



*GVAT's Housing Action Research Team prepared a set of questions on Housing Affordability for candidates in City of Victoria's December 12 by-election. We circulated the questions to 11 candidates, 2 of whom have withdrawn from the race. Of the remaining 9, we received these 6 responses. We have summarized some of the longer responses, but have tried to allow as much as possible for the candidates to express their views verbatim, as this is a key issue in the campaign. This document is 13 pages long.*

## **Questions and Responses to Victoria City Council Candidates**

**Date: December 2, 2020**

**Homelessness:** Council has recently approved a set of 6 recommendations aimed at eliminating overnight camping in city parks by the end of March 2021, and ensuring more shelter space and services are made available. Do you support these 6 recommendations? How would you implement them?

William Heflin (WH): I do not support Council's approach to solving the housing crisis because it does not deal with root causes and it puts some of our weakest people together with those who would prey on them. The substance abusers should be housed in two different groups: those who use drugs and those who abuse alcohol. I believe we also owe temporary housing to those of our citizens who are down on their luck so that they can get reestablished when the current health crisis is at an end. The key to this whole system is adequate identification of the homeless and what has caused them to be a member of that subset of society. I believe the City should set up a task force to find out who is who and enter them into the appropriate housing/treatment scheme.

Rob Duncan (RD): 1. Although I think it has some strong points and is an improvement over the status quo, I don't completely agree with Council's approach on this matter. For instance, a small number of people in the outdoor community have come to prefer living outdoors for various reasons and don't want housing. The City's approach doesn't include any accommodation for this small group. My suggestion is that the small number of people who don't want housing should be accommodated with a purpose-built facility, a supervised and regulated municipal campground with washrooms, showers and maybe even an outdoor cookery (thereby avoiding the need for cooking fires in tents and other dangerous places).

Sean Leitenberg (SL): Yes I support the initiative but the deadline of March is too far away. Camping in our parks is not shelter. Inadequate living standards without the basic human needs. I would work with the private sector to get the job done faster, reduce red tape and get as much help from our newly elected Provincial government.

Hailey McLeod (HM): I support a lot of the recommendations, but have a few concerns. First, I do not think poverty and homelessness should be criminalized, so I am not in favour of the bylaw allowing camping in parks to expire in March. Even with vastly increased housing support, there may be those who cannot or do not want to choose that option. There was a project in Vancouver that housed a large number of street entrenched youth in supportive housing. Suicide and overdose rates among the youth went way up due to increased isolation in comparison with living on the street, and surveillance by the housing coordinators (I can provide a reference if needed). We need to be careful that the housing we are providing people is a safe alternative, and that people have autonomy over where, how, and if they are housed. We do however need to prioritize providing homes to people, and I support the plan to



open Oak Bay Lodge to those over 55 sheltering in parks, encouraging the provincial government to develop affordable housing on Yates street, and the tiny home project.

Roshan Vickery (RV): Yes, I support the 6 recommendations made in council. As a councillor, I would implement the recommendations by working closely with stakeholders including the province, neighborhood associations, and care providers to ensure a smooth transition. This should be regarded as a first step in securing housing for the most vulnerable. With regards to Oak Bay Lodge, occupancy should be based on mitigating factors like structural integrity, with the safety of inhabitants being a primary concern.

Stephanie Hardman (SH): Yes. Everyone deserves a place to call home. For too many people in our city right now, that place is a tent in a park or other open space in our community. We can do better than that. To that end, I absolutely support finding people real homes and I support the goal of ensuring everyone has both safe indoor shelter and a path to permanent housing by the end of March 2021.

Right now, we need to be working on emergency response for indoor sheltering options in the short- and medium-term, and also, most importantly, a long-term strategy to ensure everyone has a safe and stable home, with security of tenure.

Like many central cities in the country, the issue of homelessness has landed most visibly at Victoria's doorstep, but we cannot solve it alone. We need all levels of government to come to the table. I support the motion and 6 recommendations approved by Council because this approach calls upon all levels of government (regional, provincial, federal), Island Health, and our neighbouring municipalities to work together to address the issues before us. This sort of collaboration and cooperation is the only way we will be able to address homelessness.

