

Dear Red Deerians

As promised, here are my full answers to the Parkvale, Woodlea, and Waskasoo Forum. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend in person due to being ill, but I prepared these responses so residents could still hear directly from me on each of the questions.

I want to thank the forum hosts for sharing my regrets, and I'm pleased to hear the event went over well.

Sincerely,
Calvin Goulet-Jones

Question 1:

What is your vision for how our city should grow over the next 10–20 years, and how does that fit with the current Municipal Development Plan and other city policies? How would you balance growth with preserving the community's character and heritage?

In the last four years, Red Deer has grown by about 12,000 people. People want to live here, and I don't see that slowing down anytime soon.

Looking 10 or 20 years into the future, one thing is clear: Red Deer is going to keep growing. I'm pro-development — I want to see new homes, new businesses, and new opportunities here. But growth has to make sense. If we don't protect what we already have, we risk losing it.

That means opening up underused land more quickly so we can keep housing supply moving. It means welcoming more competition among developers so projects stay competitive and innovative. And it means stepping back from the City itself trying to be a developer — our role on Council is to set fair rules and expectations, not to compete in the market.

At the same time, we have to protect our existing communities. Places like Parkvale, Waskasoo, and Woodlea are part of Red Deer's history and character. The Municipal Development Plan already recognizes heritage as part of our community identity. I want to build on that with a stronger tool — a Residential Heritage Community designation — perhaps even new through zoning. That would give those neighbourhoods special recognition so that infill and redevelopment have to respect the character of the community they're being built in, instead of replacing it.

So my vision is straightforward: Red Deer will grow, and it should grow. But it has to grow in a way that is stable, competitive, and respectful of the neighbourhoods that already make this city strong.

Question 2:

“In your opinion, should densification and infill in existing neighbourhoods be a core City strategy in addressing housing affordability issues? Why or why not? What other strategies would you support?”

In my opinion, densification and infill in existing neighbourhoods should not be the City’s core strategy for housing affordability.

Why? Because density on its own does not guarantee affordability. The Housing Accelerator Fund doesn’t even mention affordability outcomes — it only measures units. And we can see in Calgary that even with widespread densification, housing prices have not come down and affordability remains difficult, even in the most densely built neighbourhoods.

Now, that being said, I very much support infill projects when they are one home replacing one home, and I’m even willing to explore larger lots having two residences — but only with full consultation of the community. The reality is that we have older housing stock that will eventually need to be replaced. But those projects must respect the character of the neighbourhood — especially in heritage communities.

The other major concern is cost. Densifying existing neighbourhoods isn’t just about building more units — it requires a complete overhaul of sewer, water, and electrical systems that were never designed for that kind of load. Those upgrades would run into tens of millions of dollars. That’s money the City doesn’t have and residents shouldn’t be on the hook for, especially when it doesn’t even deliver affordability in the end.

So what should we do instead? First, look at new neighbourhood structure plans where higher density can be built in from the ground up with proper infrastructure. Second, cut red tape to speed up shovel-ready projects. And third, work with not-for-profits like Habitat for Humanity, where investment directly creates homes that families can actually afford.

Question 3:

If the City continues to pursue residential densification, what is your position on the potential impact, both positive and negative, of densification on existing neighbourhoods and their residents?

When we talk about densification, let’s define our terms. There are really two kinds. One is densification in greenfield development — brand new neighbourhoods where structure plans can be adjusted to allow for more homes. The other is densification in existing communities, where a single home is torn down and replaced with multiple units.

I support looking at structure plans in new communities to find ways to create more housing supply. That's where it makes sense — you can design the infrastructure from the start, build it properly, and make sure the neighbourhood is ready for growth without creating surprises for residents down the road.

But I do not support blanket densification in existing neighbourhoods, as the Housing Accelerator Fund would bring. I feel very protective of our heritage communities — Parkvale was founded in 1905, over 120 years ago. Once that character is gone, there's no reclaiming it.

It must also be noted that the impacts of densification go beyond heritage. When you densify existing neighbourhoods, it's not just replacing one house with another. Every system connected to that home — sewer, water, electrical — has to be reworked. That's not a minor change; it's a complete overhaul. And the cost of those upgrades would run into tens of millions, far more than the City could ever hope to recover.

To me, that's a lose-lose. We don't protect our neighbourhoods, and we add costs we can't afford. So yes, I support smart density where it makes sense in new developments — because it can actually help with affordability — but I will stand against forced densification in the communities Red Deerians have built and cherished for generations.

