

THE 2009 MUNICIPAL ELECTION CANDIDATE SURVEY

Please complete by circling the letter that best represents your opinion and return to the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association office by **October 9, 2009.**

Name: Lenore R. Swystun, Mayoral Candidate

1. The City of Saskatoon is sufficiently promoting the growth and opportunities of the City.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Strongly Agree | c) Disagree ** |
| b) Agree | d) Strongly Disagree |

Additional Comments:

Over the past several years, Saskatoon has benefited from the commodities boom and recognition by ex-pats of its high quality of life. This has increased our rate of population growth, and demand for housing, which has reduced supply and increased costs. This has led to historic highs in housing prices that have pushed certain populations out of the housing market, particularly low to moderate-income households such as first-time home buyers or seniors. One of our most important tasks is to balance the recent rise in housing costs with efforts to retain affordability. The City has attempted to address this issue, but has fallen short. There has been notable work done by a few private developers to build affordable, quality housing, but without more creative incentives at the municipal, provincial and even federal level for private sector investment in affordable housing, we will not be able to make the most of our opportunities for growth. As mayor, I will work closely with the other levels of government to reduce administrative duplication and improve incentives for private sector investment in affordable housing. We need growth that is balanced and sustainable.

2. The City of Saskatoon should review previous growth plans, update projected targets, and provide more serviced land to builders to satisfy housing demand and keep housing affordable.

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|--------------------|----------------------|
| a) Strongly Agree | c) Disagree |
| bl agree ** | d) Strongly Disagree |

Additional Comments:

The supply of land and new housing units is currently greater than the demand. As a result, we have already seen a slight decrease in the cost of housing. In 2007 and 2008, the City serviced and sold substantial holdings of land to meet the demand generated by the economic boom. With the recent downward trend in the market, updates to project targets are necessary. Balance is the key. Having undeveloped serviced land is expensive to the tax payers as is not having enough supply during times of high demand. The City's Future Growth Plan is intended to give certainty and predictability to the suburban residential market up until 2055 (or a population of 400,000). Where plans need to be reviewed is around the accessibility of affordable housing. This would include affordable housing innovations such as a land trust, increased allocation of land sales to the City's affordable housing reserve and the recent direction by the provincial government to remove the education fees from municipal property tax. Saskatoon can participate in ACT (Affordability and Choice Today), which encourages housing affordability and choice through regulatory reform. Saskatoon needs to act now to be able to provide affordable housing options for first-time home buyers, empty nesters and seniors.

3. The City of Saskatoon has been proactive in increasing density within the City's core neighbourhoods.

- a) Strongly Agree
- b) Agree
- c) **Disagree**
- d) Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments:

It has long been my view that for Saskatoon to prosper, its downtown and core areas must be a place where families, seniors and singles want to live, work, shop, and recreate. Increased density is one of the strategies to achieve this outcome. Densification is also a proven means of optimizing existing infrastructure (e.g. sanitary, roads, transit) and is a good investment of tax payers dollars. However, providing a diverse range of housing options for a range of income types is also an important key to successful core area redevelopment. When I was on City Council, I worked to advance the local area planning program, the enterprise zone, secondary suite incentives and research on tax incremental financing to ensure that core areas were receiving their share of reinvestment.

4. The current level of municipal levies, fees and transaction costs charged to builders and developers in the residential construction industry is reasonable.

- a) Strongly Agree
- b) Agree
- c) **Disagree *****
- d) Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments:

Historically, the City has administered municipal levies, fees and transactions on a cost recover basis. Over the past few years, there has been a significant increase to these fees. Increases in fees outside the administrative costs are a burden to future home buyers and efforts are needed to keep these services operating on a cost recover basis.

5. The City of Saskatoon would benefit from partnerships with the industry to develop and service land, design neighbourhoods and to keep levies, fees and transaction costs competitive.

- a) **Strongly Agree ****
- b) Agree
- c) Disagree
- d) Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments:

The City must work in partnership with industry to ensure policy and program decisions (such as neighbourhood designs or transaction costs) are in the best interest of the home buyers and the home builders that supply the housing. There is more room for the housing industry to be engaged by the City in creating innovative neighbourhood design and redesign concepts, including alternative energy systems for neighbourhood. Similarly, at a micro level, there is role for the housing industry in helping design affordable housing programs, trades employment programs and promoting excellence in housing design and quality.

6. The City of Saskatoon should review the currently used mechanisms for assessment of condominium property taxes.

- a) Strongly Agree
- b) **Agree ****
- c) Disagree
- d) Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments:

Recent provincial legislation has removed some of the barriers and costs for condominium developers.

Similar municipal barriers need to also be examined for new condominium development. Overall, barriers for multi-unit dwellings (condos or rental units) need to be reduced. These forms of development are cost effective and servicean efficient housing type that can increase the supply of affordable housing for homeowners and renters alike. Any review of the appropriate level of taxation for condo units must be undertaken within the context that we need to look at a systematic overhauling the City's total taxation structure; this is necessary to maintain not only tax equity but tax efficiency.

7. The City of Saskatoon should refrain from making inclusionary zoning mandatory.

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|--------------------|----------------------|
| a) Strongly Agree | c) Disagree |
| b) Agree ** | d) Strongly Disagree |

Additional Comments:

Since housing affordability is an important issue in Saskatoon, it is important to explore all options. Inclusionary zoning has been used as a tool to prevent income-segregation in other cities, and it has been achieved voluntarily through expedited permits, reduced fees, cash subsidies, or other incentives for developers who voluntarily build affordable housing. Lower-cost units would need to be indistinguishable from market-rate units. There are a number of problems with this approach that need to be resolved, such as allowable appreciation over the long term to retain the affordable character.

8. The City of Saskatoon needs to limit access to city land by speculators and flippers.

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| a) Strongly Agree *** | c) Disagree |
| b) Agree | d) Strongly Disagree |

Additional Comments:

Having people that want to invest and live in Saskatoon should be a priority. Absentee landlords or property owners are a problem, particularly in the core area. Additionally, speculation can increase land values dramatically when supply is limited, and this results in additional costs to developers which are passed on to eventual home buyers. Every effort should be made to minimize speculation.

9. The City of Saskatoon should review architectural controls in neighborhood development due to the impact of affordable housing.

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| a) Strongly Agree | c) Disagree |
| b) Agree *** | d) Strongly Disagree |

Additional Comments:

The appearance of neighbourhoods and any infill development can be a source of both great pride and frustration for residents. While a current emphasis is on meeting demand and maintaining affordability, tasteful and complementary developments are still essential to maintain overall value. As mayor, I will support the use of ACDs and work towards a policy of infill development that may use a zoning overlay to ensure that the pre-existing character of a neighbourhood is retained with any new development, low-cost or not.

10. The City of Saskatoon understands the importance of the residential construction industry's impact on jobs and our economy.

a) Strongly Agree
b) Agree

c) Disagree ***
d) Strongly Disagree

Additional Comments:

The City does not typically report on the number of jobs created through the housing industry in Saskatoon. They do not have an economist or market analyst on staff to ensure trends in this sector are being properly reported and accounted. The City can do more to both understand and communicate the impact of the industry on Saskatoon as a whole. Housing is a major economic generator as well as a social stabilizer. As Mayor, I would pursue creating a regional Housing Sector Table that would be supported by the City administration who in turn would be responsible for collecting market information and developing housing programs.