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Future-Proofing Guelph: Council Candidate Questionnaire

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Ward: 5

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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. In more than 1,500 conversations at Ward 5 doors this summer, housing came up more than any other issue, and nearly everything else on my platform runs through it: rent, tax bills, keeping graduates here and homelessness. When they conflict, I would put new discretionary capital projects, the facilities that are nice to have, behind the water, sewer and road capacity that gets homes built. I'd also go after one of the biggest hidden barriers to new homes: parking minimums, which force builders to spend land and money on parking spaces instead of homes. Along frequent bus routes, they shouldn't be required at all. Homes there let people live close to transit and everyday amenities without needing a car, and builders can decide for themselves how much parking their residents actually want.

- 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?**

Approval on paper isn't a home, and the biggest thing standing between the two is time. Every month a project waits, the builder carries land and financing costs while staying exposed to interest rates, construction costs and market shifts no city controls, so a project that worked when it was proposed can stop working before it reaches a permit. Feasibility is the other half: Guelph already allows four units on residential lots across the city, but when I ran the numbers myself, buying a house at today's land and construction costs to rebuild as a fourplex loses money, and projects only start to work at around six units or more. Council can't set interest rates, but it does control how long projects are exposed to them and how many homes a lot can hold, through approval timelines, parking minimums, pre-approved designs and as-of-right permissions. That's why I'd restart the City's paused work on allowing more units

on corner lots, so the projects that actually work financially are legal to build. Faster, simpler approvals lower the risk of building here, and lower risk is what turns permits into homes people can live in.

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. Speeding up approvals is the biggest thing I want to get done on Council, so I'd welcome quarterly reporting: I expect the numbers to show real improvement, and public reporting is how we prove it. The clock should run end to end, from first submission to final approval, for each application class, so the numbers match what builders actually experience. When a timeline is missed, the application should automatically escalate to senior staff with a firm date to resolve it, so a stalled file gets unstuck instead of just explained. Staff should also report publicly to Council on the reasons and the fix, whether that's staffing, process or technology. The targets need to be realistic and properly resourced, or the reporting just measures a system set up to fail.

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?

I'd treat builders, for-profit and non-profit alike, as partners in solving the housing shortage, and start by listening to what actually stalls their projects. Most of what they need from the City isn't money: it's predictable timelines, clear rules and fewer surprises late in the process. My first-year step would be pushing for a standing housing table where builders, non-profit providers and City staff name specific barriers and track them until they're fixed, and I'd gladly take part in the Chamber's housing and development roundtables. I'd pay particular attention to small local builders, who are best placed to build missing middle homes but are the most vulnerable to delays, including pushing Guelph to pre-review designs from the federal Housing Design Catalogue so they can start from plans the City has already vetted. The goal isn't only to help the builders already here. It's to make Guelph one of the easiest places in Ontario to build, so more of them choose us.

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.

First, housing starts by type, since approvals that never get built don't house anyone. Guelph has averaged about 1,000 new homes a year over the past two decades; success is roughly 1,900 a year, the pace the City is aiming for in its development charge reduction application, with a growing share of missing middle and purpose-built rental homes. Second, median approval time by application class, with success meaning the City meets or beats its published timelines in every class, every quarter. Third,

homes per hectare in new development, which shows whether we're making good use of the land and infrastructure we already have instead of spreading outward; success is that number rising every year of the term. Together, these show whether we're building enough, building faster and building smart.

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?**

Speed matters for employers too: I'd push for a fast-track approval lane for manufacturers and agri-food businesses that need to expand, retool or reorganize, so a permit delay never costs Guelph a job. I'd also protect our employment lands, including the Hanlon Creek Business Park, so companies looking to relocate or reshore have somewhere to go. With the Province and Ottawa, Council should advocate alongside the Chamber and local employers with specific, data-backed asks rather than general concern. I'd want the Chamber at the table when Council sets its advocacy priorities, not consulted afterward. Over the longer term, the most useful thing Council can do for employers is make Guelph a place their workers can afford to live, which brings it back to housing.