Question 4:

At times, City Council is asked to decide on development issues that impact neighbourhoods, such as revising bylaws, rezoning land, or providing City Administration with clear directions. These decisions impact numerous stakeholders including local community members, city-wide residents, developers, and Administration itself. As a member of Council, how would you weigh the needs of competing stakeholders?

While the City does have many stakeholders, here's one truth: if I am elected to Council, my primary responsibility is to serve the people of Red Deer.

That does mean ensuring the City functions well, that development is responsible, and that Administration and developers are part of the process. But if I am elected, I am not elected to serve Administration. I am not elected to serve special interests. I am elected to represent residents.

So when competing interests come forward, my job is to listen carefully, to weigh the options openly, and to do it in a public and transparent way. Sometimes there is no perfect answer, but if we begin to rebuild trust by being transparent in showing how decisions were made, then even when people disagree with the outcome, they will at least know they were heard and respected.

At the end of the day, I will always measure decisions against a checklist:

- Does this serve the long-term interests of Red Deerians?
- Have we adequately listened to residents?
- Have we considered the impacts on our neighbourhoods?
- Are we being transparent about the trade-offs?

If the answer to those questions is no, then I won't support it.

Question 5

Many Red Deerians feel that the City's process for making development decisions is increasingly top-down and the public is being sidelined in decisions over land use. How do you think Council can rebuild trust in the development process?

Council can rebuild trust by making communication two-way again — by actually listening to residents before decisions are made, and by being open about what's happening throughout the process.

Right now, too often residents don't get a real chance to share their views. And when they do, they sometimes discover their sensitive personal information has been made public by the City. That's not just frustrating — it's discouraging, and it makes people think twice about ever submitting an opinion again.

We as a City must do better. We need to move away from push surveys designed to drive people toward a pre-set outcome. We need to avoid town halls that aren't truly about listening, but instead leave residents feeling like what seems to have been already decided is simply being presented to them.

Rebuilding trust starts with how Council itself communicates. As councillors, we can't stay silent behind the walls of City Hall. People deserve to know what's being discussed before decisions are made. They deserve clarity, not surprises.

In this campaign, I've been making short videos explaining my platform. If I'm elected, I want to carry that same approach forward — keeping residents informed on upcoming decisions, explaining the choices that were made, and showing how people can be involved.

Trust won't be rebuilt overnight. But once communication is restored and residents see they are truly being heard, that's where rebuilding begins.

Question 6:

Blanket zoning the city to allow up to four units on every residential lot is a requirement for the City to receive a \$12 million federal HAF2 grant. In July, City Council voted to reject this blanket zoning change based on an overwhelming response from the public, but they also decided to advocate with CMHC for the removal of this condition so that the City can receive the \$12 million and carry out the remaining HAF2 initiatives. If CMHC refuses to waive the four units-as-of-right condition, what would your position in Council be going forward? And what are your thoughts on the remaining HAF2 initiatives, including reducing or eliminating off-street parking requirements and making up to 8-units per lot a discretionary use within 800m of Gaetz Avenue?

I was, and remain, firmly against the HAF condition that would force every Red Deer lot to allow four units as-of-right, and I remain opposed to re-zoning communities close to transit for eight units — which include some of our heritage neighbourhoods. Administration has said that even without this blanket rezoning the metrics would still be hit, which leaves me curious about how open and fair the process actually is.

There are a couple of decent ideas within the Housing Accelerator Fund, such as improving efficiency in our planning department and reducing barriers for shovel-ready projects. There's also a piece that could help not-for-profits like Habitat for Humanity, and I would support exploring that.

But here's the bigger picture: a \$12 million cheque from Ottawa is not free money — it comes with strings attached. And if those strings mean Ottawa gets to dictate how Red Deer develops, then that's not a partnership, that's a bribe. Furthermore, even if we did accept it, the cost to upgrade the infrastructure to handle that kind of blanket densification would quickly outstrip the grant. We'd be left with splintered heritage communities and a hefty bill, at a time when residents are already struggling with high taxes.

At the end of the day, development in Red Deer has to reflect Red Deer values. It has to respect the character of our neighbourhoods and the voices of the people who live here. If CMHC refuses to change its conditions, I would rather walk away from the funding than trade away our community's right to decide its own future.