

Thank you to our Sponsor:



Future-Proofing Guelph: Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Katherine Hauser

Ward: 6

Contact Email: katherine@hauserward6.ca

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?**

Housing will be one of my top priorities, but I would not make responsible decisions by automatically subordinating every other City priority to it. Housing depends on the infrastructure and services that support it, including water and wastewater capacity, transportation, parks and other community services. We need to build more homes, but faster cannot be our only measure of success. Growth must be affordable, sustainable and supported by the infrastructure required to make new neighbourhoods successful. My priority is not simply approving more units; it is creating the conditions for those approvals to become homes while maintaining the quality of life that makes Guelph a place where people want 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 gap demonstrates an important distinction between approving housing and actually getting it built. More than 6,000 units are already on zoned, draft-approved or registered lands that do not require additional City-enabling infrastructure, yet they have not proceeded to construction. Council cannot compel a developer to build when market conditions, financing, construction costs or other factors make a project unviable. What we can control is our side of the process: timely and predictable approvals, infrastructure readiness, clear requirements and consistent municipal policies. I also support our new "Use It or Lose It" servicing allocation policy so that limited servicing capacity is not tied up by projects that are not moving forward. We should continue working with builders and housing providers to understand what is preventing approved projects from moving forward, while advocating for greater stability and predictability in provincial housing and development charge policy.

- 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?**

Yes. Guelph already reports application processing timelines by application type, and I support making that information clear and easy to track. When an application is delayed, we should be able to see where it got held up and why. If the delay is on the City's end, there should be a clear process to get the application moving again and address recurring problems. If we keep missing the same timelines, Council should be asking why and what needs to change.

- 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?**

Strong working relationships require open communication, clear expectations and mutual respect. There are already mechanisms for City staff, for-profit developers and non-profit housing providers to work through issues, and I would support strengthening those relationships rather than creating another layer of process. I would also support housing roundtables that bring these groups and other partners together to identify barriers and practical solutions. In my first year, I would make sure the issues raised through those discussions are heard at Council and, where the City has the ability to address them, acted on.

- 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.**

I would focus on measures the City can directly influence.

1. Building permits issued: Success would mean meeting or exceeding the City's established annual housing targets.
2. I would track affordable housing created, with success measured against the targets in Guelph's Housing Affordability Strategy.
3. I would track uptake of City programs that support affordable and accessible Additional Dwelling Units, including basement apartments. Success would mean year-over-year growth in both grant uptake and completed units, demonstrating that the tools we have put in place are actually creating more housing.

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?**

I would strengthen the work already being done through the Economic Development to identify tariff-affected employers and help them access available provincial and federal programs, funding and supports. Protecting Guelph's manufacturing and agri-food sectors means protecting thousands of local jobs as well as the businesses and suppliers that depend on them. I would work with our provincial and

federal representatives to ensure Guelph businesses have a direct voice in identifying where existing supports are working and where gaps remain. Our advocacy should be specific to what local employers are experiencing and focused on protecting jobs, investment and Guelph's economic stability.

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?

Keeping property taxes affordable is paramount, but reducing services residents rely on is not the answer. Council needs to continually review spending, service levels and value for money, and look for efficiencies before asking taxpayers for more. At the same time, deferring necessary infrastructure and maintenance simply to keep the annual increase lower can cost taxpayers and the long-term cost of the decisions we make. Residents should be able to clearly see what they are paying for and why.

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?

Major spending decisions should be presented in plain language, with the total cost, funding source, long-term financial impact and expected benefit clearly identified. Residents should not have to dig through hundreds of pages of reports to understand what Council is being asked to approve. I would also like to see clearer reporting after major investments are made so residents can see whether the promised outcomes were achieved. Transparency is not just showing people what we spent; it is also demonstrating the value residents and businesses received for it.

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.

The financial risk to the City is significant, particularly when we are already managing the impact of delayed development-charge collection. My non-negotiable condition would be a firm commitment from the Province that Guelph will be made whole for the development-charge revenue it gives up. Growth still requires roads, water, wastewater and other infrastructure, and those costs do not disappear when development charges are reduced. I am also concerned that reducing development charges does not guarantee lower home prices or that the savings will be passed on to buyers. The safeguard must be stable, predictable provincial funding sufficient to cover the lost revenue, rather than leaving existing property taxpayers and utility ratepayers responsible for the shortfall. Without that guarantee, I would have serious concerns about the financial risk being transferred to Guelph taxpayers.

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 specific ask would be predictable funding for the water, wastewater, roads and other infrastructure needed to support new housing. We should be able to show Queen's Park and Ottawa exactly where the bottlenecks are, what it will cost to fix them and how many homes that investment would unlock. I would work with all levels of government, not just when we need something from them. Strong relationships matter, but so does coming to the table with a clear ask and being able to show exactly what their investment will accomplish.

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?

Wellington County is the service system manager responsible for housing and homelessness services, while mental health and addictions treatment are primarily provincial responsibilities. The City's job is to use tools within our control, including planning and approvals, infrastructure, municipal services and public spaces, while funding our share of services delivered through the County. Our community partners have tremendous knowledge and experience, and we need to bring the City, County and those organizations together to identify gaps and develop practical solutions. We also need to work with the County and community organizations and advocate for gaps in services to be addressed. Jurisdiction matters, but it should not prevent us from doing more where we have the ability to help.

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 and expedited approvals for qualifying projects. I would absolutely support a project in Ward 6, but location still matters. These projects should be located where residents can access transit, services and the support they need to be successful. The goal should be to create housing that works, not simply to ensure every ward has one.

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. Municipalities are being asked to deliver increasingly complex services and infrastructure without the revenue tools to keep pace. I support predictable infrastructure funding and a better alignment between who is responsible for a service and who pays for it. In return, Guelph should demonstrate strong financial management, transparent reporting and clear, measurable outcomes for how that funding is used. A better funding relationship must come with accountability and demonstrate value for money for taxpayers at every level.