

ROBIN WIENS – Council Candidate

To Downtown Business Improvement Association:

I remember when we moved to Salmon Arm twenty-four years ago, how quiet the downtown core was. The conversation at the time was all about how to draw people, and business back to the core after a long and steady decline. It has been such a pleasure to see how successful our city has been getting traffic back into the heart of the city. We have even gotten to the point where parking is a concern. What a positive problem to have created.

One of the most talked about issues in this election cycle amongst the candidates revolves around recreational facilities. That is an issue that concerns me significantly (Q1 and Q4). It is frustrating that facility enhancement projects have not been prioritized. It is time for our city to be bold. I recognize the financial difficulty of the present time; however, I would like to consider how projects could be completed rather than viewed through a limited mindset. Perhaps with coordination of the regional district, private enterprise, multiple user groups, grant writing, and a coordinated effort, a palatable proposal could be presented to the voter base through a referendum or similar democratic decision-making process. The regional district has much greater borrowing capacity than the city, and by involving them, the user tax base grows from about 18,000 to 30,000 which distributes the cost across a greater group of users. The sewage treatment plant is a necessary cost that must be done (Q1). Therefore, to accomplish both projects, the recreational facilities will require significant planning, coordination, enfranchisement, grant writing, and boldness. Enhanced recreational facilities, will attract and retain local shoppers.

The other two prominent issues (Q1 and Q2 and Q4) for me are developing the local economy and climate preparedness. In the next four years I would like our city to intentionally look for ways to enhance business in the industrial park. The downtown business improvement association has brought significant vitality to the downtown core; perhaps we need a similar association for the industrial park. Industrial progress would bring quality jobs to the area, enhance the community corporate tax base and stabilize the year-round economic outlook in the area, which means more consistent year-round shoppers downtown. As far as climate action and disaster preparedness goes, I want the city to prepare for and intentionally mitigate the likelihood of climate disaster. Climate disasters are not only devastating on individuals but also on local businesses. Intentional climate work will have long term positive stabilizing implications for the downtown core. Regular smoke in the summer puts a damper on the downtown core business in the summer; a climate disaster could bring irrecoverable economic devastation.

Given how much work has gone into the development of the downtown Salmon Arm over the years, I feel that it is important to keep the momentum going forward. I support all the downtown activities (Q3) that are happening and would be open to any new ideas that come

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up. The vitality of the downtown core is healthy, especially in the summer; with ongoing intentionality, the level of vitality could extend throughout the year.

Just as important as keeping the activities going is having the foot traffic feel safe as they shop. Bylaw 4273 (Q5) seeks to create a sense of safety downtown by preventing, to a large degree, the solicitation in the area. Although controversial at the time it was passed, I see this bylaw as a necessary step to keep our downtown core vibrant. By no means do I think that bylaw 4273 addresses the greater homelessness issue, but it does provide enforcement options to the city. The unhoused members of our community are valuable human beings. It is important that the city treats them with dignity by providing supports for them such as shelters, affordable housing units, mental and physical health supports, and opportunities to work themselves out of their struggles as they are ready and able. Support for the marginalized community, as necessary as they are, should not come at the expense of the vitality of the downtown core.

The Salmon Arm downtown core is the heart of the city. It is so important to guard and intentionally promote the resource for the long term development of the city.

Robin Wiens