

DRAYSON NETZELWOOD – Council Candidate

1. Community priorities and leadership

As a businessman, commercial appraiser, and owner of several downtown commercial buildings, I see three major issues facing Salmon Arm: (1) the cost of essential infrastructure and the pressure it places on property taxes; (2) our tourist and infrastructure vulnerability to wildfire and smoke; and (3) downtown public safety.

Council must scrutinize major projects, plan for their full costs, and build reserves so necessary work does not suddenly become a knee-jerk tax emergency. It must also act on wildfire preparedness and provide dependable, consistent, and effective bylaw enforcement while working with the RCMP and the Province on matters within their responsibilities.

By the end of the term, I want to see a credible, funded infrastructure plan that avoids unnecessary pressure on property taxes, measurable progress on wildfire resilience, and a beautiful, clean downtown where residents, visitors and businesses feel safe.

2. Year-round economic vitality and resilience

Salmon Arm gets a welcome boost from summer visitors, but many businesses cannot rely on tourism alone. A stronger year-round economy starts with more local jobs and paycheques. I would prioritize practical servicing plans and growth opportunity within our industrial lands, work with employers to identify barriers to expansion, and make permits more predictable and obtainable so businesses can invest and hire here.

The City should also work with the Chamber, Downtown Salmon Arm, event organizers and local businesses to support attractions and events in the spring, fall and winter. We should look at ways that public facilities and events can remain usable during smoky periods. By the end of the term, I want to see an increase in industrial and business investment, more off-season economic activity, and a community better prepared even when wildfire resources are stretched thin.

3. Growing and protecting our downtown

My vision is a downtown with thriving businesses, more residents living within walking distance of shops and services, and new buildings that add to the character our city already possesses. I want to incentivize property investors to pursue worthwhile projects that face fewer red tape and encourage them to employ attractive designs and materials that last. That means clear design standards, efficient permit reviews, and a fresh look at the City's existing downtown tax exemption program. Any incentive should have a clear public benefit and a known cost.

I would also support thoughtful housing above and alongside commercial spaces, while ensuring that access, servicing and the pedestrian experience keep pace. Growth should make downtown more useful and more beautiful, with buildings meant to last for more than just a single generation.

4. Infrastructure, economic growth, and community attractions

I would start with the budget and the condition of what we already own. Essential water, sewer, roads and other infrastructure need to be maintained and renewed before deferred work becomes more expensive. Major proposals should be tested against their lifetime costs, realistic alternatives and the benefit residents will receive.

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Beautifying Salmon Arm and maintaining its infrastructure are not mutually exclusive. Well-kept streets, landscaping, parks and public spaces improve daily life and help businesses attract customers. I would advance necessary infrastructure work alongside modest, high-impact improvements to the places residents and visitors use most.

To limit tax pressure, I would seek savings in lower-priority spending, phase projects where practical, pursue grants and partnerships, and consider sponsorship or crowdfunding for suitable amenities. Essential infrastructure, however, needs a dependable funding plan.

5. A safe, welcoming, and compassionate downtown

Compassion and accountability belong together. People facing poverty, mental illness or addiction need appropriate help, but businesses, residents and visitors also deserve sidewalks and public spaces they can use safely. These are NOT mutually exclusively endeavours. The City should enforce its street solicitation and other applicable bylaws consistently, without double standards, and maintain a dependable bylaw presence where problems are recurring.

BC's temporary drug decriminalization exemption has ended. I would make downtown public safety a clear priority in the City's discussions with the RCMP, while respecting that police make operational enforcement decisions. Council should also double down on efforts to press the Province for accessible detox, treatment, recovery and mental health services, and coordinate with local providers so people can be directed toward help.

As a father of six, I know that caring for someone includes both offering help and expecting responsibility. Our approach downtown should reflect both.