**Housing First:** How would you describe the key principles of a "Housing First" approach? How has the City of Victoria supported such an approach? What additional measures, if any, would you support as a councillor?

WH: Housing first is not practical from a standing start. Council needs to sweeten its attitude to the Province so that we can move ahead. The Province has the resources, and frankly, much of the responsibility to house our poorest. We need to implement the program I described in the previous question, coupled with an aggressive programming guideline of coming up with the housing needed for each group. I fear that Council's "get them off the streets, no matter how we do it," approach is not workable, even in the medium term.

RH: The Housing First approach recognizes that when a person is in a perpetual struggle to find a safe place to sleep at night, they are unable to address other issues such as addictions or other health problems. Once a person has safe, secure, adequate housing, he or she is able to focus on other needs and problems. The City (in conjunction with the Province) has attempted to enact this approach by providing housing in the old motels that have recently been purchased, but this housing is not adequate and is unsuited for the purpose it's being used for, so the City has been largely unsuccessful in



implementing a true Housing First approach. What is needed is properly-designed purpose-built supported housing.

SL: I would describe the housing first program as a collaboration between the CRD the Province to invest in the construction of subsidized, affordable and near market rental units together. The required services from a health perspective on a flexible mobile plan to help integrate those most marginalized in our society. I would work with the Province and Island Health to insure the support is adequate. 833 Johnson is not working and we need to make sure that we are creating a sustainable environment for both neighbourhoods, residents and businesses.

HM: The key principal of the “Housing First” approach is that housing is the core need that people have, and should be resolved first. All of the 6 recommendations approved by City Council are part of a housing first strategy and the CRD’s Regional Housing First Program also supports the strategy. In addition, I think we need to encourage the province to fund more transitional housing with support for mental health and addictions, those escaping violence, leaving prison, and others.

RV: I would describe the key principles of a Housing First approach by saying that housing is a fundamental human right. We have an obligation as a civil society to house our homeless population today, tomorrow, and the day after that. Only once this most vulnerable population is housed can we get on with the real work of treating mental health and addiction issues, rehabilitation, and reintroduction back into society. These people are our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and children. As a councillor, I would support a model that tied a housing first model to treatment. We need to treat the patient, not the disease.

SH: Housing First -- not ‘housing only’ -- is an approach that sees housing as fundamental to personal and community health and wellbeing. It means working to ensure that everyone has access to housing and support options to meet their unique needs. It’s a person-centered, evidence-based, and effective approach to housing and homelessness that has been implemented in communities worldwide.

We know that when people are safe, secure and supported they are better able to address the challenges they have in life. They can better take steps to address their health and well-being. If we want people to take steps to heal from trauma, to address problematic substance use, to improve their mental health, we need to help them find homes. In the current housing environment, it means ensuring we can create new homes as there is currently a shortage of housing options available to those living on low incomes, as well as a shortage of housing for moderate income households.

The City of Victoria has supported the Regional Housing First Program, and I would champion continuing this support. The program involves working with the Capital Regional District, BC Housing, Island Health, and other partners to ensure the creation of scattered-site, mixed-income buildings and communities throughout the region. These buildings include units available at the shelter assistance rate (\$375/mo) to house people transitioning from homelessness. I support the Coordinated Access and Assessment process of ensuring that each person’s unique needs are taken into account and that they are offered choice in housing and supports. Every individual is different and unique -- and the housing and support system should be person-centred and responsive to individual needs. That was one of the key recommendations I included in [a report](#) I authored for the Greater Victoria Coalition to End



Homelessness -- based on speaking directly with people experiencing homelessness -- that informed the development of the Regional Housing First Program.

I also support the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness and the incredible and important work they are doing to provide culturally supportive housing. The Aboriginal Housing Strategy -- with four key pillars of finding wellness, building community, bearing witness, and building strength -- is a crucial complement to the Regional Housing First Program, and any housing strategies or approaches.

