

Downtown Surrey BIA
Questions for Council Candidate 2018

Responses by Kashmir Besla
Independent Surrey City Councillor Candidate

1. What makes you think you are qualified to run as councillor?

I believe that my ability to listen effectively, treat people with respect, and collaboratively work toward the betterment of our city are skills that qualify me to run as a councillor. If I don't know about an issue, I will ask and inform myself.

2. What skills do you bring to Council if you are elected?

I am a registered clinical counsellor by profession. I have been a therapist for over twenty years. I know how to listen to people and allow their voice to be heard. I have a successful private practice in Surrey, I know how hard small business owners work and how much they contribute to the community. I am concerned about all the citizens of Surrey and will keep them at the centre of all my decisions in city hall. My ability to communicate effectively will be an asset on council.

3. In your opinion, what do you think is the most positive thing that has happened in Surrey recently that makes you proud to live here?

Surrey knows how to celebrate and come together. The Fusion Festival is one of my favorite summer events. As I look around the city, I am also proud of new developments like the expansion of various universities and high rises that attract families to the city. People from various ethnicities and cultures make Surrey their home, and I am proud of this diversity.

4. Are you committed to a strong City Centre and the creation of a vibrant Downtown core? What is your strategy and commitment to business-arts-culture-technology and community in Downtown Surrey.

A City Centre is essential for the city. A Downtown core that is walkable and safe creates vibrancy. People want to live in a city that they can be proud of and that meets their needs. Money can be kept

within the city if the downtown core is developed and a place that people want to spend time in. Residents of Surrey shouldn't have to go to other cities to experience night life.

5. The Downtown Surrey Business Association had advocated for the past five years for a professionally managed purpose-built shelter in Surrey. What is your commitment to have the project move forward?

A professionally managed purpose-built shelter is essential for our community. Every person deserves to be treated with compassion and respect, and every person deserves to have a safe place to sleep at night. I would whole-heartedly support this project because when people are housed, they feel better about themselves and make better decisions.

6. What do you see as the top five issues facing Surrey?

Crime, affordable housing, transportation, mental health support, opioid crisis.

7. We know that there is always a debate between perception and reality. Everyone wants a safe place to live and do business. What is your strategy to deal with the root causes of crime?

The root cause of crime can be addressed by resolving issues of addiction, mental health and housing. Healthy people make better decisions and have less of an inclination to commit crime. Everyone wants to feel that they belong and have something to offer. Citizens need to work with the RCMP to create safer communities. Prevention needs to be a priority to reduce crime.

8. Do you support child care space in private developments?

Private developments can make for good child care space. These decisions should be made in collaboration with the neighbourhood.

9. How should requests for decreased amenity space in new residential or mixed-use developments (both indoor and outdoor) be addressed by the city?

Outdoor space for residents to walk, sit and meet is important to create healthy communities. Open spaces need to be well lit and maintained.

10. The temporary modular housing is scheduled to be removed from the locations in Downtown Surrey in two years. Do you support

the City's housing strategy that moves people from the current temporary housing into supportive housing throughout the city? If not, what is your solution?

I support moving people from temporary housing into supportive housing throughout the city. Resources and support should be made available for people regardless of where they live. People that have basic human needs met, will be able to offer more to their communities.

11. How would you make Council decisions more transparent?

City council is the government that affects citizens the most and yet it seems to be the one that people take the least interest in. A public service campaign to educate people about the role of municipal government would allow citizens to become more engaged with the process.

12. What do you think is the priority for public transit South of the Fraser? What do you support?

When light rail was introduced to the city, I really liked the project. I recently attended a TransLink meeting in which the project was explained in further detail. It is a project that I can stand behind and support as it has been well developed.