

OPENING QUESTION

Besides being in love with Boulder, tell us who you are and what the most compelling reason is for why you're running for City Council?

I am indeed in love with Boulder, and have been for the last 28 years. The values of Boulder citizens are infectious: environmentally aware, curious, educated, civic-minded, entrepreneurial, and dedicated to social justice. It is a community that thinks globally and acts locally. I have been proud and humbled by the chance to serve this community for the last 6 years, and would be honored to serve it again if the residents of Boulder think that's a good path forward. I have always strived to be a servant-leader, serving on a host of boards of environmental organizations, being an active member of the Sugarloaf Volunteer Fire Department for 15 years, 2 of those as Chief, and serving on the Boulder Planning Board before being elected to City Council. I have also founded and run two companies here in town, one of which is devoted to producing electricity through sustainable means. I would be proud to represent the people of Boulder again on Council, and the reasons I am running include mitigating and adapting to climate change, promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency, working to implement better land use policy that includes increased community benefit, and furthering social and economic equity in our city.

ISSUE QUESTIONS

1. What do you see as the vital components to the future of Boulder's economic vitality and what specific strategies would you support as a City Councilmember to maintain a vibrant economy?

I am the founder of a Boulder-based company developing clean energy technology. Boulder's entrepreneurial culture is important to the place we've become and should be nourished by the public sector. I would support continuation of the Flexible Rebate program to retain some of our fast-growing companies in the area. I would also initiate a discussion of how use tax is applied to prototype equipment purchased by hardware development companies, and software in general, to make sure that tax policy is encouraging entrepreneurship. I support a dedicated economic vitality program annual budget, and strong City coordination with business groups.

2. What do you believe are the most pressing human service needs in the City of Boulder and why?

I think Boulder's most pressing human/social service needs are addressing homelessness, delivering culturally sensitive support to the Hispanic community especially in the areas of education and domestic violence, and preparing for the ageing of the Boulder population. The City needs to continue to increase the amount of affordable housing in the City, expand support for the homeless in collaboration with non-profits, and protect and advance the safety of all of its residents. In addition, the City needs to address the increasing difficulty of middle-income individuals and families to afford to live in Boulder.

3. What do you believe is the appropriate role for the City of Boulder in addressing human service needs (e.g. housing, food, health care) for low income/marginalized people in our community?

The City of Boulder has a critical role to play in the provision of local social services. Traditionally in Colorado, counties take the lead in receiving and disbursing funds for Medicare, Medicaid, housing assistance, and other social services. Boulder has long adopted a policy of buttressing these county services with its own direct aid to those in need, principally through directing funding to existing social service agencies. Another front on which Boulder provides direct support is through providing funding to affordable housing projects, including partnering with Boulder Housing Partners, Thistle Communities, Habitat for Humanity, Attention Homes, and other organizations. In addition, the Human Services department provides direct grant funding to a host of local non-profits, including EFAA, Bridge House, Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, Mental Health Partners, and many others. Finally, the City provides direction around the coordination of services between these non-profits, its police force, and the municipal court system. This is all as it should be in a progressive city like Boulder.

4. The City has spent a considerable amount of money on buying the Boulder Community Hospital site. The site currently sits vacant and debt service accrues. Should this project be accelerated and how should it be developed?

The planning process for the Alpine/Balsam project is well underway, and the needs of the entire community, including the neighborhood in which the project will be developed, should be carefully considered. There is no reason to rush the planning for this site. The site should consider the following uses for its development: City offices, County offices, affordable housing, mixed use including food service, small business space, and space for community gatherings. Other considerations should be given to public art, highly energy efficient construction, and excellence in site design.

5. Do you support the Transportation Master Plan's goal of increasing the mode share of bicycles from 10% to 30% by 2035 to achieve the community's environmental and livability goals? If so, what concrete steps do you propose to achieve this and how do you anticipate doing that while maintaining safety for cyclists and motorists alike?

