

WARD 17: CAPITAL

Heritage Ottawa posed the following five questions to each candidate running for Ottawa City Council. The following answers were received from winning candidate **Shawn Menard** in Ward 17.

QUESTION 1

Demolition by neglect, in which designated heritage buildings are left to deteriorate, is an increasing problem in Ottawa. Should the City take a more active role in preventing the demolition by neglect of heritage buildings? Would you support the City's expropriation of Ottawa's most egregious example, Somerset House on Bank Street? Why or why not?

Shawn Menard:

The City of Ottawa does indeed need to take a stronger and more activist role as the City is losing too many heritage buildings – the recent loss of the McGee House in Hintonburg is an important case in point.

If elected I would consider expropriation as a tool that can be used. The councillor for Somerset Ward - Catherine McKenney - called for expropriation mostly because the owner has so clearly neglected this valuable heritage property – for a number of years now. Expropriation is a tool that can and should be used in situations where it is legally possible.

I am also in favour of the city designating more resources to empower inspectors for heritage buildings. The city has the power to do the repairs itself, and to charge the owner for them or put a lien on the property. These are tools we can use now and use them we must.

QUESTION 2

Since 2001, the Ontario Municipal Act has allowed the implementation of a Heritage Property Tax Relief Program to encourage the rehabilitation of Ontario's privately owned heritage resources, which has been used successfully by many municipalities in the province. Would you support implementing such a program in Ottawa that would provide important tax incentives for owners to invest in the repair/rehabilitation of their heritage properties? Why or why not?

Shawn Menard:

I would indeed support implementing such a program in the City of Ottawa. This type of program properly encourages the appropriate management of heritage properties. WE need this to assist owners in maintaining their heritage properties. This program would go hand in hand with a much increased heritage grant program, which I believe is presently underfunded. Both of these tools can provide important support for heritage buildings. incentive programs in place that have been effective in encouraging building owners to make improvements to heritage assets.

QUESTION 3

In designated Heritage Conservation Districts, do you believe that local community opinion should influence City Staff recommendations to approve or reject heritage applications within the district? Why or why not?

Shawn Menard:

I believe that yes – City of Ottawa Heritage staff should take into account the views of local residents where they are addressing valid heritage points. Part of what makes a particular property or district heritage is its importance to the community. This is reflected in the wording of the Heritage Act. Residents must be allowed to have their input along with community groups like local community associations and our own Heritage Ottawa organization. These groups' opinions must be taken seriously and given significant consideration.

And, of course, City of Ottawa Heritage staff's expertise is an important part of the decision making process and they should be able to make independent judgements based on their particular heritage expertise. The Councillor has an important role to play here, which I plan to take very seriously.

QUESTION 4

The City's Heritage Register is a list of buildings determined to contribute to the cultural heritage value of the city. (Please note: a listing on the Register is not a formal heritage designation; the only restriction is that property owners must provide a 60-day notice of intention to demolish.) Do you believe that properties should be exempt from inclusion on the Register at the owners' discretion? If not, how would you attempt to alleviate a property owner's concerns?

Shawn Menard:

I believe the city's Heritage Register is a valuable tool in protecting heritage properties across Ottawa. But, I do believe the city has not done a good enough job in communicating why this tool is important and how it works. Communication is imperative so that property owners are not surprised when their property – large or small – is put on the register, rather than to find out just when a property is to be sold or redeveloped. Property owners of all sizes must realize that placing a structure in the heritage is not a problem – only a tool to assist the city.

I am very much in favour of the city carrying out an extensive education program for areas where properties are placed on the Heritage Register, so the owner understands exactly what that means. I think the Councillor has a role to play in this education and as Councillor of Capital Ward – a ward with a substantial number of potential heritage buildings – I want to play an active role.

QUESTION 5

What is your view on the proposed addition to the heritage-designated Château Laurier hotel? Do you agree with Council's decision to delegate final heritage and design approval of the addition to Ottawa City Staff, rather than requiring a revised heritage application to return to committees and Council for final approval, as per normal procedure under the Ontario Heritage Act? Why or why not?

Shawn Menard:

I agree with Heritage Ottawa that the current proposed addition is not substantially different from the presentations made previously by the owners. More consideration should be taken into account for the enormous importance of this building.

My question remains today why the owner was not required to submit a full application at the very beginning of this very disruptive and failing decision making process. The owners must get this right!

I believe the heritage issue is important in Ottawa – the capital city of Canada – and it should be handled with the importance it deserves.