



**Manitoba Home
Builders' Association**

2018 Winnipeg Municipal Election Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Micheal Wiens:

As a candidate in this year's municipal election, your opinion and position on issues important to our sector is highly valued. The MHBA asks that you please answer this brief questionnaire on the following four important topics:

1) Increasing Costs and Fees

According to Statistics Canada, residential construction costs in Winnipeg have risen over 14 per cent, more than double the national average, since the beginning of 2017. Between January 1st and March 31st, 2018, the cost of building or renovating a home in Winnipeg has shot up 7.3 per cent. To put that in comparison, the city with the next highest increase in construction costs during that time was Vancouver at 2.2 per cent.

During this same time, builders in Winnipeg saw increases on numerous permits and fees issued by the City of Winnipeg, including a 5% increase to the City's Impact Fee. These fee increases, while generating increased revenue for the City, are compounding other increasing construction costs and have negatively impacted the affordability of all housing – not just new homes - across Winnipeg.

What is your plan to stem increasing fees being charged to new and existing home owners in Winnipeg?

The new impact fee is nothing more than a desperate tax grab in my opinion. I would work to eliminate this new tax.

I would like to see a consolidated effort on the entire city to re-develop neighborhoods that are under-valued. When we have residential properties that are in poor states of condition and or are considered old housing stock that fail to meet current building codes we need a master plan to update these areas. This will not happen over night and I consider this a legacy project that will outlast the life cycle of an elected councilor. In the Mynarski ward we have numerous examples of this type of housing and I feel that this should be given equal priority will new construction.

2) Infill Strategy

The City of Winnipeg's implementation action plan for the Residential Infill Strategy has been developed and is currently being presented for public feedback. The MHBA supports an active and thriving infill housing market. More and more, the City of Winnipeg will rely on infill housing to sustain its long-term population growth.

What is your plan to help promote infill housing development and to create more certainty around investing in infill housing?

I have a great deal of concern with the current infill strategy. I have talked to many residents of the ward and where the city is pushing for density, but they are ignoring the will of the neighborhood and sub dividing 50 ft lots and placing homes that do NOT suit the neighborhood. I have been told by residents that the current councilor is of no help to address this concern when a variance is being heard at a committee meeting. **I will always support the will of the neighborhood over the planning department.** In under valued properties I would support the removal of permit fees and even have a municipal tax exemption for no longer than 60 months to promote accelerated development in undervalued properties. This program would increase the value of the housing stock and would apply to construction of 250,000. And up. The original property would have to have a value of half or less than the new construction. At the end of the 60 month tax free exemption the property would be assessed as new construction and be taxed accordingly. I feel that this approach will provide an opportunity to the construction market to provide new single family dwellings as well as replace our ever aging housing stock in our older neighborhoods.

3) Development Approvals

Timing is a critically important component in securing private investment for major development projects that help provide Winnipeg with a consistent and reliable supply of housing. Winnipeg's development approval process can be an onerous one and added delays can potentially put investment at risk. Streamlining this process, which involves multiple City departments, would significantly help both Winnipeg's builders and land developers.

How would you support improving the development approval process?

I used to work for a land developer and I have installed the primary infrastructure in many developments. River Park South phases 1 thru 3, Normand Park, Whyte Ridge, and Island Lakes to name but a few. What I see as a requirement is a need to amalgamate certain departments to provide the efficiency that you are looking for. What I feel that needs to be addressed by the development process is to be clear with land developers as to the final product when the city assumes it into the municipality. I feel that the developer must provide sufficient green space in their rendering as well providing a "Shell community center building" built at their expense as part of the development agreement. The finishing appointments would be fulfilled by the city and local residents to suit the requirements of the neighborhood. Neighborhood access would be considered as part of the overall project as it impacts the adjoining road infrastructure. These are a few concerns that I feel are not being addressed by the current council, I would be active to change it for the better.

4) Our Winnipeg Review – Plan for Growth

Our Winnipeg is the City's road map and vision for future growth, planning and development for the next 25 years. It sets out the goals, policies and guidelines intended to direct all physical, social, environmental, and economic development in Winnipeg, now and into the future. A stable and predictable residential housing supply is critical to ensure that Winnipeg is able to grow in a sustainable way.

What are your thoughts on how Our Winnipeg can be a tool for residential growth?

I believe the plans that I have mentioned in the other parts of this survey have addressed the need for growth in our city. In new developments we must have a variety of housing stock available. Multi family structures, and single family homes with adequate lot sizes to ensure that we have comfortable separation between dwellings. In high density construction there must be public green space as part of the development. I will not accept just building boxes for people to live in. I grew up in a neighborhood, I want the same for all residents of this city. If you build pleasant neighborhoods and provide housing for all fiscal demographics you will achieve the goals you are seeking as developers. Successful projects will create the opportunities for your industry to be requested to build additional projects. It is the role of council

Please provide your response to our questions via email to lmcinnes@homebuilders.mb.ca by **4:30 pm, October 12, 2018**.

Your responses will be shared with MHBA members through our e-newsletter on October 16, 2018 and will also be posted on the MHBA website.

Building Excellence since 1937

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