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: Zac de Vries   **Date: September 24th**

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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 Priority**	Municipal policies have contributed to our housing crisis. New and innovative municipal policies and practices have the opportunity of addressing our affordability crisis better than other levels of government.
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**	Walkable neighbourhoods and better transportation options can contribute to more vibrant and affordable communities. We need to increase the housing stock that is geared towards the working class and people with low-incomes.
Affordable infill (more compact housing types, such as multiplexes, townhouses and low-rise apartment buildings, within existing urban areas) is often opposed by neighborhoods who want to preserve existing conditions.	3. Do you support affordable infill: **In all neighborhoods**	All neighbourhoods need to add density if we want to make Saanich more affordable. Core neighbourhoods need to be the focal point of the higher forms of density. We have a lot of options when it comes to increasing density. I'll make it a priority to ensure that the type of density that we add fits the neighbourhood we add it too.

Context	Questions	Comments
Most residential neighbourhoods only allow two stories and limited densities, which excludes most *missing middle* housing (see below). Affordable housing requires upzoning.	4. Do you support upzoning: **Neighbourhood-wide**	We need to update our local area plans to reflect a long term vision of Saanich that supports affordability. I support upzoning accordingly to reflect our local area plans so that we can build the missing middle for a more affordable and inclusive Saanich. We have to act on the understanding that current zoning practices have contributed to Saanich becoming unaffordable.
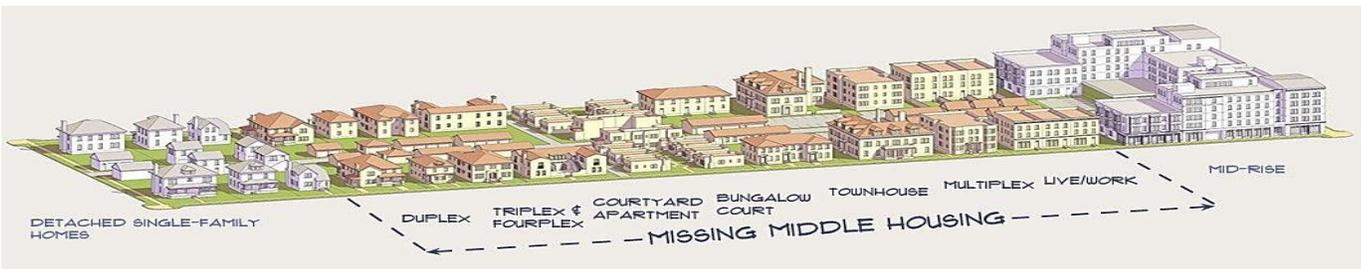
The "missing middle" includes moderate density housing types such as multiplexes, townhomes and low-rise apartments. These are generally the least costly houses to develop.

Context	Questions	Comments
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 most new housing**	Projects first and foremost need to be feasible. While we need non-market housing units, to actually get them built, and increase our market stock as well, we need to ensure that this mandate is balanced in a way that keeps projects viable.
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 housing, even if some neighbours object? **Yes**	Reducing parking minimums is part of the transition to a 21st century transportation network. That said, we need to ensuring parking isn't being pushed from residences to public streets.
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? **Generally approve**	I will approve variances that make sense. We need medium priced infill for affordability in the long term and flexibility will go a long way to making it happen.

Context	Questions	Comments
Saanich's *Official Community Plan* allows up to eight story residential buildings in *neighbourhood centres,* 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 it**	Change is uncomfortable, but if we do not change our built environment, our built environment will change our community. If we do not take action prices will continue to rise and will ultimately push many of the people we love, like our children, out of our municipality. I am embracing density because it supports the greater good.

9. What other municipal affordability strategies do you support?
I support dynamic zoning and better planning. I favor vibrant villages and complete communities because they can address housing affordability and transportation costs at the same time. It is key that single-family homes are not the dominant form of housing in our core areas and villages.

I also support a path to compliance for illegal suites in Saanich as well are raising unit maximums so that we can better plan our communities and formalize the changes that are already underway.

10. Please let us know if you have other thoughts concerning our community's inaffordability problems and solutions?
Urbanization is a complicated phenomenon, we need a council who understands that the way we build our cities has social, economic, and environmental consequences. I advocate for an urbanization for the rest of us, where affordability and long terms impacts are of higher consideration than a resistance to change of a few. If we do not change and adapt to the economic conditions of our community, especially the housing market, we will move towards being a community of the rich and people who have bought in a long time ago.