

Affordable housing

In the past five years ward 8 has lost 500-1000 affordable housing units to condo conversions and new construction of expensive condos. Hundreds more have seen substantial price hikes, partially due to the 200-250% tax hikes they have faced. There has been no plan in place to replace those units. I would like to see an immediate tax freeze or even a tax reduction on any building that has rental units for less than \$750 a month. For the money spent on the setting up the Brick as an emergency shelter the city could subsidize over 1000 rental units a year keeping those units in the marketplace. We also need to see funds from condo conversions and new buildings diverted into a fund to create or subsidize additional affordable units.

We also need to see the immediate use of existing empty buildings as transitional housing opportunities. We do not need Cadillac solutions. For someone sleeping in a box anything warm, dry, and secure is a marked improvement. Calgary currently has hundreds of empty buildings that could be converted into temporary housing with minimal cost. It is all about inventory and currently city hall has a backlog of development permits. City council needs to make the processing of valid projects a priority so that more housing inventory is on the market which in turn will help costs decrease.

Transportation

A failing of the Go Plan was its designed use to force Calgarians onto transit by sharp increases in downtown parking, a lack of parking at LRT stations, and planned congestion. We deserve a transit system that accommodates both needs and lifestyles. A major concern of inner city residents is that most buses are full when they reach ward 8. We need increased transit circulation within inner city streets. We need buses that only go up 14 street from Sifton Blvd and perhaps North Hill Shopping center. We need a bus that goes up 11th Ave to Sunalta and then back down 12th Ave to the Vic Park. We need a dedicated bus lane to West brook Shopping center until the SW leg of the LRT is in place. By creating community oriented routes we take some pressure off longer routes from the suburbs and provide inner city residents with a valid transit option.

Tax Fairness

I have been a vocal critic of the fair market system for years. City taxes must reflect the cost of service delivery. That is what the money is being collected for. We must have a system that accurately reflects the real cost of growth and urban sprawl. If inner city taxes continue to subsidize new communities than we lose that accurate estimation of cost and are lulled into thinking growth is less costly than it really is. City hall must establish a fairer system and then lobby the provincial government to accept it. Personally I would like to see a tax credit available to inner city residents who by accepting higher community densities make growth less expensive to the city. In the beltline we are making room for an additional 20,000 residents at little or no cost to the city for additional services. A new suburban development with the same population would cost the city millions in additional infrastructure costs.

Environment and Sustainability

Calgary needs to continue leading in this key area. With our variable weather ensuring LEED standards only makes sense. Subsidizing our building's energy consumption with solar panels makes good use of our high amount of sunshine hours. Installing fully accessible green roofs allow us to further insulate and create additional green space for inner city residents. We have not done well with our garbage and recycling initiatives for condo and apartment residents which are making up a growing percentage of our population. With over 40% of Ward 8 residents in multi-family buildings this is a massive amount of waste that is not being properly dealt with and given their concentrated density it seems like a population that could be relatively easily accommodated. We have also failed to properly situate concentrated work and living space around LRT stops which was part of our original plan. This is an ideal situation to couple transportation growth with environmentally friendly communities.

Democratic Processes

I think the civic election funding process should be even more arduous than other levels of government because there is more opportunity for injustices. All campaign funding should be filtered through a single auditing agency before being dispersed to the candidate to ensure that all monies are properly accounted for. Our current system of leaving it up to candidates to file audited statements six months after the fact has proven to be flawed.

To collect money for one purpose (a specific campaign) and then spend it on something else (even another campaign) is fraudulent no matter how noble or innocent. Collecting money for breast cancer and then giving it to the heart and stroke foundation would the contributor's knowledge be illegal. All money collected on a specific campaign must either be spent during the campaign or dispersed immediately after the campaign ends by either returning the excess money or diverting it to some cause – a cause made clear to all donors beforehand. I would also like to see incumbents unable to fund raise until six months before an election. Too many contributors are being compelled to give money to future campaigns so as not to fall out of favour with an incumbent. We need to level the playing field to encourage suitable candidates to come forward.

Steve Chapman M.Sc.
Ward 8 Aldermanic Candidate
Turning Common Sense into Common Practice

214 11th Avenue SE - Suite 212
T2G 0X8
Cell 660-4595
Office 264-6272
Fax 264-6001

www.ward8.com
www.innervoicemagazine.com