



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Tell us about who you are and why you decided to run for City Council?

My name is Erin Waite. I have a few reasons for running. Over the last few years, I've become increasingly involved in community issues, and regularly sit in on Council meetings and am fascinated by urban issues and urban design. What makes a great city and how does that happen? I also have raised three kids who have left Calgary. Two of the three do not have driver's licenses and probably never will. Their choices for a place to live and how they live are different than mine were at the same age. That also fascinates me and I want to build the city they see as interesting and the place they want to make their home. Finally, Calgary can be an excellent mid-sized city. Let's be that. Liveable, walkable, accessible. We have significant barriers to living well for many populations and we have to change that. I see all of our neighbourhoods being varied and with a mix of populations and people and it is in that mix that we have vibrancy and resilience. We have a ways to go to reflect that image and I want to get after it.

2. Why should Calgarians vote for you?

I bring three important experiences - a corporate career that taught me about finance and financial analysis. It also taught me how to communicate complexity effectively. Our cities and social issues are nothing if not complex! My second career taught me about advocating for and listening to people who do not have the same access and choice as others. I also worked with other levels of government and worked on big systems change. My third area of expertise is board governance, including being on nine Boards of Directors. I was Board Chair for DJD when it funded and built its new building. I understand big systems, governance, what works and what doesn't (and what works on paper but not on the ground) and I know how to bridge to other points of view. I know how to go for the big change or win when that door opens and how to accept small steps of progress when the door is closed. I know how to ask hard questions, analyze critically, and synthesize information so that it can be shared.

3. Calgary's current City Council has a history of erratically delaying the Green Line, and the provincial government continues to threaten the project with further delays. Do you feel the Green Line should be a priority? If so, how would you approach getting the project back on track?

There are two aspects to this that I feel I can bring to the table. One is being able to bring people along through bigger ideas and projects. Helping people see that bigger picture - that long-term outcome - and not get distracted or lost in the weeds, is an important aspect of leadership. It is in consistent messaging and framing information so that people can clearly visualize the outcome. City Councillors need to be this kind of leader and use persuasion with other Councillors and City staff to unify that effort, encourage and cajole to support the project to stay on track. The second piece is appropriate governance. There has been a serious breach in the past with Council approving a strategy or committing to a project and then voting differently thereafter. Adhering to the processes that are in place, preserving the integrity of the Council itself, is what will protect the Green Line and all other City initiatives. While only one voice at Council, I hope to use my knowledge of governance to uphold Council standards and work to ensure a higher functioning Council than we've seen in recent years.

4. Over the past year, Alberta has seen more residents leave for other provinces than the reverse.

A. What do you feel are the main reasons that residents (particularly youth and young adults) are leaving?

As someone with three children who have grown up and left Calgary -- all of whom in careers that allow them to live anywhere -- I have watched this trend and understand through the young people in my life the reasons from their points of view. I feel we've spent time and energy in unproductive ways to help Calgary through the transition that's needed. It was never about attracting Amazon or Google to move to Calgary. I believe Calgary can be a great mid-sized city where many people will choose over other options because of the liveability which means many different things to different people. I feel we have to be better at assessing how well our city works for all kinds of people in all parts of our city and making the improvements that are needed. It's not necessarily the one, big thing that is the answer. But developing our city in smart ways which, to me, means: using available resources well; working well with other levels of government to maximize their contributions and partnerships; being willing to refine and improve, rather than pendulum swings that are costly and different without being better. The basics of municipal government are often the underlying or foundational services that keep a city humming and result in a place where people can build a life. This is a long game, not a short one. If we play it right, people will choose Calgary as their home and businesses will start and thrive here and they will stay because this is where they have a base of employees. We have to recognize that we are in a transition, that transitions are hard, and we have to stay focused on a vision for a great liveable city and work through to the other side. There are specific issues of job opportunities for young people and the erosion of post-secondary investment and these are less in the Municipal domain and more influenced by the provincial government. We have to advocate effectively, adding our voices, to the importance of the provincial government's investment in our future.

B. What would you do to keep young Calgarians from leaving the city?

There are times I believe the City can partner effectively and innovatively to support business and industry opportunities to be created in Calgary. The City has some levers to pull to encourage economic growth. There are other times where the City has to get out of the way and ensure it isn't creating barriers to creativity and ingenuity. Again, I feel these are difficult to get right and there's a challenge to be thoughtful and careful with resources, to be in line with standards and practices that represent important values, but then to also be able to move quickly and change when appropriate. Strategically, all levels of government need to promote new business initiatives that dovetail with reducing climate change and environmental impact. We need to ensure that all of our resources, initiatives and efforts are not only encouraging opportunities to work in Calgary but to work in ways that meet other goals and values that are important to our long-term health. We have to stop agreeing to an immediate need (adding jobs) if we're adding jobs that go against long-term values and goals. Not only do I see that we can create new opportunity with this approach, but I think we'll attract young Calgarians to be part of a city that is making these choices. They'll choose to stay and be part of a city that lives to these standards and ethics.