**Housing Needs and Affordability: How would you define housing affordability? Which groups in Victoria currently lack affordable housing? What can the city do about this?**

WH: I define affordable housing as housing that can be made available to the poorest of our citizens. Large groups of our working poor and non-working poor cannot afford housing in this municipality. The City should build, with help from both the Provincial and Federal Governments at least three major structures that quickly provide subsidized housing for the various groups that need it. We should not go cheap, these buildings need to be as beautiful as we can make them and provide good permanent housing for those sectors of our society that need it. There are several other approaches that over time can make a difference:

- The build up of high value housing that will gradually create vacancies in the lower level of housing
- improve housing for those who have it and then take the lowest value housing thus freed up and make it available to our poorest.

RD: Housing is considered “affordable” if the occupant is paying 30% of their income or less for housing. Numerous groups in Victoria lack affordable housing, including homeless people, many rental tenants, and many families purchasing house. There’s not much that can be done at the municipal level about the real estate crisis; the homelessness crisis can be addressed by securing funding for and building purpose-built supported housing; the rental market crisis can be addressed in part with vacancy controls and an expansion of the City’s inclusive zoning bylaw.

SL: I define affordable as 30% or less of a household income. The working families of Victoria are those most in need of affordable housing. The city can increase density, reduce parking requirements and increase property tax grants for the construction of our rental stock.

HM: I define affordable as being something people can pay for without sacrificing other necessities, but also without sacrificing their ability to live meaningfully in community. I have seen this set at 30% of income and I think this is a relatively okay measure, though it doesn't take into account the differences between paying a mortgage (paying into a long term investment) and renting. Who is the current “affordable housing” serving? My guess is, the young middle, and upper middle class. This leaves out most of the working class, seniors, those living on disability and social assistance, students, those transitioning out of supportive housing and more. Single parent families are also critically in need of affordable housing. To increase (real) affordable housing we need to vastly increase the supply of middle income housing, co-ops and other alternative housing models. City council can support this through inclusionary housing policies for development, rezoning single family dwelling neighbourhoods to allow



multi-family homes and apartment and condo buildings, and creating bylaws against short-term rentals such as Airbnbs

RV: I am the only candidate that does not talk about affordable housing. I believe that as long as affordable housing is tied to the market, it will remain an unachievable goal for the majority of Victorians. Currently, Victorians pay, on average, 60% of their income towards their mortgage. Victoria is ranked as one of the top 5 most expensive cities in the country. The groups that lack affordable housing are:

- a) The current homeless population. The provincial government should be required to increase the current rent supplement so that basic accommodation can be acquired;
- b) The current population of renters. Renters make up 60% of residents in the city and have seen their rents go up by as much as 15% in a year due to market driven forces and commodification of housing; and c) Low and middle income earners. As long as housing is tied to market, even offering housing at 10% and 20% below market means that low and middle income earners cannot achieve the goal of home ownership in the form of a condominium or detached house. We need to lobby the federal government to partner with the province and the city to build affordable housing in the form of co-op housing, subsidized housing, and affordable rentals. The federal government has been absent as a partner since 1993. In Sweden, for example, 30% of all housing is considered social housing, whereas in Canada, only 13.5% of housing falls into that category.

SH: The widely used definition of housing affordability, used by CMHC, is a threshold of 30% of a household's gross income on housing and shelter costs (Shelter Cost to Income Ratio, or STIR). However, even a third isn't truly affordable for people living on low and moderate incomes -- as it leaves many in our city with so little left to attend to the other basics of life, like food and transportation. We also know the vast majority of those working in industries key to the success of Victoria's economy -- such as tourism, retail, food service, childcare -- live on low wages and have been especially hard hit by COVID-19.

Renter households exceed the affordability threshold of 30% more than owner households. According to the 2016 Census, nearly half (45.9%) of tenant households in the City of Victoria are spending more than 30% of their income on shelter costs (rent and utilities), exceeding the threshold of affordability. Comparatively, nearly a quarter (22.3%) of owner households are exceeding the 30% STIR.