- 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 a zero increase, since that usually means deferred maintenance, which is just a bigger bill later. I'd fund the basics first, like roads, snow clearing, pipes and transit, and make nice-to-haves prove their value. The bigger lever is growth: I want Guelph's tax base growing faster than the cost of serving it. That means making the most of the roads, pipes and bus routes taxpayers have already paid for, so new homes and businesses bring in revenue without adding decades of new upkeep. More households and businesses sharing the bill is the most sustainable way to keep it down for everyone.

- 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?**

Every major project should come to Council with its full lifecycle cost published before the vote, not just its construction price, since upkeep over the decades often costs more than the build. After major projects are finished, the City should report publicly on whether they came in on time and on budget, so residents can judge the decisions behind them. I'd also like the City to publish what different kinds of growth cost to service compared with the revenue they bring in, which would put growth-financing

decisions on an evidence base anyone can check. Personally, I'll send regular ward updates on how I voted on major spending and why. Residents and businesses fund every one of these decisions, and they deserve to see the reasoning, not just the result.

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 is that the federal and provincial funding is confirmed in writing, with a dollar amount, before Guelph locks in the reduction, and that it goes where we need it most: the water and wastewater capacity our growth depends on. My safeguard is a public accounting every year of the program, showing how much development charge revenue we gave up, how much was offset and how many homes actually got started. If the numbers fall short, the gap should come back to Council openly with options, rather than being quietly backfilled from residents' tax bills. Looking past the three years, I'd push for the next development charge by-law to reflect what each type of home in each location actually costs to service, so homes built on existing streets stop helping pay for new pipes at the edge of the city. Relief is only worth it if it builds homes without moving the bill onto residents.

- 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 long-term, predictable funding for water and wastewater capacity: Guelph relies almost entirely on groundwater, and servicing capacity is the hardest limit on how fast we can build. Ottawa's \$33.4 million in August to expand our wastewater treatment plant, supporting nearly 4,400 homes, shows what a well-prepared ask can deliver. I'd build on it with costed, shovel-ready projects tied to the number of homes each one unlocks, since governments fund results, not requests. To build the relationship, I'd stay in regular contact with our MPP and MP regardless of party, not just in a crisis, and make sure Guelph delivers the homes it promises, since a city that hits its targets earns the next yes. Beyond the City's own infrastructure, I'll stand with Guelph General Hospital in pressing the Province for the new hospital a growing city needs.

- 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 funds and regulates health care, mental health and addictions services, and social assistance. Wellington County, as the service system manager for Guelph and the County, runs shelters, social housing and homelessness programs, with the City paying its share. The City's job is to fund that share predictably, manage public spaces and bylaws with compassion, and advocate hard for the health and addictions supports only the Province can provide. Its most powerful tool, though, is zoning: high rents are the biggest driver of homelessness, and the City decides how much housing, including supportive and transitional housing, can get built.

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, and yes, including Ward 5. Supportive housing is one of the most effective and cost-effective ways to help people with complex needs stay housed, and qualifying projects with experienced operators and a clear plan for working with neighbours should be at the front of the line. I'd go further: faster approvals should be the norm for every kind of housing we need, and supportive and transitional housing should never wait longer than anything else. Every ward should share both the responsibility and the benefit. I can't ask other wards to accept what I wouldn't accept in my own.

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 based on what your home is worth, not what you earn, which makes them the wrong tool for funding social services and the safety net. Yet that's increasingly what Guelph's tax bill is being asked to cover, alongside major growth infrastructure. Predictable infrastructure funding and growth-linked revenue tools would let the City plan for growth instead of reacting to it. In return, Guelph should offer results: meeting its housing targets, reporting openly on how provincial dollars are spent and managing its assets well. Our housing track record is our strongest bargaining chip, and I'd pursue this alongside AMO and Ontario's Big City Mayors so Guelph isn't asking alone.