an essential caregiver can also book an appointment by calling the provincial booking system.

As of Monday, about 32 per cent of Niagara residents have received their first dose of vaccine.

Vaccine portals are expected to be open to anyone over 18 by late May, said Niagara’s chief medical officer of health, Dr. Mustafa Hirji.

Appointments can be booked online through the provincial portal at [ontario.ca/bookvaccine](https://ontario.ca/bookvaccine) or by calling the provincial booking system at 1-833-943-3900.

**CELEBRATING  
OUR 3RD  
ANNIVERSARY!**

**As of May, it’s been three years since The Lake Report began printing its hyperlocal paper for residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake. We began by filling a gap in local news coverage for our town, and are thrilled to continue offering NOTL’s best local news week in and week out. Thank you to our readers, advertisers and sponsors for supporting us. We could not have done it without you.**

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