According to the [participatory action research project](#) I conducted with the Victoria Tenant Action Group, from our sample of approximately 500 renters who filled out a survey, we found that some renters face additional barriers to accessing housing, including discrimination (for example: renters with pets, families with young children, and youth).

Our city lacks all types of affordable housing, but especially housing for very low incomes, families, those with disabilities and seniors. As a city there needs to be considerable effort in supporting cooperation with all levels of government and regional partners to build hundreds of new units of affordable housing including social housing, co-ops, land trusts and other creative approaches while still protecting the supply of affordable housing stock we have.



**Inclusivity mandates:** Inclusivity mandates require that a portion of new private developments be sold or rented below market rates (i.e., market rate housing units subsidize affordable units). Do you support inclusivity requirements for new development, and if so, what type of requirement? Should moderate-priced housing be excluded from this requirement?

WH: I do not believe in inclusivity mandates. I think that an alternative system should be employed whereby new housing developers are required to pay one-off contribution to the City to offset losses to the rental and housing base. The fund would be exclusively available to the City to purchase and renovate properties for subsidized housing use.

RD: Yes, I support the City's inclusivity requirements, but I think this approach should be broadened to include a wider range of multiple-unit developments. Moderate-priced housing should be included, because the City needs more affordable units.

SL: Yes I support inclusive mandates. Just over two years ago I asked the city to look at my 20-20-20 plan to ensure 20% of new construction be produced as rental stock at 20% below market rent for the next 20 years. Many aspects of this policy has already been used by the City. Moderate housing need not be excluded but property tax grants given instead.

HM: I do support inclusivity requirements for new developments. The Council has suggested 20% of units be reserved for affordable units and I think this is a reasonable number. I have heard concern from construction trades unions that the requirement will discourage developers from investing in Victoria which I think needs to be given consideration. We need to make sure we are providing a range of affordable housing options, but I would consider excluding moderate-priced developments from this requirement if it encouraged more developers to focus on building moderate priced housing.

RV: I support inclusionary housing when it makes sense. However, I do not feel that it should be a requirement. The recent housing development on Cook Street, which was just rejected by council, is a perfect example. I would have voted for the proposal, as it was the right development for the right location at the right time. However, Together Victoria rejected it on the basis that it did not offer subsidized housing.

SH: In June 2019, Victoria City Council approved the Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy. Victoria has been facing a housing affordability crisis for years with no signs of slowing down -- the market has been continuing to increase year after year at a rapid rate. In order to help moderate the market, we need to ensure we are creating housing that's affordable, and affordable to people who currently live and work in Victoria.

We need a variety of housing types affordable to various income levels since we have a shortage of housing that's affordable to households living on very-low and low incomes, as well as housing that's affordable to moderate income households. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that including all income levels in housing projects and neighbourhoods creating a more inclusive and thriving area.

That's why I support the Inclusionary Housing policy of ensuring that 20% of units in large strata



developments are affordable to people living in Victoria - aligning with low to moderate and moderate-income households in the City's Housing Targets. It is also key that the affordability and tenure will be secured through legal agreement for either 60 years or for the life of the building, whichever is greater.

**Diversity and Representation:** How can the City meaningfully take into account the housing needs of marginalized communities who are not normally heard in public consultation, including those who are impoverished; Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC); women; differently abled; and the 2SLGBTQI+ community?

WH: I believe that housing is the number one issue in our community today. Council should have a semi-permanent sub-committee for housing policy development. Their first priority should be to take account of all the interest groups in housing and report back to Council on that. That should not be taken to mean that we should have segregated housing for any group that does not need extra supports. Nor do I believe that physical disability should be a bar to living in any residential building in Victoria. There is no doubt that much updating will have to be done to accomplish that.

RD: The City should work with the Province to create the kind of social housing marginalized groups need.

SL: I believe we live in a very inclusionary city. More work needs to be done, but I believe Victoria is on its way to insure housing for all, regardless of our differences.

