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QUESTION 1: The City of Edmonton should take more action to make municipal land available for low-income affordable housing development (eg. surplus school land).

Affordable housing is still an issue for many people in Edmonton and the nature of the demand is evolving. There is still a need for affordable housing accommodate newcomers, lower income Edmontonians and those who are not served by the current housing market. There are 18 sites for affordable housing (http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/first_place/first_place_phasing_v3.pdf) established by the First Place, formerly the First Time Home Buyers Program across Edmonton. These are being phased in over six years ending in 2018. Edmonton needs these projects but the process for establishing the sites really riled up many communities. From my many years of work in the community one of the principles that many areas of the city have agreed to is that affordable and social housing should be spread over the city and not bunched all in one place. This is very easy to agree to in principle, but the conversation often changes when a site winds up in a particular neighbourhood. We desperately need to find more mature ways to have these discussions about the best overall strategy and when citizens are given more say in how it works, citizens must also accept responsibility for saying where these developments can take place. There are other ways to achieve affordable housing through zoning and agreements with developers to include a certain percentage of multi-family projects as “affordable.” Ultimately we must find ways to build more affordable housing, to spread it throughout the city in a fair way and to plan for the best outcomes for all neighbourhoods.

QUESTION 2: There is not enough subsidized housing in some neighbourhoods, and the City must ensure a better distribution in all neighbourhoods throughout Edmonton.

A better distribution of non-market housing in Edmonton is a linchpin of a fair and effective housing strategy. Some areas have become hosts to more than their fair share of subsidized housing for too long. With our LRT and transit system that no longer has to be the case. Also, it is a much better strategy for the social development of the city and its people to have neighborhoods with a diverse mix of incomes, ages and races.

QUESTION 3: The City should seek to use zoning flexibility (on issues such as required parking spaces) to support the development of more affordable housing initiatives.

Zoning flexibility, specifically on parking, is key to building new, innovative and effective affordable housing initiatives. When you look at the statistics for young people and driver’s licenses the numbers are going down. We must evolve with the trends and we must work with communities to ensure our plans are part of making the whole community more sustainable over time. Sometimes if we are too rigid, it can lead to communities becoming unsustainable, losing their schools and their infrastructure over time. Public engagement is key to seeking broader support.

QUESTION 4: The City should commit funding to extend the Cornerstones Affordable Housing program.

The original Cornerstones program was a success and I'm hopeful for continued success with Cornerstones II. Secondary suites are a key tool for helping affordability in some neighborhoods. The details of how secondary suites are allowed is also important in maintaining support from other residents.

QUESTION 5: The City should create a comprehensive plan to address the need for thousands of units of affordable housing in a comprehensive and coordinated way that includes attention to schools, public transportation, and community services.

I agree, the City should create a comprehensive plan to address the need for thousands of units of affordable housing in a comprehensive and coordinated way that includes attention to schools, public transportation, and community services. That plan must also include a significant public engagement component to ensure people in these neighbourhoods already can have a say too.

QUESTION 6: The City is doing a good job to end chronic homelessness through the current 10 Year Plan and the work of the Edmonton Homeless Commission.

The 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness is working and it's a credit to our political leaders and the staff and volunteers that are making it happen. Continued work is necessary.

QUESTION 7: The City must be more active in advocating with the provincial and federal governments for more funding and better policies on affordable housing.

The responsibility for homelessness and affordable housing is pretty clearly something that is not primarily a municipal responsibility, Unfortunately Edmonton bears the brunt of the costs for a challenge that faces all Albertans but is mostly played out in the big cities. So yes, we need to advocate for more provincial and federal funding. Part of that comes in the upcoming negotiations for the Big City Charter.

QUESTION 8: The City must develop better ways to gather views of all residents about housing issues and not depend so significantly on input from community leagues and developers.

The city desperately needs new and innovative ways to involve citizens in understanding the needs, understanding the benefits of one strategy over another and in helping advocate solutions by becoming involved in the process of creating affordable housing. Respect for citizen's views means citizens will accept more responsibility for solving the problems. This will require new civic engagement processes that are high profile and solutions oriented instead of confrontational.

QUESTION 9: Finally, you may provide any additional comments about any other aspects of housing and homelessness.

No answer.