Cities for Everyone

Cities for Everyone supports more affordable housing and transportation, in order to provide security, mobility and opportunity for people with all incomes and abilities

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Municipal Candidates Affordability Survey

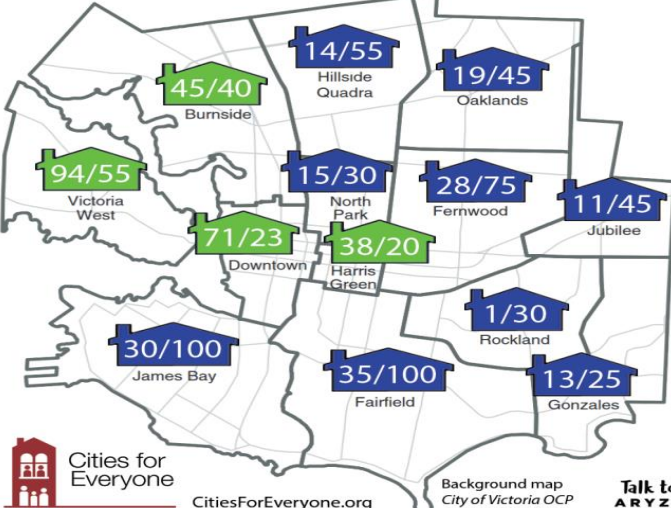*Please fill out this survey and return to info@citiesforeveryone.org by 24 September 2018.*

Candidate Name: Bruce McGuigan   **Date: October 5**

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For more information see the *Victoria Affordability Backgrounder* and other documents at www.citiesforeveryone.org.

Context	Questions	Comments
Our region is considered unaffordable, based on income-to-cost ratios (households spending no more than 45% of income on housing and transport), and low rental vacancy rates.	1. What priority do you give to local efforts to increase affordability? **High**	Affordable housing must be a top priority. Victoria isn't meant to be a place to speculate in real estate, it's a community that people to live in.
Many middle-income households ($40-80k per year) spend more on housing and transport than is affordable, and so want more middle-priced ($1,200-2,500 per month) housing in walkable urban neighbourhoods.	2. Do you support efforts to increase middle- as well as lower-income affordability? **Yes**	Part of my position on housing is that we need to have a stock of *income appropriate* housing. Someone earning $40K per year cannot afford $1200 in rent on top of ever increasing costs of living.
Our urban population grows approximately 1.5% annually. Although housing supply currently grows at about that rate, most new units are downtown or at the urban fringe. The *1.5% Neighbourhood Affordability Solution* (see below) sets neighbourhood infill targets.	3. Do you support the *1.5% Solution* neighbourhood housing growth targets? **Maybe**	I'm not sure this is the right percentage. I feel that building should slightly exceed growth to increase the vacancy rate. Generally, I think we need to look gentle density in primarily SFD neighbourhoods, and multi-story mixed use buildings in areas such as Rock Bay and the Victoria section of north Douglas corridor.

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Cities for Everyone's *1.5% Neighbourhood Affordability Solution* sets targets to increase neighbourhoods' housing supply by approximately 1.5% annually, to match the City's population growth rate.

Most of this housing should be middle-priced ($1,200-2,500 per month), so it is initially affordable to middle-income households, and becomes affordable to lower-income households as it depreciates in the future.

This ensures that more lower- and middle-income households can afford suitable housing in walkable urban neighbourhoods.

Most residential neighbourhoods only allow two stories and limit densities, which excludes most *missing middle* housing (see below). Affordabel housing requires upzoning.

4. Do you support upzoning:

Only on a case-by-case basis

The "missing middle" includes moderate density housing types such as multiplexes, townhomes and low-rise apartments. These are generally the least costly houses to develop.

Many jurisdictions have *inclusionary* mandates which require that a portion (typically 5-15%) of new units be priced below market rates. However, if this requirement is excessive it can reduce the number of new units built.

5. Do you support mandates:
For all new housing

Until the housing crisis in Victoria is brought under control, all multi-unit developments should indeed provide a portion of units for sale at below market prices or as rentals. That number will depend on the development. Developers know how to do that and still make money.

Urban parking typically costs $10-60k per space, and an increasing portion of households are car-free. For affordability and fairness sake many experts recommend reducing parking requirements so occupants are not forced to pay for costly spaces they do not need.

6. Do you support reduced parking requirements for infill developments even if some neighbours object?

No

I am a cyclist, but I also have a car. We are a long way from being a community where bikes and public transportation are the preferred methods of getting around. Once parking is not needed, it can be converted to

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		another use, however, the reverse is almost always impossible without affecting greenspace and existing housing stock.
Infill development often requires variances to allow taller buildings, higher densities and fewer parking spaces than codes require. Neighbors often oppose these variances.	7. Would you approve variances needed for medium-priced infill? **Approve if**	If there is support from the neighbourhood and council agree they benefit the neighbourhood, yes. Zoning is a community and neighbourhood asset.
Victoria's *Official Community Plan* generally allows up to two stories in *traditional residential* neighbourhoods, three stories on *collector streets*, four stories in *urban villages*, and six stories on *major arterials*, but some residents consider these too tall and dense.	8. If a proposed development meets OCP guidelines and includes moderate-priced units (less than $600k), but is opposed by some neighbors, would you: **Approve if**	The OCP has been heavily criticized by many people I have spoken with as ignoring neighbourhoods at the expense of development, and the term urban village is clearly misused. Proposed development such the current one at 5 corners in Fairfield for example, will forever alter the character of the neighbourhood. I also have met many people in neighbourhoods who feel that their CALUCs are unwilling to listen and meet in camera with city staff to the exclusion of other residents. I certainly think all meetings pertaining to development should be open and the voices of those who live in the neighbourhoods must be heard.

9. What other municipal affordability strategies do you support?

Building mixed income housing on City owned land -which in time will become a municipal asset. We can increase this stock with additional resources from other levels of government including land and funding, but we have enough to get started. We need to ensure we have a reasonable vacancy rate to keep the demand and rental prices under control.

10. Please let us know if you have other thoughts concerning our community's inaffordability problems and solutions?

A lack of affordable housing creates multiple social problems. We are rapidly eroding our sense of community.

We are at a tipping point. Victoria is on the edge of becoming a city of the very rich and the very poor – with most of the very rich not even living here full time. In addition to the homeless, there is an increasing segment of the population

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that exists in a state of precarious housing – one or two paycheques away from being on the streets or a friend's couch. This is not the Victoria I moved to 25 years ago, nor is it one that my children and their children will be able to build lives in.

Victoria needs to reject this and return to a city that supports people at all economic levels. As mentioned above, I prefer the term income appropriate housing, because incomes change. Someone living in a subsidized three bedroom townhouse as a single parent doesn't need to be there once the kids have grown and moved out and they are 15 years into a good job with a pension. Similarly, someone who has had a reduction in income should be able to find housing that doesn't mean living in a single room at the mercy of the rental market.

In camera discussions regarding development seem to me to be an exploitation of the legislation that provides for minimizing risk to the City. I was very surprised to hear they take place at neighbourhood association meetings. All development discussions must be made in a thoroughly transparent manner with consultation that includes community voices.