HM: I support Councillor Dubow's motion to fund a diversity and inclusion office, and I think we should support hiring BIPOC, those differently abled, and people from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community at all levels of city management. Consultation is incredibly important but we need people from these communities also in charge of decision making. We need to make sure they get paid. We need to make sure inclusion is built into the fabric of our institutions. I would also like to see more attention paid to the housing needs of new immigrants and that their particular barriers are understood and their rights protected. I think during every single discussion around housing at City Council meetings, there should be a discussion of how BIPOC, women, the differently abled, and the queer community will be impacted or served by our decisions. This needs to be intentional.

RV: I think the city should do more to address the needs of all marginalized communities. I think that is a conversation waiting to happen. I live in Chinatown, Victoria's only ethnic neighbourhood. It has become a quaint, eclectic, colourful neighborhood, but it evolved out of necessity as the Chinese population was prohibited from owning property in other parts of the city. The city once had a thriving Japanese population who had their property confiscated during WW2. This population never returned in large numbers to their original neighbourhood in and around Chinatown. We once had a thriving black population which, over time, dispersed for a variety of reasons. I would encourage discourse at a local level with all marginalized communities. I think that the current mayor has done more to address previous wrongs than all the previous mayors combined, and I would follow her example.

SH: Part of why it is so important to gather data about who is experiencing hardship and who is getting access to services is so we can measure how well what we are doing is meeting the needs of all the people we serve -- especially when it comes to housing. That's why I believe Victoria's Housing Strategy



needs to be data-driven - using disaggregated data to drive housing decisions can help remove systemic discrimination from housing systems and benefits.

It's also important to note that people communities that have been marginalized for any number of reasons often don't have access to the same ability to be heard - often because they don't have adequate access to the internet at home, or are unable to leave work or home to attend an in-person meeting due to a lack of reliable transportation or due to child care needs. Providing free or low cost wifi to low-income households, as well as moving towards a fare-free transit system are ways we can make sure no one is left out of the conversation simply because they can't afford to participate.

We also need to do more to reach people in ways that work for more people- that means translating more documents and websites into more languages and into more accessible formats that enable screen readers and other accessibility features.

**Rentals:** Victoria has seen rents increase by 15% in the last year. Current affordable rentals are being lost to renovictions and evictions due to redevelopment (demovictions) and are typically replaced by rentals unaffordable to the previous tenants. What role do you see for the City in protecting renters from renovictions and demovictions? Would you support City policies that aim to increase protections for renters?

WH: I see a role for the City in protecting renters but I am not entirely sure what that role should be. I hearken to the City of Santa Monica. Their Council decided on a rental freeze. As with any solution, there is always a way around it. The only way found to get around it was to sell rental properties to new developers who would then tear them down and create new properties that were not rentals.

RD: Vacancy controls are badly needed. Without vacancy controls, other rent controls are ineffective. Yes, I would support policies that would protect renters.

SL: I see the inclusionary policies for new construction can accommodate the current tenants by working with developers to ensure that current tenants are offered the inclusionary housing first and that developers pay for the additional rent costs through construction. The new units will be more expensive for those not regulated, but it allows the construction of more housing stock. This allows development with higher density and in the end balances out the costs.

HM: I absolutely support the City adopting policies aimed at protecting renters from renovictions and demolitions. We should pass strong bylaws that prevent both unless the health and well being of tenants is at risk. For renovations that need to take place, tenants should be able to return to their suites without rental increases. I would also be interested in exploring tying rents to properties/units rather than tenants. This would disincentivize renovictions.

RV: I believe that rising rents can be tied directly to commodification of housing. We should not allow housing to be treated as an investment/commodity. I think that the city should implement rent controls like they just did in the city of Halifax. I think the city should have more control over the existing rental stock. I would like to see the city partner with AirB&B owners and return that housing stock to affordable rental stock, perhaps by offering subsidies to owners in exchange for offering affordable long-



term housing to locally employed people. Yes, I would support city policies that aim to increase protections for renters.

SH: Protecting renters and preserving and increasing our rental stock is one of my priority issues. I think the city has a key role to play in protecting renters, preserving our existing rental stock and ensuring that we are still building new affordable units throughout the region.

