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Future-Proofing Guelph: Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Greg Cox

Ward: 2

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Priority One: Build More Homes, Faster:

- 1. Will housing be your first priority for the 2026–2030 term? If so, name one current city priority you would subordinate to it when they conflict. If not, what ranks ahead of it and why?**

Yes. Housing would be one of my top priorities because it affects affordability, our tax base, our ability to attract workers and whether young people can afford to stay in Guelph.

If there's a direct conflict, I'd put off non-essential capital or beautification work before delaying infrastructure needed for housing. Downtown safety would still be just as urgent for Ward 2, but I don't see the two as competing priorities. We need safe neighbourhoods and enough places for people to live.

- 2. Guelph has unlocked over 22,000 potential units but issued permits for a fraction of that. What do you believe explains the gap, and which parts of your explanation are within Council's power to change?**

The 22,000 figure represents potential housing, not 22,000 homes that are ready to be built. High interest rates, construction costs, financing, development charges, servicing and market conditions can all stop a project from moving ahead.

Council can't control interest rates or force a private builder to start construction. What it can do is improve approval times, review municipal fees, make sure infrastructure keeps pace and figure out where projects are getting stuck. I'd publish the reasons approved projects aren't moving forward so we're fixing the real problems instead of guessing.

3. Would you support publishing binding end-to-end approval timelines by application class, reported quarterly against actuals? What consequences should follow when the city misses them?

I'd support published timelines for each type of application, with quarterly reporting showing whether the City is meeting them. The reporting should separate time with the City from time spent waiting for applicants, outside agencies or missing information.

When the City misses a target, there should be a public explanation, someone responsible for fixing the problem and a clear way to escalate a stalled application. If delays keep happening, that should guide future decisions about staffing, technology and how the work gets done. I'd only call a timeline binding when the City actually controls it.

4. Getting approved housing built depends on strong working relationships with the people who build it — both for-profit developers and non-profit housing providers. What would you do to build genuine working relationships with both, and what's one concrete step you'd take in your first year to strengthen them?

As a business owner, I know good working relationships come from being reliable, accessible and honest when there's a problem.

I'd meet regularly with private builders and non-profit housing providers, along with the City staff responsible for moving applications forward. In my first year, I'd bring those groups together quarterly to discuss delayed applications, common problems and projects that are ready to move but need something resolved. It should be a working meeting that solves problems, not another presentation or photo opportunity.

5. What three housing metrics should residents use to judge the next Council — and you — at the end of the term? State the values you would consider success.

Residents should judge the next Council on:

1. Building permits issued compared with the City's annual targets. Success means meeting those targets each year.
2. City-controlled approval times. Success means reducing the median time by at least 25 per cent over the term and meeting the 45-day review period for applications covered by the Community Planning Permit System.
3. Homes completed, not just approved. Success means at least 10 per cent more homes completed during the next term than during the current one. Affordable, supportive and rental housing should be reported separately so residents can see what kind of housing is actually being built.

Priority Two: Make Guelph More Competitive

- 6. Guelph is one of Ontario's most tariff-exposed communities because of its manufacturing and agri-food base. What's one specific thing you'd do as a councillor to help those employers weather this period, and how would you work with the Province and Ottawa to bring supports to bear and ensure Guelph's business voice is at the table?**

The most useful thing Council can do directly is avoid adding unnecessary costs and delays at City Hall. I'd review municipal fees, permits and approval timelines with that in mind, especially for employers investing in facilities, equipment or new jobs.

With the Province and Ottawa, I'd start by asking Guelph employers what support would actually help them. Then I'd work with the Chamber, AMO and the mayor through Ontario's Big City Mayors to make a clear case based on what our manufacturing and agri-food businesses are facing. Local employers should be part of those conversations, not just talked about after decisions have been made.

- 7. Guelph businesses and residents consistently raise the cost of property taxes as a concern. How would you approach property tax increases while ensuring the City can continue to deliver the services residents expect?**

I won't promise an arbitrary tax number before seeing the budget, and I won't move costs into user fees or next year's budget and call it a saving.