5. Thousands of Calgary residents are employed through our city's public services with even more relying on them to go about their daily lives.

A. In your view, how important are public services to fostering a successful city?

Public services are hugely valuable to our city. Those who only cite cost and cutting costs are not even making a good business case. Keeping talented people employed to deliver services for our city on behalf of Calgarians is also a direct contribution to the community and economy because these are people who also pay taxes and are contributing citizens. Any discussion about the cost of public services should be reported on a net basis and in full context, rather than citing one person's overtime pay and other misleading statistics.

B. Are there any instances in which public services could be cut in favour of private-public partnerships?

Again, a business argument answers this. If there's a for-profit element added, the partnership costs more money than when a project or services are delivered by public service alone. Until June 30th, I worked in a sector where more than half of the government-contracted service providers are private and that is simply dangerous. There is no question the pursuit of profit negatively influenced decisions about level and quality of care and treatment of employees. The business case answers this question: adding a profit motive does not improve the outcome, it threatens the outcome in terms of cost, quality, or both.

6. Some would argue that the solution to Calgary's economic woes is to cut our way to prosperity. Do you agree with this philosophy? Why or why not?

Cutting costs isn't a plan. Even if costs are cut, there is still a budget to manage, priorities to set and services to deliver. If a platform is defined as cutting costs, that tells me nothing about how anything gets done or what gets done. It's unfortunate that our left and right labels persist because the fact is that in a downturn, we need more investment to get out of it and in better times, we should be setting aside resources for the downturn and investing in the longer-term, bigger initiatives. I also, personally, disagree with cutting corners on aesthetics. When we build infrastructure that we expect to be around for 50 or more years, then let's not compromise on how it looks. We should value having beautiful surroundings. The cutting our way to prosperity advocates often place arts, culture and aesthetics at the top of their list to cut. That's a huge mistake.

7. Urban sprawl has been shown to increase costs for building and maintaining public infrastructure as well as creating more disconnected and exclusionary neighborhoods.

A. What solutions would you present to combat urban sprawl?

Council governance should have this issue covered. When Council agrees to the strategy of refusing to sprawl and then votes against its own decision, governance and processes have broken down. I was at the Council meeting when the 14 communities were added and was appalled that one Council vote contradicted a past vote. This should not even be possible if appropriate governance is in place. Beyond that, it is the job of all Councillors to more fully and effectively communicate context and the relevant context on urban sprawl is that it is hugely costly for all Calgarians. It appears that this message is finally getting through to citizens as this is being heard at the doors. Finally, I do worry about gentrification and our established neighbourhoods becoming to expensive. I would like to see a mechanism for multi-home developments to ensure a portion are sold at below-market rates so that we aren't pricing our established neighbourhoods out of the reach of young people and young families. There are ripple effects to ending urban sprawl and we need to be aware of them and ensure policies and planning take those into account.

B. Do you support the policies laid out in the Guidebook for Guidebook for Local Area Planning?

I do support the Guidebook and while hearing a great deal of negative response at the doors, that response is never based on the actual plan. It's all been based on the misinformation. The principles of the plan are excellent and they benefit residents and developers - providing a clear direction so that all interests are clear on where the community is going. I think with some refinement to the community consultation process, we can get the Guidebook and Local Area Planning back on track and people will, on the whole, see both as good for our City and for all residents.

8. Many Calgary businesses and residents in the downtown core are struggling. How important is a downtown revitalization plan to you? What solutions would you present to get the downtown core thriving again?