There are a few tools we can use to protect our existing rental housing stock and the tenants housed within it. One is rental tenure zoning, a new power granted by the province in 2018 but yet to be applied in the City of Victoria. We also need to prevent buildings from unnecessarily falling into a state of disrepair as justification for demolition or deep renovation leading to displacement. We can do through holding landlords accountable for maintaining existing rental housing with the implementation and enforcement of the new Standards of Maintenance Bylaw.

The City of Victoria has Tenant Assistance Policy to prevent and mitigate the impacts of renovation and demoviction, however, it needs to be strengthened in order to actually prevent tenants from being displaced from their homes, neighbourhoods, and our city. I would like to see Victoria tenants offered right of first refusal at the same rent they were paying, like we've seen in Burnaby.

We also need to do everything in our power to end the discrimination against renters who have pets so they aren't being unfairly evicted or denied housing.

**Residential infill:** To serve our growing population the Greater Victoria region must add 2,000-4,000 new housing units annually, including a diverse range of moderate-priced homes. The CRD Origin Destination Household Travel Survey, and the recent study, Housing and Transportation Cost Estimate Study 2020 for the Capital Regional District, show that some people prefer to live in more compact, walkable neighborhoods, where they need fewer vehicles, spend much less on transportation, produce fewer emissions, and exercise more than they would in fringe areas. What do you think about higher density infill residential development in the City of Victoria?

WH: I am for it with several caveats: 1. We need to ensure that we have adequate infrastructure to service our new generation of high-density buildings – water and transportation come to mind. 2. We need to establish decent green spaces within easy reach of these high density corridors so people do have a place to walk around, etc. 3. We need to incorporate the experience of larger urban centers in the design of larger structures, including roof-top gardens, cistern capture of water from roofs and common spaces, etc.

RD: Higher density infill is critical for addressing the community's housing needs.

SL: I support higher density infill. We can build more homes but we can't build more land.

HM: Yes! We absolutely need residential infill in Victoria. Care should be taken around noise and green space to ensure that those living in higher density areas have a good quality of life, but I am a huge fan of spreading out the density of development. Most (it think 65% or more) of the land in Victoria is



reserved for single family dwellings. That does not meet the needs of the current population, nor does it leave room for the growth of our city. There is a lot of research showing that peoples' well being improves when they are within walking distance of their jobs and amenities. With the looming problem of climate change and the projected increase in population here in Victoria, I think residential infill is a necessary thing to encourage.

RV: I am not in favour of higher density infill residential development. The city has tied itself to an ambitious development agenda which it sees as the key to broadening our tax base and revitalizing our city. Vancouver is an example of a sick city. Victoria would do well to learn from the lessons of other cities, including Vancouver. I am in favour of good development. Development should make our neighbourhoods, our communities, and our city better. The proposed development at the Harris Green location or where the Market on Yates stands is an example of a failure of planning. Four towers over 28 stories with no green space. Of the proposed 510 residences, only 23 are being offered as affordable housing. There is no green space proposed, even though the city has an obligation to provide more of it. And we would be adding additional vehicles when we should be looking at ways to tie living in the downtown core to going carless, or car-sharing. This was the failure of Yaletown in Vancouver. You can build all the bike lanes you want and it will not make a difference as long as you keep increasing your carbon footprint.

SH: From talking to hundreds of people in Victoria, I know that people love living in walkable neighbourhoods with access to greenspace and amenities like grocery stores, cafes, and more. We need to increase our housing supply to meet existing and future need. Increasing housing supply doesn't have to come at the expense of neighbourhood character and feel. I think we can find ways to increase our housing supply in ways that are appropriate and suitable to the neighbourhoods and locations.

Encouraging density is one way we can encourage retaining and growing greenspaces as our population increases. And increasing density doesn't have to mean towers in the sky; there are many ways to gently increase density through house conversions, carriage homes, and other creative solutions. This is needed in order to address the "missing middle" of housing forms. We need to see new housing units created in all neighbourhoods in Victoria, and ensure that each neighbourhood has equitable access to key amenities.