I'd challenge spending first, look for duplication and ask for a clear explanation of the value residents are getting from major projects. I'd protect core services such as water, roads, emergency services and basic maintenance. Growth also needs to contribute fairly to the infrastructure it requires so existing residents aren't left carrying the full cost.

Holding the line means getting better value from what the City already spends and being honest when a decision involves a real trade-off.

- 8. What would you do to make major municipal spending decisions more transparent and ensure residents and businesses can clearly understand the value they are receiving for the taxes and fees they pay?**

The full budget should remain available, but residents also deserve a plain-language version showing where their money goes, what has changed and why.

For every major project, I'd want the original budget, approved changes, current estimate and expected public benefit shown together in one place. Significant cost increases or delays should be reported when they first appear, not after the project is finished. The City should also report whether services are meeting the standards residents were promised.

Priority Three: An Effective Strategy to Advocate for a Fair Deal

- 9. Guelph's pending development-charge reduction trades short-term relief for long-term financial risk if the offsetting funding falls short. Name one non-negotiable condition you'd require before supporting a deal like this, and one safeguard you'd put in place to protect taxpayers if it doesn't pan out.**

My non-negotiable condition would be a clear, written and reliable source of replacement funding before any reduction takes effect. A promise that funding might arrive later wouldn't be enough. I'd also require a public breakdown of what the decision would mean for housing, infrastructure, property taxes and water and wastewater rates before Council votes. Where legally possible, there should be a review date and a way to reconsider the reduction if the replacement funding doesn't arrive. Existing taxpayers shouldn't quietly be left to cover the shortfall.

- 10. When infrastructure capacity is the reason a housing application stalls, the City's real power may lie in advocacy for provincial and federal funding rather than in saying no. What specific ask would you bring to Queen's Park or Ottawa to unlock that funding, and what would you do to build the kind of relationship that gets a yes?**

My ask would be predictable funding for water, wastewater and transportation infrastructure tied to housing growth. If a housing project is ready to move but servicing is the barrier, Guelph should be able to bring forward a specific project, a clear price and a timeline for getting it built.

I'd build those relationships by showing up consistently, bringing the facts and being clear about exactly what Guelph needs and what we'll deliver. I'd work through AMO and support Guelph's participation in Ontario's Big City Mayors so we aren't making the case alone. A megaphone doesn't build a watermain. A clear plan and a good working relationship give us a better chance of funding one.

- 11. Describe, in your own words, the division of responsibility among the City, Wellington County as service system manager, and the Province on homelessness, mental health, and addictions. What is the city's job, specifically?**

The Province is responsible for the healthcare system and most mental health and addictions treatment. Wellington County is the local service manager responsible for social housing, homelessness programs and related supports across Guelph and Wellington.

The City's role is different but still important. It controls planning and zoning, local bylaws, parks, lighting, cleanup and many of our shared public spaces. It also has a role through policing, local coordination, City-owned land, municipal funding decisions and advocacy.

The City can help get supportive housing approved, keep public spaces safe and clean, coordinate the local response and push the County and Province to do their parts. I won't pretend the City can treat addiction or solve homelessness by itself, but it needs to do its part well.

- 12. Would you support supportive and transitional housing, with expedited approvals for qualifying projects? Would you accept such a project in every ward, including your own?**

Yes, I support supportive and transitional housing, along with a faster approval process for projects that meet clear requirements. It's an important part of helping people move off the street and stay housed. I'd accept properly located projects in every ward, including Ward 2. The standard should be a sensible location, proper on-site support, good management and honest conversations with neighbours. Those conversations should help improve a project and address real concerns, but they shouldn't become an automatic veto.

13. Do you endorse the municipal sector's case for rebalancing provincial-municipal finances (cost uploads, predictable infrastructure funding, growth-linked revenue tools)? What should Guelph offer in return?

Yes. Property taxes are being asked to pay for services and infrastructure they weren't designed to carry alone. I support moving appropriate costs back to the Province, more predictable infrastructure funding and giving municipalities reliable revenue connected to growth. In return, Guelph needs to show that it's using the money well. That means well-run operations, transparent budgets, clear targets and results residents can measure. If we're asking other governments to invest more in Guelph, we should be able to show what the money will accomplish and report honestly on whether we delivered.