



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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

I can tell you the day - June 2nd, 2020. Nearing the end of the school semester while my students were stuck at home during the first covid shutdown, I ran a digital conference for my students much like many I've done before. Outside of being a Social Studies and English teacher, I am also an Anti-Racism educator. So when George Floyd was killed - my students still reeling from Ahmad Arbery and Breonna Taylor's deaths - I couldn't just let them deal with it alone. This session was built to help them deal with the digital landscape of advocacy, misinformation, and the history necessary to begin understanding the systems that killed George Floyd.

At the end of this session, I held a question and answer session. I was asked a direct question - What do we do now? My answer was simple: Engage. If you want to change the systems at play, you need to learn them, learn how they work, get involved. Naturally, as students do, they pushed back. "What are you doing?" they asked. Put on the spot by the question, I gave a standard answer - I teach. But I knew that answer wasn't enough. It started me on a journey that led me to running for City Council.

I pushed the CBE to create an Anti-Racism Task Force. I assisted BLM NYC in their responses to racist incidents in the Catholic School system. I, as one of the original organizers, helped build the Defund2Fund Coalition that pushed for a true harm reduction strategy through the reallocation of funds from the CPS to what came to be known as the Community Safety Investment Framework.

Through it all it became clear that no matter how much people demand change, without individuals in leadership with a clear vision and values, change will always be slow or stagnant.

So I decided to run so that the next time people demand change, there is someone on the inside ready to see that change through.

2. Why should Calgarians vote for you?

Calgary deserves a leader who understands the connection between the issues that are facing Calgarians. That means recognizing the significant intersections between affordable housing, the opioid crisis, climate change, community investment, smart contextual development and density, the downtown strategy, and the diversification of our economy. Seeing these intersections are necessary to approaching and leading Calgary through the challenges it will face in the days after the October Election.

Seeing the landscape is not enough though, it is about the values that form the foundation of leadership that should inform Calgarians on who to vote for. For me, I lead with compassion and empathy, and an endless pursuit of equity. My values are a product of the lived experiences that brought me to Calgary. I grew up in affordable housing, took the bus most of my life, my mother was an addictions counsellor, my father a social worker, I've seen the inside of most of the systems built to help our citizens. In addition to that, I have spent the last 5 years teaching which has only further instilled my belief that what we leave behind for our next generation must guide our leadership.

I bring these qualities to this campaign, and I believe Calgarians deserve someone who will demand more from our council - demand more from them self.

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?

The Green Line is definitely a priority. The significance of the Green Line must be spoken about beyond just the cost. The Green Line is a long term investment in a greener, more accessible, equitable and connected city.

My approach to the Green Line is about transparency and coalition building. In light of a combative provincial government, I believe that the only way to truly create the change necessary is to activate the public to demand what is best for our city. This means gathering the many stakeholders who would be well served by the Green Line to speak out in favour of it such as community associations, environmental organizations, youth groups, education advocates, equity advocates, and so on.

Politics have often been gate kept, opting for leaders to work behind closed doors and often in contravention of public will, my strategy is to bring it absolutely into the public. Through coalitions, engagement, and education it becomes possible to bring the public into significant decisions.

In addition to this, there must be a true sense of collaboration that will bring the two orders of government to the table and express a vision for Calgary supported by evidence. The combination of these two forces - evidence based outcomes with public education - we can truly see this deal done.

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?

Calgary has not been built for everyone. It was built around a lifestyle that is no longer dominating this city. We do not have the oil boom to fall back on. We are not the headquarter capitol we thought we would be. The province has failed to invest in our post-secondary educational facilities. Our neighbourhoods are not functional for every stage of living. We have a racism problem (as do most cities) that has been unaddressed. We have an environmental sustainability problem. We have an underdeveloped arts and culture scene.

People can work anywhere, but what makes people want to live somewhere? It is the life offered to them. Calgary once offered a prosperous life in the oil and gas industry and we bet big on it. The time is now to bet big on something else.

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

When we look at the values that underpin a future forward city, it is our commitment to equity and inclusion that will lead us in the building of a city that will keep people here and attract even more. People will forever be our biggest asset, so it is when we invest in that asset that we will begin the work of changing the tide of Calgarians, especially young Calgarians, leaving the city.

That investment takes the form of complete and connected communities where people can afford to live where they choose, a vibrant arts and cultural scene that provides substance to fill people's lives, partnering with PSE to support and collaborate each other to further invest in our people, and to be a leader on the portfolios that the youth have demanded action on - Dismantling discriminatory systems, taking action on the opioid crisis, and making real headway toward our environmental sustainability goals.

