

### **Peggy Feltmate's Policies**

Ms. Feltmate has been elected Councilor for Ward 4 in Ottawa. Peggy now represents the largest (by population) Ward in Ottawa (Kanata) and the fastest growing.

What is happening in Kanata is nothing less than a phenomenon; a phenomenon, by the way, recognized by people in not only the technology industry but also the retail industry, the housing industry and other industries as well. Folks in Toronto and in the US who control the national retail industry and techies in Palo Alto and others all want a piece of the action in Kanata—they want to be here; they want a Kanata location.

Ms. Feltmate is to be congratulated on running an effective campaign and on her overwhelming victory. There can be no doubt that Peggy has a mandate to govern and her policies won widespread support. But that doesn't mean, at least in my view, that her policies are right.

Peggy has said 'no' to Minto's expansion, 'no' to DEL and Brookfield too. There is certainly a fear that expansion in Kanata is equivalent to 'urban sprawl' and that expansion means higher public costs too. There is also a fear that more homes, more shops, more offices, more industrial buildings will degrade our quality of life and reduce property values. When you add it all up, Fear and Greed are very strong, almost primal, emotions and they reverberate strongly in our electorate. But basing decisions on fear and greed does not necessarily make for great urban planning decisions.

For many years, former Mayor Merle Nicolds worried that expansion in Kanata North would undermine her very worthwhile efforts to get the Kanata Town Centre plan off the ground. My argument was that these two developments were in fact complementary not competitive—people who want to live in a two storey single family home in Morgan's Grant, Briarbrook or approved lands further to the north do not want to live in an apartment above a retail store in the Town Centre and vice versa. In fact, more s.f. homes in Kanata North creates more demand for retail and other services, more employment growth and more employees, some of whom just might want to live in the Town Centre. In fact, if you want to get more density at the city centre, then you need more growth at the edges...

To say 'no' to Minto, DEL and Brookfield, who, at least in my mind, are infilling the spaces around our established urban areas undermines our ability to create a denser form of urban living at the core. Kanata right now is just a long, 'stringy' thing—it kind of strings out on a north-south axis along March Road and Eagleson. Now that is an unsustainable and inefficient urban form.

And then there is the fear that more development might somehow reduce property values or that by restricting the supply of new homes, we might somehow create a windfall for sitting owners. I mean, normally, we associate a shortage in supply with increasing

prices. Since sitting home owners tend to vote in Municipal elections, this is a pretty powerful argument. But is it right?

I would argue that by saying ‘no’ to new development will dampen demand faster than supply and, hence, house prices could go down or, at least, not increase as fast as they otherwise would. So maybe Kanata homeowners have just voted themselves a price decrease?

If more people locate in Kanata—more retail stores, more offices, more industrial plants, more entrepreneurs, more managers, more owners, then maybe some of the new employees will want to live here too. More demand means higher prices for existing homes, not lower.

And I am not convinced by the argument that new development doesn’t pay for itself. Certainly, the fiscal impact on City coffers of commercial and industrial development is hugely positive. The City provides almost no services to commercial property owners but it does tax them to the max. Even new sub-divisions likely produce a fiscal bonus—development charges are a significant part of the cost of new homes and what do they really pay for? The new roads in a sub-division? No, these are paid for by the developer. The new sewers, water mains, cable, telephone, storm works? No, these too are paid for by the developer.

Well, what about hockey rinks, libraries and other public facilities? Some of these are now being paid for by P3 (public/private partnerships). And what, if we have more citizens living in the area, isn’t that making better use of these types of facilities, more intense use? More ice rentals and library members.

If we want more sustainable communities, then let’s let our construction industry build them that way. The Kanata Town Centre shows the way—instead of maximum densities, the KTC mandates minimum densities, instead of height limits, the KTC encourages taller structures. Instead of setbacks, the KTC requires build-to lines so we get more friendly streetscapes.

You want a vibrant KTC, then you need a hinterland and yes, you need Minto, DEL, Brookfield, Richcraft, Urbandale, Claridge and the others. Want more density and intensity? Want to protect important environmental zones? Then let builders build more compact communities. Stop whining about open space ratios, stop demanding mono-cultured sub-divisions that don’t allow townhomes or duplexes or corner stores or on-street parking in them. That is what you have to go after, changing your zoning codes, not arbitrarily establishing a phony line (urban boundary) beyond which life can not go.

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