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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).

I am strongly in favour of making municipal land, including decommissioned schools where applicable, available for developments that integrate affordable and non-market housing with existing communities. (My only caution about "surplus schools" is that maybe if new developments come into a community, the schools would NOT be surplus any more, as neighbourhoods undergo renewal and "densification". Sometimes there has been poor communication between school boards and city planners before school boards decide a school is "surplus". In Ward 6 many neighbourhoods are trying to increase the number of families living there, while school boards have closed schools right in the area where now development is planned. The boards and City MUST work together.)

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

Neighbourhood diversity makes for strong resilient neighbourhoods. Housing developments which are a mix of income and other demographics are usually the most successful. When a neighbourhood is very homogeneous, sometimes a development can correct an imbalance. Development of all housing, no matter what the income level of the residents, should be done with adequate community consultation. New neighbourhoods should allow for a mix of residents in their planning. Finally, I should note that low-income residents should have as much choice of where to live as people with higher incomes have now--as a principle, we should try as much as possible to ask first where people want to live, then plan second. All of these matters of balance depend on LOTS of communication between people: individuals, communities, planners, developers and city departments!

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.

This type of incentive is already in place in some areas. But incentives aren't the whole picture. An enlightened view of city planning (which I think is more and more likely in Edmonton, as our Sustainability department has been seen to be working more and more with people in a community consultation model) will look at all planning as an opportunity to serve the needs of a wide range of people. That means we must continue Edmonton's commitment to end homelessness, which has already shown us to be leaders in this area in Canada, perhaps even North America. But we have to make sure that commitment is ongoing and strong, and is not diluted by indifference or by removing resources. And we have to, as a city council, show the leadership to draw the line when developments and neighbourhoods are planned, and not allow some developers or neighbourhoods to thoughtlessly opt out of the city-wide commitment to end homelessness and under-housing.

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

Cornerstones has been an essential part of our progress in ending homelessness and inadequate housing, and it must continue.

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.

If the plan in place is not comprehensive enough, or does not include considering numbers of units, schools, public transportation and community services, then the plan must be expanded and updated to cover the need. Also, it must be an ongoing plan. Even if it is divided for ease of action into "three-year plan", "five-year plan" or "ten-year plan" segments, these must be done with the understanding that they are part of a permanent strategy to serve the needs of every Edmontonian, no matter how disadvantaged. Let me note, however, that segmenting a plan like this into bite-sized parts can be a very good way to keep the commitment fresh. There is a management truism that after five years, an organisation stops serving the goals it was created to serve and starts serving the goal of its own survival. How non-profits, businesses and governments deal with this likelihood for complacency is by renewing boards, personnel and mandates. So a five-year or ten-year plan might be about the right length of time to allow for maximum effectiveness, while assessing whether what comes next should look similar, or be hugely changed to respond to changed needs.

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.

I do believe that the City is doing a good job. But as I noted above, we must always be mindful. We must keep assessing the work that is being done to ensure that it is the work that NEEDS to be done. Assessment and refreshment of goals and results is an absolute necessity. And let us make sure that we have good ways of assessing needs and results. Sometimes plans are made without input from the people they are made for. This is paternalistic, top-down government. As a municipality with a consultation strategy already in place across the whole administration, we all -- Council and community-know better than that. We need to always be sure that we know what we are doing, and that as many people as possible have come to a consensus about how we are doing it. A point that is about what is needed in addition to actual bricks-and-mortar homes (and this may take a couple of paragraphs): I served for 17 years on a citizen committee with the police, and six years on the Chief's Advisory Council on Hate and Bias Crime. The police are committed to community policing and equality of policing, and set up community liaison committees for people covered by all the protected grounds for anti-discrimination in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Criminal Code. I firmly believe that low income and homeless people should be represented by one of these liaison committees with the Hate and Bias Crimes Unit, and represented on the Chief's Advisory Council, in order to advocate at a high level for equality of policing to this community. At the same time, at the street level, I think a "Flying Squad" of mixed disciplines (police, EMT, social workers) such as those that deal with domestic violence or child protection, should be formed to respond to calls that 911 and EPS take about homeless or hard-

to-house individuals who are at risk, vagrant or in need. Often 911 and EPS are the first called, but they are responding to situations that are not criminal in nature. To a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. To the police, to whom we delegate our response to criminal activity, there is a risk that every call about a homeless or distressed low-income person might start to look like a crime. Appropriate housing, including harm-reduction and rehab spaces, would mitigate many of these calls and support the hard-to-house, troubled, addicted or mentally-ill low-income person in their own home. In some difficult cases, it's got to be more than just providing four walls. People who have many problems that drive them to the streets need many solutions, We as a city must, and I say **MUST**, be willing to commit to finding these solutions, for the good of everyone. It is not easy, but we will be judged on how we treat the most troubled and needy among us. Recently I read that the Anglican Bishop of Edmonton said to parishioners in Terwilligar Towne, "No-one said helping the poor would be easy." I was struck by how applicable this is not just to issues of poverty, but to all the issues of negotiating diversity in communities. Until we imagine that we ourselves could easily be as challenged and as troubled as our most needy neighbour, and then deal with all people the way we would like to be dealt with, we can't make change. However, if we approach our fellow Edmontonians with a willingness to understand, share and find common ground, then deal firmly with the issues that are outstanding and troubling us all, we can--and will--change our city for the better together.