**Coordination of Housing and Transportation policies:** In order to better coordinate housing and transportation policies to reduce automobile use, do you support efforts to improve walking and bicycling facilities, public transit services, and complete streets policies (streets designed to accommodate all modes)? Do you support traffic calming and other traffic speed reduction strategies if justified to increase pedestrian and bicyclist safety? If so, how should such policies be tied to housing development in Victoria?

WH: I have and do advocate and integrated transportation plan that includes the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists. I am afraid that as a government town with widespread suburbs, Victoria is going to need some form of rapid transit system to tie the outlying areas to the core without the need of a personal automobile for commute purposes. My view of "traffic calming" is that there should be a real justification for it. It is expensive and I suggest, rarely needful, and it is, frankly, tough enough to get around Victoria by car just as things are.



RD: Yes, I support efforts to improve walking and bicycling facilities, public transit services, and complete streets policies. Yes, I support traffic calming and other traffic speed reduction strategies for the sake of safety. As residential densities and pedestrian and bicycle traffic increase in specific locations, speed reduction strategies should be implemented in those locations.

SL: Yes I support reduction of automobile use. I support parking variances for housing built for non car owners. Push for more car share parking and requirements in development to accommodate future alternative transportation needs. Lowering of the speed limit to reduce need for dedicated bike lanes on some streets.

HM: We need a comprehensive re-zoning plan that looks into building up density in neighbourhoods that are currently reserved for single family dwellings, and taking some of the burden off the downtown core. With more mixed use zoning we could work towards creating a “15 minute city” where housing, jobs, and amenities are within short walking and biking distance. We need to start building more protected and accessible bike and pedestrian paths to encourage more sustainable transportation, and we need to increase public transit services. In addition to this, I would like to look at working towards a long-term plan of investing in rapid transit options for the city. I absolutely support traffic calming and other traffic speed reduction strategies aimed at increasing pedestrian and cyclist safety, and these routes need to be part of our zoning plan to ensure that all neighbourhoods have access.

RV: Yes, I support traffic calming and other speed reducing strategies in areas where they are justified. I think there should be a direct correlation between housing development and strategies that increase pedestrian safety and bicycle safety. I have looked at other larger cities like Oslo, Norway, where parking in the city centre has been banned. It increased pedestrian traffic by 10%. Another study in Toronto and New York identified that cyclists and pedestrians spend 40% more than car drivers. I would work to close Government Street to traffic from May to September and look at the possibility of similar pedestrian seasonal malls in other neighborhoods.

SH: Absolutely. We need to be coordinating our housing and transportation plans and policies to ensure that everyone has safe and accessible ways to get around our city -- creating complete streets that allow all modes to move safely and efficiently -- regardless of which neighbourhood they live in.

Pedestrian improvements are paramount to me, since we all share the experience of navigating sidewalks in our city -- even if another mode of transport is our primary. As a city councillor, I would work to eliminate pedestrian deaths in Victoria by introducing traffic calming measures, lowering speed limits, and improving accessibility for people with disabilities. I want to ensure our sidewalks and pedestrian walking routes are maintained and improved to ensure walking is safe, pleasurable, and can get everyone to where they'd like to go.

I will also work to continue to expand our all ages and abilities biking network, making sure we are applying the most rigorous and up-to-date standards to make them more accessible for more people. I would also commit to making it easier to find covered bike parking.

Encouraging transit ridership is another sensible transportation policy aimed at building a more inclusive



city. I look forward to working to expand the fare-free bus pass program to seniors and people in low-income households with an eventual move to universal, fare-free transit for everyone.

Another option would be to consider removing the requirements for off-street vehicle parking from new and infill developments, particularly in locations within easy walking distance of the frequent transit network. Parking spots add tens of thousands of dollars to housing costs - sometimes over fifty thousand dollars for one spot. If we're serious about reducing the cost of housing and addressing the climate emergency, one of the most straightforward ways to do so is to remove costly parking requirements and ensure future residents have access to a host of transportation options, including bus, walking, bike, carshares, etc

The City's **Official Community Plan** currently provides for high density residential development in some areas downtown and along major transportation corridors. Would you support upzoning these properties to their OCP density targets? Should the city try to capture the associated land value uplift? If so, how?

