

SHELLEY DESAUTELS – Council Candidate

1. Community priorities and leadership

Over the next four years, I think three of the biggest challenges Salmon Arm will face are growth and infrastructure capacity, housing/homelessness and community safety, and the increasing fiscal pressure of trying to fund everything the community needs.

Growth and infrastructure: We have already made a commitment for more housing which means that Salmon Arm is going to inevitably grow which means roads, water, wastewater, transportation, recreation and other services all need to keep pace. My approach would be to understand what is already at capacity, what projects are already committed, and where we need to be planning ahead instead of reacting later. I would also like to keep the conversation around future recreation moving, while looking realistically at cost, partnerships and funding opportunities.

Housing, homelessness and community safety: I've grouped these together because I don't think they can really be dealt with separately. Housing alone is not the answer for everyone, and enforcement alone is not the answer either. I would like to see stronger coordination with frontline organizations, a better understanding of where the actual gaps are, and stronger advocacy to the Province where mental health, addictions, complex care and housing supports fall outside municipal jurisdiction.

Fiscal pressure and prioritization: The next Council is going to have to make some difficult choices about infrastructure, services and amenities while also considering affordability for taxpayers. For me, this means really understanding what we need to do, what we would like to do, what can be phased, and what gives the community the best long-term value.

By the end of the term, I would hope residents can see real progress on major infrastructure, a more coordinated approach to homelessness and supports, and clearer, more transparent decision-making around what the City can realistically afford and prioritize.

2. Year-round economic vitality and resilience

I don't think the City can simply decide that we are going to have a stronger year-round economy and make that happen. There are a lot of pieces involved, and I would want to start by understanding where the actual gaps are and talking to the businesses and organizations already doing this work.

I do think there is a role for the City in making Salmon Arm a place where people want to visit, spend time and invest throughout the year. That could mean looking at things like recreation and community amenities, events outside of the summer season, infrastructure, transportation, public spaces and how easy it is for businesses to start, expand or invest here. This also comes by understanding what is already being done by organizations such as Downtown Salmon Arm and SAEDS before deciding the City needs to create something new. I would rather strengthen partnerships and fill gaps than duplicate work that is already happening.

We have seen year after year with wildfire smoke and unpredictable summers that relying heavily on one season leaves businesses vulnerable, it is a conversation that I have heard many times. I don't know that there is one solution to that, but I think Council should be willing to ask what would bring people here in November, February or April, and what would make residents want to spend more of their time and

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money here throughout the year instead of travelling outside of our community during the holiday season.

For me, it would be about listening first, understanding what is working and what is missing, and then looking at where the City can realistically help.

3. Growing and protecting our downtown

We own a business downtown, so I see some of these challenges from that side too. I think downtown already has some great businesses, but I would also like to see us continue to build a broader mix of shops and experiences that give people more reasons to come downtown and stay for a while.

I don't think that means trying to dictate what kinds of businesses should open. It means looking at how the City can make downtown an attractive place to invest, making development and business processes clear, and supporting the kind of environment where a wider variety of businesses can succeed.

More housing downtown can help with that too, because more people living nearby means more year-round customers. At the same time, I think we need to protect the character, walkability and public spaces that make downtown feel like Salmon Arm.

For me, the goal is not to change everything that is already there. It is to keep adding reasons for residents and visitors to choose downtown. Sometimes I think the question is simply: what would make someone decide to spend an afternoon downtown?

4. Infrastructure, economic growth, and community attractions

I think this is one of those areas where Council must be able to balance more than one priority at a time. We obviously need to maintain and invest in the infrastructure we already rely on. Water, sewer, roads and other core services must come first because everything else depends on them functioning properly.

At the same time, I don't think that means amenities and community investments should always be pushed aside. Recreation, parks, trails, public spaces and community facilities are also part of what makes people want to live here, visit here and invest here.

I am curious about the condition of what we already have, what absolutely needs to be done, what the long-term costs are, and where an investment could provide broader community or economic benefits.

Recreation is one area I would like to see move forward as a real conversation. I don't have a specific facility or price tag in mind, but I do think we need to better understand what the community needs, what we can reasonably afford, and what partnerships or funding opportunities might exist.

For me, it would be about doing the homework first and then making decisions based on long-term value rather than simply choosing between infrastructure or amenities as though we can only ever consider one at a time.

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5. A safe, welcoming, and compassionate downtown

I don't think compassion for people who are struggling and supporting our downtown businesses have to be opposing goals.

People experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges or addictions deserve to be treated with dignity and connected with appropriate supports. At the same time, I don't think it is reasonable to expect individual business owners and their employees to manage difficult situations on their own simply because those situations happen outside their doors.

I would want to understand what is working with the current bylaw approach, where the gaps are, and what businesses, frontline organizations, bylaw staff and people with lived experience are seeing. I think there needs to be a clear response when businesses are dealing with persistent problems, but enforcement by itself is not going to address why someone is there in the first place.

This is also where I think we need to look beyond simply providing a shelter space. Different people need different things. For some that may be housing; for others it may include mental health care, addictions treatment, complex-care supports or other services that largely fall outside municipal jurisdiction. Council still has a role in identifying those gaps, working with community partners and advocating to the provincial government when the services we need are not available.

I don't pretend to know exactly what the right combination looks like. I would rather talk to the people dealing with these issues every day, understand what is and isn't working, and make decisions from there.