I am excited about Downtown being fully in Ward 7 and look forward to being part of its revitalization. I've worked Downtown more than not and shop and recreate Downtown. It's truly my backyard. Our Downtown has a beautiful skyline but is endangered by being so empty and under-utilized. But even in Calgary's 'boom' times, Downtown was underutilized and not terribly vital. It always emptied out at 5 pm. I think we can aim to revitalize in a way that takes us to a far better place than we've ever been. I love the Downtown Strategy and it's had very smart, knowledgeable input. But it can go even further and I'm sure it will. I'd love to see elementary and high schools in the core and ensure condos or retrofitted buildings include family living opportunities. Even East Village, as successful as it is, has almost no living space that works for families. I can imagine the schools added Downtown could be performing arts-based curriculum that then have partnerships with the Folk Festival, ClIFF, DJD, the Glenbow and Arts Commons, as well as with businesses and post-secondary institutions that have a Downtown presence. The inter-relationships of businesses, groups and arts organizations could be quite exciting. I believe the City can support specific initiatives as they've just done with Alice Lam's Good Neighbour store and the way Seattle subsidizes rent for a large second-hand bookstore simply to attract people to hang out downtown. With the pressures on budgets at all levels of government for the next few years, I want to see those smaller projects throughout Downtown that will create interesting places so that people visit continuously. Those small projects can and do 'punch above their weight.' I don't want to only see Glenbow and Arts Commons renovations, but also to have more activity throughout Downtown so that someone who buys a concert ticket spends a day Downtown and stays after the concert. I'm excited to work towards a Downtown that isn't seen as only office buildings and corporate head offices - there has to be much more to it as a community.

9. Calgary's new arena is already over budget before construction has already begun and CMLC has continuously been excluded from critical negotiations. What are your views on the arena deal and are you in favour of moving forward with the project?

I did not support the Arena deal at the time though I was also surprised by the support for it. When it was approved, I was on DJD's Board of Directors and an active volunteer with ClIFF. I wrote a letter and copied my arts organization contacts to express concern that the arena deal is based on the idea of every Calgarian's discretionary spending going in and around the arena. I worry that this creates a reverse ghetto for all arts organizations located outside of East Village. Further, the moment there are cost concerns, as there already are, the placemaking plans that would ensure the arena creates something interesting for most of Calgary who can't afford Flames' tickets will be the first thing cut. We know the hockey focus will be protected, but I suspect all other aspects of the plan will be on the chopping block. In short, I'm worried about the interests of Calgary where the arena is concerned.

10. How do you plan to advance actions in the City of Calgary's White Goose Flying Report: Calls to Action report?

A fellow Ward 7 candidate, Marilyn North Peigan, is the person who has by far the most credibility and important voice on this report. She was directly involved in shaping it and I wasn't. I therefore will defer to her voice and perspective and only say that I support those who presented this report to City Council. From a governance perspective, with the passing of this Report, it is crucial that Council follow through and integrate the recommendations into all relevant processes and planning. Like the Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, these have to be integrated and not put off to the side as a committee or a separate agenda item.

11. The provincial government continues to make cuts that affect the lives of Calgarians for the worse. How would you approach standing up to the province and advocating for the needs of Calgarians?

I have learned about the impact of cuts on social programs and services through 10 years as a leading advocate in Alberta's disability community. The facts are - and a simple business case demonstrates - that consistent supports and services save money and generate outcomes. We have a terrible tendency to have a social issue 'darling' that gets attention, to the exclusion of other issues, and then moving to another issue when we tire of hearing about the first one. This is a terrible approach to entrenched social issues that need a more holistic, inter-related and consistent approach. We actually spend more money that way than we do by being consistent and truly supportive of people. I now have a deeper understanding of social issues and social policy, and I have learned the most important lesson which is to listen to lived experience. I will bring these learnings to my role on Council, to the decisions related to FCSS funding, to social issues and social services, and to the relationship with provincial and federal governments. Finally, I can communicate to people in their terms why social services and programs are important. Whether a business case, pulling on a heart-string, or shaping effective policy (usually all three are needed), it's important to advocate by focusing on getting the right framing of the right information to the right people. I will bring my experience doing this to Council.

12. Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

I know we need the voices of younger people at City Council but we also need people with experience and expertise. I have learned, over time and through different roles and experiences. I believe this has value for City Council. This doesn't replace the need for voices that come from different backgrounds and cultures and age groups. But I do think it's important to include and I feel I can add value because of hard-won lessons and personal development throughout my careers and community involvements, and from living in Ward 7 for +30 years. I feel this brings depth, understanding, and thoughtfulness to the role. I hope my Council peers will find I can support them. Finally, my personal button is ethics and principle. I have lost jobs over taking an ethical stance and I don't regret those choices. I will always make a decision for the public good over personal interest. I will listen, respect and work well with others. But I will also take a stand by myself if required.

13. Are there any websites or social media accounts that you would like to direct Calgary's Future supporters to?

Website: erinwaite.ca

Twitter: [@ErinWaite42](https://twitter.com/ErinWaite42)

Instagram: [erin.waite.ward7](https://www.instagram.com/erin.waite.ward7)

Facebook: [@erinwaiteward7](https://www.facebook.com/erinwaiteward7)