

Inner City Coalition of Calgary Society

Candidate Survey

Ward 8 Candidate John Mar's Responses:

1. ***“We believe the City must increase its options for solutions to the housing squeeze”***

Yes I agree with this statement.

“What policy changes or practical action such as leveraging existing funding can you initiate for Council to address this issue in the long and the short term?”

If elected I will propose that the City place a cap on market value assessments for those retired seniors who are facing escalating property taxes for on their homes.

I believe that we have to look at what has worked in other jurisdictions like the San Francisco model which I have studied such as inclusive zoning and other policies that will encourage developers to include an affordable housing component to all new developments.

The residents of Ward 8 have been clear on the issue of secondary suites- we need to permit secondary suites in order to tackle head on the lack of affordable rental space. Further I believe that as a City we must work with the Province, developers and other stakeholders in considering forms of rent protection which will shield renters from exorbitant and sudden rent increases while ensuring that landlords can keep up with rapidly rising operating costs.

I am currently working on a plan with representatives of the Mustard Seed, a group of developers, and other stakeholders to examine alternatives for the proposed expansion of the Mustard Seed at its current location. The goal of the project is to provide much needed “transitional housing” for the working poor as opposed to creating another “drop in centre”. I am proud to have spearheaded this group that is developing solutions to the affordable housing crisis facing our city.

2. “We believe the City must balance its plan for growth in all quadrants of the City. Additional employment centres and localised community services will help mobility systems become more efficient and effective”

Yes, I agree with this statement.

“Are you willing to take a leadership role and implement the Calgary Transportation Plan (GoPlan) and its principles of balance growth strategy?”

We need to reexamine the GoPlan and adjust it to our current needs.

Everyone uses Calgary’s downtown whether it is for work or play, and it is also a great place to live. But we need a plan for Inner City infrastructure development to reflect the challenges of being “everybody’s Ward”.

We need a plan to ensure that Calgary’s core is accessible for the residents and businesses who have made Ward 8 their home. We need to reduce traffic, deal with parking challenges, increase access to transit services, and encourage Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) so that we build a Calgary that is more livable, holistic and environmentally responsible.

We need to expand the LRT system and look at ways we can get more trains on the tracks.

Infrastructure in our City’s core is aging and has not been a priority of City Council. Infrastructure is more than just roads and transportation; it is the foundation of our City. Ward 8 needs a responsive Alderman with a plan to address our Inner City needs.

3. "We believe the current system is unfair to a wide range of Calgarians and has negative planning implications for the city as a whole."

Yes there are changes required to the tax system.

"What policy initiatives would you implement to mitigate the imbalances of Market Value Assessment and ensure taxation fairness?"

Overall I believe that all levels of government should always be examining ways that we can reduce taxes and user fees for our citizens.

Currently our Ward generates approximately 30% of the City's revenue but only 5% of City spending is re-invested in Ward 8. Given the issues facing Ward 8, that is absolutely unacceptable. It is time for Ward 8's voice to be heard at City Council.

More of the tax revenues generated by Ward 8 must be reinvested into the core to tackle issues of affordable housing, crime (we need 100 new officers dedicated to the core), and infrastructure.

I am calling for a cap on property tax increase as a result of Market Value Assessments for seniors who live in Ward 8.

4. "We believe that better planning tools such as land use building regulations, and new engineering standards are required for an ecologically sustainable future"

Yes.

"As a municipal leader, what types of policy have you or would you initiate to reduce our environmental impact and maintain our quality of life?"

We need to make environmental responsibility easier for our citizens. This can be done by providing incentives to individuals and businesses to take greener steps.

We need to encourage Transportation Orientated Development (TOD) and ensure that new developments consider local access to services as a part of their projects.

Calgary must look at ways to encourage development that increases density and reduces the rapid expansion of our ecological footprint.

Environmental sustainability and impact needs to be a consideration in evaluating new development projects.

5. “We believe that the financing of election campaigns at the municipal level should be subject to the same financial scrutiny of federal and provincial elections”

Yes I believe that municipal campaigns should have greater scrutiny however there are significant differences between the federal and provincial systems.

“What election financing policies would you champion to provide limits checks and balances against actual or perceived preferential treatment?”

I would like to see greater transparency when it comes to municipal election financing. In my opinion that would include donation limits for individuals and corporations, and full disclosure of campaign donations.

That is why I have voluntarily limited donations to my campaign to a maximum of \$5000 and will be disclosing a list of donors.

I also believe that council should examine if a lobbyist registry is needed at the municipal level.

