

MARIANNE VANBUSKIRK – Council Candidate

Marianne VanBuskirk's responses to the 2026 Municipal Election Candidate Questions:

1. Community Priorities and Leadership

I feel that the three most significant issues facing Salmon Arm in the next four years are: Housing Affordability; Asset Management; Wildfire Resilience and Climate Preparedness. As for the role of City Council, the Council should gather feedback from citizens, City Staff, local businesses, Rightsholders, and special community groups to develop partnerships to help facilitate in these areas by removing municipal barriers to viable housing projects and modernizing land-use regulations. A key resource is executing the comprehensive Zoning Bylaw Review to align zoning codes directly with the 2025 Official Community Plan and the City's Strategic Plan. By the end of the 4-year term, I hope to see the following:

- **Housing:** Streamlined approvals for purpose-oriented rentals and multi-family developments
- **Asset Management** (Infrastructure): Completion of targeted upgrades identified under the federally and provincially funded **Long-Term Financial Plan for Asset Management**.
- **Wildfire & Climate:** Full implementation of the new **Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP)** and securing a community forest agreement in partnership with local First Nations, such as the Neskonlith and Adams Lake Indian Bands. (I do dedicate a section on Climate Change on my webpage at <https://www.mariannevanbuskirk.ca/>)

2. Year-round Economic Vitality and Resilience

I feel that as City Councillors we should protect local businesses against wildfire impacts by expanding shoulder-season and winter activities. This could be achieved by strengthening core municipal funding and policies by consulting with **SAEDS (Salmon Arm Economic Development Society)**. Specifically, some ideas might include:

- **Tech and Innovation Support - The Salmon Arm Innovation Centre** provides co-working space to support the City's growing sector of high-tech businesses - so why not research some ways to see how SAIC can support these firms, even in the off-season?
- **Community Campus** - we could plan for a **downtown community campus** to focus on training and skills to foster a year-round student population (adult and youth) to directly sustain downtown commerce.
- **Agriculture and Food Security** - we should continue to promote **Zest Commercial Food Hub** and also perhaps broaden the plan to align with Food and Urban Agricultural Plans to assist such businesses which bridge agriculture with food production, markets, and more.
- **Tourism and Event Grants** - we should collaborate with local hospitality businesses and work with the **MRDT (Municipal and Regional District Tax)** program to improve marketing campaigns during Spring, Winter, and Autumn months. The MRDT via SAEDS was instrumental in assisting us at the Salmon Arm Tennis Club to encourage the tourists to

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frequent local businesses while they were here. (I am on the tennis club's board of directors as Vice-President this year.)

3. Growing and Protecting our Downtown

I feel that we can protect Salmon Arm's downtown AND uptown, by: improving on building relationships with our local businesses; supporting high-density city housing; and improving active transportation. I realize that this questionnaire comes from Downtown Salmon Arm - but we cannot forget about our Uptown businesses, or satellite ones such as Westgate or Smart Centre and more.

- **Local Business Relationships** - continue events such as SAEDS business walks program to gather data from core business owners. Boots-on-the-ground visits to local businesses are a must in any city. There should be some tax incentive structures to stay competitive with the larger cities like Vernon, Kamloops, and Kelowna. Thinking about how to retain patrons, customers, and clients is key!
- **High-Density Housing** - continue to support rentals and owned housing to be near the core city centres. I see this happening now, but we will need to always be thinking about development to support local businesses.
- **Active Transportation** - we must make easy access to business as much as possible without requiring the use of automobiles since parking is rather limited. I have served on the Active Transportation Advisory Committee for 8 years and would like to continue to support this committee as a Council member. We must link residential neighborhoods directly to local businesses by investing in multi-use pathways, pedestrian and bike corridors, and more.

4. Infrastructure, Economic Growth, and Community Attractions

I need to be able to support balanced priorities, so creating a strong economy and high quality of life will require an approach that is balanced so that the City's infrastructure can support a dual purpose. Capital spending can maintain the essentials (water, utilities, roads) but dipping into those extra funds for unique projects like creating vibrant and accessible spaces will be key. So, again, my focus would be on:

- **Expanding Active Transportation Networks** - as mentioned above
- **Looking at Climate-Resilient Public Spaces** - supporting multi-use indoor facilities, cooling areas - anything to keep visitors and residents coming back again and again.
- **Downtown Beautification Projects** - these projects must continue and include: accessible and inclusive access, modern public lighting, sidewalk maintenance, good signage to promote local businesses.

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5. A Safe, Welcoming, and Compassionate Downtown

A healthy tax base relies on safe, predictable commercial corridors, which makes enforcement tools like the Street Solicitation Prevention Bylaw (Bylaw 4273) necessary to prevent public nuisances and preserve downtown vitality. However, bylaw enforcement cannot act in isolation; it must be paired with compassionate, proactive partnerships that address the root causes of homelessness, poverty, and mental health challenges. My actions should include:

- **Direct Support and Resources for Merchants** - there is available literature and resources to assist staff and workers with protocols for dealing with mental health support, de-escalation, and tapping into social service interventions.
- **Collaboration with Support Networks** - I can help to advocate for strengthened partnerships with the Salmon Arm RCMP, Interior Health, Canadian Mental Health Association, Bylaw Services and more. We definitely would require a health-led response, but this cannot be achieved by business owners alone - they need full support.
- **Advocacy** - Using my eight years of collaborative public service, I will work to ensure Council lobbies senior levels of government for long-term investments in local complex care housing, mental health resources, and local addiction treatment services. This shifts the financial and social burden away from downtown business owners and our municipal tax base.