

WARD 6: STITTSVILLE

Heritage Ottawa posed the following five questions to each candidate running for Ottawa City Council. The following answers were received from winning candidate Glen Gower.

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?

Glen Gower:

Yes, the city should take a more active role in preventing demolition by neglect. We have at least two examples in Stittsville of buildings that are at risk -- the Bradley-Craig barn and Boyd House, in addition to many more across the city. One key initiative would be creating policies and protocols that ensure a quick and effective response to identified issues of neglect, to compel owners of property to fix deficiencies quickly before they get out of hand.

As for Somerset House: In general, expropriation should be used only as a last resort, but in this case would be appropriate given long-term neglect and lack of action on the part of the building's owner.

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?

Glen Gower:

I do support this approach. Three years ago I attended a talk by Bruce Elliott (hosted by Heritage Ottawa) where he gave an overview of the various tools that Canadian municipalities have used to encourage heritage rehabilitation. Several cities, including Charlottetown, Halifax and Vancouver, have tax 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?

Glen Gower:

Yes. Local community opinion should be an important factor to consider in any planning application, in balance with other stakeholders.

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?

Glen Gower:

In the last year we've seen examples of piecemeal removal of properties from the register, which to me is problematic. Many residents and property owners do not understand the implications of the heritage registry or heritage designation. It's up to councillors, city staff, and heritage leaders to provide more leadership and education in this area.

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?

Glen Gower:

The latest design for the proposed addition is still a great disappointment to me and to many residents in Ottawa. I do not support delegating approvals to staff, given the intense public interest in this development and the prominent location of the building.