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.

I am concerned that in a provincial and federal political environment which has an emphasis on decreasing taxation for political expediency, the money for funding for this important issue will be vulnerable to "cost-saving" cuts. But such cuts will not save costs, because homelessness has a much higher cost, even if only money is assessed, than housing people properly. In this area, "cost-saving" REALLY means providing funding and good policies for affordable housing in order to avoid much higher social, economic and personal costs that come from having a portion of our citizens living in desperate situations. All levels of government **MUST** understand this and act accordingly.

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.

We do need good ways to gather views of all residents, and sometimes community leagues do represent only a sliver of community opinion, but sometimes community leagues also lead the way. Community leagues and developers need to stay at the table, but the table also needs to get bigger--and be a round table, with equal listening, learning and sharing from and by all at the table. More importantly than targeting anyone for being either obstructive or permissive, we have to gather as many of the people as possible with an opinion on a community's priorities all into one room from time to time and have the necessary conversations, however long it takes, to understand each other. I've seen both kinds of meeting: the confrontive and the co-operative. We need more of the second kind--but they cost more and take more time. Sometimes the parties are too impatient to take the time, don't want to spend the money or personal investment to deal with greater cost, or refuse to "de-polarize" in order to have the necessary conversation in a pleasant way. These problems can be worked with, if the will is there. It is not easy to discuss changes in communities that are already established. Sometimes no-one gets exactly

what they want. Sometimes there must be dramatic compromises. That's the reality of living closely together in cities with the many kinds of diversity that make us a modern city.

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

This is an issue about which I am passionate. As a low income person working in my own business in the arts, I feel lucky to have a home myself, and have worked hard to own a home late in life, after partaking of many alternatives for housing. I've seen the advantages of many models of housing (co-ops, apartments, condos, detached housing, renting and home ownership). Many of my neighbours are homeless or underhoused, or, by contrast, are financially stressed but now are living in non-market housing that finally is there to meet their needs. So often the phrase "the homeless" is used as if there is a monolithic block of willful, dangerous, negative people, a Problem Population, who need some sort of draconian measures to "deal with them". There is really no Them and Us. Everyone could suffer a crisis that would end in homelessness or in marginal, inadequate housing. Everyone. Each homeless person or family has a different story and the solution that will answer their needs is different. Very few people choose to be homeless, but sometimes it is forced on them and sometimes it is the best choice in a bad situation. The approaches that work "deal with" homeless and underhoused people one person or family at a time. It's a process of long conversations and a willingness to listen and change. As an example let me talk about my experiences in the last four and a half years. I live in Boyle Street neighbourhood, where considerable development and densification is planned. It is also a neighbourhood with a large homeless and underhoused population. Over the eleven years we've been here, we've seen dramatic changes for the better as initiatives to end homelessness combine with new affordable housing, programs to eliminate the "bars of last resort", and other efforts. During my tenure as vice-president of Boyle Street Community League, the board passed and supported a non-market housing policy calling for the inclusion of non-market and affordable housing into the densification the community is undergoing. We recognised that the densification Boyle Street Community is undergoing will have far more impact on the nature of the community than affordable or non-market housing, group homes or harm-reduction facilities would have--at least, far more impact requiring adjustment on the part of existing residents. The changes brought by affordable housing or harm-reduction units would all be positive. Now, as a result of a three-and-a-half year process co-operating with the City, the YMCA, Capital Region Housing, Metis Urban Housing Corporation and many more, the area has 150 units of affordable housing in the Boyle Renaissance area, 90 suites of seniors adapted housing to open soon, a new community centre and an upgraded park with community table providing programming for a wide range of residents. The past five years have seen an extensive community consultation on these matters and on private developments, parks, community gardens, and other planning issues. Unfortunately, we also had an 18-month battle with LRT planning that did not turn out the way the community hoped. We saw the best and the worst of neighbourhood planning and consultation, but the community (not just the league, but many many groups within the community, working together) has never stopped working with sustainability and transportation planners to keep the changes we face part of a planned, controlled and mindful change process. Even then, last fall I attended a major meeting where as many initiatives as possible came together in one room, and we heard new things about each others' needs that we hadn't yet heard in the four previous years. It is an ongoing process (as Jane Rule said, "Politics is housework.") Bear in mind, Boyle Street has many differences from its neighbouring communities, so there is no one-size-fits all solution. The point of telling our story is to show that a

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process can be designed that fits each community individually. It's not even a grassroots process--it's more like planting a tree that must be kept healthy from the root to the crown. If the people, groups, civic administration and Council show the will, we can invest together -- time, money, energy, commitment and caring-- in a process that is mindful of us all, and all our needs. That's the bottom line.