

**Urban Development Institute – Victoria Branch  
City of Victoria Civic Elections 2008**

**Questions to Candidates**

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What is your overall blueprint for a sustainable Victoria? What specific and immediate initiatives would you propose as part of the sustainability framework for the city, and how will that impact development interests?

A clear vision for environmental goals and urban density targets. Developers today are receiving mixed signals on the latter. Concentrating density in areas where it's best suited meets environmental targets and protects established residential neighbourhoods. I have spoken twice before the Urban Development Institute on urban issues related to smart growth. I've worked to ensure Downtown development met smart growth principles, including ensuring new mixed use projects had a sustainable and varied range of tenants and features. We worked with architects to design buildings with less interface for automobiles and more for pedestrian and retail use. I advocated the concentration of new construction away from traditional communities and closer to existing density and areas of future rapid transit capability.

**Independent of provincial and federal housing programs and funding, can you envision any 'made in Victoria' affordable housing solutions in social, market rental and market purchase housing? What are they, and what city and private sector roles would you champion?**

Lobbying the Federal and Provincial governments for handouts isn't the be all and end all solution. Several "made-in-Victoria" solutions are in the works. As Chair of the Downtown Residents' Association I hear from many in the housing field who are ready to implement plans. Groups such as the Victoria Real Estate Board and the Urban Development Institute have shown leadership in providing a place for the private sector to partner with non-profits to provide housing.

**Do you support the preferred Downtown Plan option for the future development of downtown? What, in terms as specific as possible, do you hope to accomplish in making this option a reality? What is your view of the current health of the downtown economy?**

The current state of the local economy is good but service providers Downtown are not optimistic and many are telling me they are bracing for the toughest economic times in recent memory. Downtown is currently in the midst of a rebirth of sorts, with residential population levels finally reaching 1970 levels. This is good for year-round economic health. The Provincial government is poised to commit to a large amount of new LEED-certified office space. Yet there is much to do to ensure economic health during the coming downturn. We must keep business tax rates as low as possible to minimize the damaging effects of the downturn. Leadership at City

Hall will ensure developers know full well what can be built and what can't. When I discussed the new Cross-town plan at a UDI luncheon earlier this year I made it clear that I thought this was the best way to balance density, transit and neighbourhood preservation for all Victorians. I support the creation of an Economic Development Board to pro-actively attract business to the Capital City.

**Do you have a blueprint for a new central library, art gallery and other facilities designed to enrich downtown as the cultural capital of the region? What is that blueprint, what's the timing, and what is your strategy for obtaining consensus amongst the region's stakeholders for the capital funding for such new facilities, or for a go-it-alone option?**

These facilities are badly overdue. The GVPL has been in temporary quarters since I was a young boy. Silver Threads has been in temporary quarters for nearly five years with no end in sight. I'm committed to a new GVPL and a satellite location for the AGGV. Getting consensus is important yet the other municipalities will want input into how their money is spent in the core. We can't let this bog down the process. Victoria was as close as it's ever been to achieving the long-awaited goal of a new gallery but the process quickly became bogged down in a debate over height and density. The City can do better by clarifying the rules on building form and where it's best suited to go and sticking to it. Neighbourhoods and developers demand clarity.

**How would you alter the development approval process and related policies to improve the working relationship and sense of collaboration between industry, community and the city?**

The UDI and my fellow CALUC chairs have been involved in the process of revamping the procedures of applying for rezonings and variances. Getting all the stakeholders at the table and hammering out a consensus was tough but successful. Let's keep this door open. Mutual education is helping as well. The UDI's "Development 101" brought neighbourhood groups, developers and the general public together to learn about the challenges they face. I hope this was the first of many such events and that the City gets involved too. But rezonings are still taking up to two years and more. This is unacceptable. Neighbourhood plans must be strengthened and supportable and residents and proponents must not receive mixed signals about the potential for future development.

**It's conceivable the city will be less able to count on revenue contributions from new development during the next mayoral term. If faced with reduced development revenue, what is your strategy for funding infrastructure upgrades and public space improvements?**

If this is indeed the case, all other options including tax holidays, leveraged grants and density transfer schemes must be investigated. Infrastructure upgrades, art and environmental features and public space improvements should not be extras that are passed over in tough economic times. They are a vital part of the make-up of a modern city.

**What, in your view, are the major deficiencies in city operation or culture? What is your plan for improvement?**

A sense of malaise seems evident at City Hall. The development process remains antagonistic at times with frequent conflict among those in Planning, Council,

development, the various Community Associations and residents. As one DRA member asked when seeing yet another development flounder through a multi-year ordeal, "Who's driving the planning bus?" All stakeholders would benefit from strengthened community plans and a commitment to adhering to smart growth principles. As a Community Association Chair, I understand the concerns of residents. I will support the Mayor and other Council members in setting priorities when it comes to development.

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End of Responses