WH: I do support our official community plan. Frankly, land is such a limited commodity within the confines of Victoria proper that it is difficult to see how the City can provide appropriate green space near the high density areas. I believe it is the duty of the City to ensure that land is developed to its limit. There should be a luxury development penalty imposed by the City if a plan does not utilize all available planned density.

RD: Yes, I support upzoning properties where high density residential developments are built downtown and along major transportation corridors. Yes, the City should capture the associated land value uplift, through property taxes.

SL: Yes I support increased density on major streets and the uplift should be used to build affordable housing within the developments.

HM: This is tricky because I understand the practicality of increasing land values along transportation hubs to increase tax revenues to support the payment of public transportation infrastructure, but at the same time Victoria needs an influx of low and middle income housing. There seems to be fairly conclusive research that this strategy as laid out in the OCP is effective. One of the things I am hesitant about is increasing land values in amenity rich areas and transportation hubs. I would have to do a lot more research on the topic to understand the long term effects on housing affordability in cities that have adopted this model of development, as affordability is one of my top concerns.

RV: No, I am not in favour of upzoning these properties to their OCP targets. I am in favour of gentle density.

SH: Victoria is a growing city, especially in the downtown core, and I think it is important to support rezoning where appropriate so that we can add to our housing supply. One of the outcomes of increasing density is an increase in land value. We need to ensure that this benefits the city and its residents, rather than just the property owners. We can capture this value and ensure it benefits our city through Community Amenity Contributions, which can help add to green spaces and more affordable



housing. Additionally, other tools to capture this value could potentially be offered to municipalities by the province. It's important that the community benefits from the value created by upzoning - but it is equally important that whatever we do, we don't contribute to the misalignment between local incomes and the cost of housing in the community since increased density can also increase housing costs.

### **Any other comments or suggestions on housing affordability in Victoria?**

WH: Low cost affordable housing is the number one issue on Victoria's plate at this time. Council should get out of the zoning business and trust its professionals to deliver good zoning decisions. If those professionals can't deliver sensible zoning decisions, then hire some who can. Council should not be micro-managing zoning.

SL: We need to encourage the construction of basic housing without all the bells and whistles added to the cost purely for aesthetics. No need for granite countertops and hard wood floor. Simple housing sold or rented at affordable prices for those that can't afford bells and whistles.

HM: This was a fantastic questionnaire and let me flush out all my current ideas around housing. I hope to learn a lot more on this subject and look forward to working with community organization GVAT who are dedicated to the critical issue of housing in our city. Thank you!

RV: We cannot begin to have a serious conversation about affordable housing as long as commodification of housing is permitted and encouraged. Housing is a universal human right. When housing is tied to the market and not to income, it creates an untenable situation that has permeated the rental and low-income housing market across the globe. Housing since 1950 has gone up an incredible 400 %, whereas wages have only gone up 100% over the same period of time. These statistics are associated with the housing market in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). I could not find comparable stats for Victoria and Vancouver, but I believe that they are not far behind. The federal government should be encouraged through aggressive lobbying to resume their partnership in building affordable housing. It has failed to meet this challenge for almost 30 years and is an important stakeholder if we truly want to build a livable city for all Victorians. We should be looking at gentle density as an alternative to high density infill.

SH: Building affordable housing isn't something we can do alone. We need to work together, not just as a council, but as a region, in concert with our federal and provincial governments. This is a regional problem that cannot be faced by the city of Victoria alone, we need all partners, levels of government and municipalities working together to solve this wicked problem. I am committed to collaborating with all parties involved to find creative solutions through community consultation and participation. I am a firm believer that if we work together and use evidence-based methods and community driven ideas we can come up with solutions. Everyone deserves safe, suitable, and affordable housing.