These may be lofty actions, but they are necessary.

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?

They are integral to fostering a successful city. Public services are a part of the guarantee of an accessible city. Of course, many politicians will discuss the potential savings of a private industry supplying public services, but history tells a story where private industry will always value profit over people. But to truly foster a successful city, we need the opposite mindset, people over profit.

Supporting that precedent, people first, is exactly what the public service sector does. I’ll support that any day.

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

Not really. Historically, my experience with the private industry is one of instability and inequity. Often, that instability and inequity is the result of austerity measures rather than efficiencies. The public sector may not always be efficient, but the solution to that is not abandoning the public sector, but to pursue efficiencies in it. This must be done with an eye to improving public services, but never leaving them behind.

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?

Austerity is not the way forward. The irony in the “cut our way to prosperity” approach is that it does nothing more than limit the services that make a city prosperous. What might end up lowering your property taxes this year (and likely not even that) will limit the accessibility that makes this city livable and somewhere to thrive.

Prosperity cannot be found by penny pinching, but rather, investing in people. It might sound repetitive from my previous answer, but they’re all connected.

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?

An early solution is to not vote for anymore neighbourhoods and instead reinvest in our established communities.

A secondary solution is to utilize our offsite levy mechanisms to guarantee that if I am somehow outvoted, then at least the infrastructure cost is carried by the developers. In addition to this, the use of municipal powers to outline a service coverage area to offer some cost guarantees is another worth exploring.

A by proxy solution is to make sure there are a diversity of housing options in every community so that the need for expansion is mitigated. To do so, we would need to continue to offer smart development and density that will alter how we view life and living in Calgary.

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

Yes, I do. I could elaborate, but I feel like a hard yes is necessary.

However, I did notice the Guide for LAP’s missed out on opportunities to explore environmental guarantees and housing affordability policies such as density bonusing and inclusionary housing policies.

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?

The downtown strategy is the corner stone to our shifting city. The opportunities that exist in office conversions are so valuable. In addition to this, the downtown recovery is necessary to reduce the tax burden on Calgary communities and businesses. So much of our economic recovery has been about finding efficiencies in the public service without a true investment in our city. One cannot exist without the other. If we really want to support our city, we need the beating heart of it to thrive.

We need to get people downtown with more accessible infrastructure. We need to invest in alternative modes of travel to bring some bustling energy to downtown. We need a true cultural core, not just a business one. We need to create more intentional spaces for people.

Where people go, business will follow. We need to give people a life downtown.

9. Calgary's new arena is already over budget before construction has 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?

To sum: Not a single dollar more should go to this deal. The lack of transparency in the days leading up to passing the deal meant that the public was never given a full opportunity to vet the details of the deal. This is how we get \$68 Million parking lot agreements. The current attempt to remove CMLC as management of the deal is extremely questionable considering their success leading some of our most modern additions to the city, such as the Central Library. The removal of CMLC is nothing more than an attempt at limiting transparent oversight on an already murky deal.

I'm under the impression that we do not have a mechanism to get out of the deal, however, we can deny further funds from the public coffer. If we cannot recoup the money spent, we can at least protect ourselves from further subsidy.

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

One of the easiest, and yet incomplete calls to action, would be seeing action on #57 - public sector education on Indigenous issues, intercultural competency, conflict resolution...

This is work that should be implemented immediately after Oct 18.

The direct transition of this work would be the development of localized educational resources made available to the school boards as well as City Hall School.

Another, more abstract but necessary solution that fits under stream F would be a suite of culturally responsive harm reduction strategies including culturally responsive housing options, outreach programs, alternative response models, and data collection to evaluate the impact our policies have on our Indigenous populations alongside sharing said data with the TRC.

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?

Most people do not know the details of what is going on in politics. I believe I mentioned somewhere before that politics are often full of gatekeepers. It would be my job to break that down. However, I must admit that

we are currently in a different political climate than usual as populism has created an even more combative set of government relationships. The nature of our current political climate may be impossible to truly overcome. To stand on my values and speak out against the problematic policies of our provincial government might limit my ability to govern, but might improve my ability to lead and be a voice for our citizens. The compromise of values in the face of governance is often at the heart of a stagnant society.

I believe in standing by my values. I have seen people try and get a win rather than doing the right thing, and I've seen this city stand still because of it. So here I am, running for City Council, promising to respect the job, do the work, and standing on my values.

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

I feel like I may have written a lot in the previous questions. I'll save you one by being concise here.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this process.

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

www.courtneywalcott.com

Twitter: @CwalcottYYc

Instagram: @CourtneyWalcott

Facebook: Courtney Walcott for Ward 8