I do support this goal, and will support a variety of policies to achieve it. First and foremost is to continue to extend our greenways network. Combining flood control and transportation, our greenways provide a low-stress way for bicycles to travel through the city without close contact with auto traffic. The greenways and paths have the advantage of fully separating cyclists and pedestrians from motor vehicles, ensuring a high degree of safety for all modes, and enabling more rapid transit by cyclists and peds due to the underpasses that accompany the greenway system. It almost goes without saying that the current sidewalk system needs to be maintained, and expanded to areas that desire it, mostly for the benefit of peds, but in certain areas for bikes as well. Maintaining road-level multi-use paths is the next-best set of solutions for bikes and peds, as some degree of physical separation exists between modes, though curb-cuts and turning autos still present some level of auto interaction with bikes/peds. The next-best set of solutions is street-level bike lanes which have some form of physical separation, as in the existing pilot along Folsom between Valmont and Spruce. Finally, stripe-separated bike lanes along most city streets allows bikes between sidewalks and vehicle lanes, and while this is the least safe of the network solutions, it provides access to all areas of the City. The Safe Streets Boulder program is an example of Boulder's efforts towards better safety for all modes.

6. What strategies do you support regarding land use, housing and transportation policies and programs to address the impacts of our in-commuting workforce?

I believe in using the high number of in-commuters as a motivation for two things: an excellent public transit system (local and regional), and a continued focus on housing access for all income levels. Since current zoning in Boulder allows for 45,000 new employees, and only 6,000 new dwelling units, Boulder clearly needs to re-examine its current zoning to enable more residential development and less commercial. In addition, I think that gradual, sensible, and sensitive in-fill development can make a neighborhood (like mine in Whittier) very walkable, and create a great diversity of housing types and costs. A person who lives in Boulder and is holds a job is 75% likely to work in Boulder. So when we add housing in Boulder, there is a good chance someone who lives there will work in Boulder. I think that when people live and work in the same place, they have a strong social connection to that place, and tend to give back to it in many ways. Regarding expansion of Boulder, I would consider annexation only in the case of a truly excellent project that provided a lot of measurable community benefit to the existing Boulder community (affordable housing, public gathering spaces, public art, excellent energy efficiency, etc) and clearly met the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan guidelines. Whatever policy changes enable any increase in housing (zoning changes or overlay districts, etc) needs to be worked on in close partnership with the local neighborhoods. People picked their areas to live in for a reason, and should be part of any decision-making process.

7. Tell us your vision for open space moving forward, including specifically the challenges regarding the success of huge visitation. Would you prioritize either protection or recreation on a hypothetical new property?

It is fitting that in the year of the 50th anniversary of the founding of Boulder's Open Space program, that a major strategic visioning process should kick off to guide management for the next 50 years. The Master Plan should set forth criteria-based decision-making processes for determining which uses, if any, are appropriate for each type of area of Open Space. The different ecological types of land managed by OSMP are already well-categorized in other documents, and guidelines and criteria for uses in each type should be set forth, without making specific determinations of use within sites. Theories of management for the different area types should be laid out clearly. Management of uses should be spelled out explicitly, and every effort should be made to allow as many uses on trails as possible without causing appreciable degradation of the local ecological and habitat value of the land. Where user conflicts are noted, the plan should be creative in proposing strategies for managing uses, considering approaches such as alternating uses by schedule (temporal separation) and using use restrictions only when levels of use conflict are unacceptable, or when given uses are causing degradation of the habitat values.

Regarding prioritizing preservation or recreation on a hypothetical new property, there are many issues to consider. The value of open space has the many aspects laid out in the Charter: preservation or restoration of natural areas; preservation of water resources; preservation of land for passive recreational use; preservation of agricultural uses; utilization of land for shaping City development; utilization of non-urban land for spatial definition of urban areas; utilization of land to prevent encroachment on floodplains; preservation of land for its aesthetic or passive recreational value and contribution to quality of life. The tensions inherent to the discussion of how much use, when and where are inherent in the purposes listed, which include passive recreation as well as preservation. A guiding principle for me is that OSMP habitat which shelters threatened or endangered species (both vegetation and wildlife) should be treated with the utmost care, and that in those areas, preservation values must be addressed first. In areas in which primarily more common species are found, the balance between preservation and use can tilt somewhat more towards user group interests. Regardless of the regulations developed, enforcement should be strong in order to preserve natural values and minimize user conflict.

8. Do you support Boulder's drive to municipalize its electric utility? If so, what are the limits on taxpayer dollars and time you are prepared to spend to achieve that goal and, if not, how do you propose to achieve Boulder's renewable energy goals?

I am a full-throated advocate for Boulder to have its own municipal electric system. There are many reasons for this, the first among them the City's adopted climate and renewable-energy goals. Boulder (and other Colorado cities) will never reach their climate commitments with the current energy provider Xcel unless Xcel were to change course radically. In the best possible projections, even if Xcel gets all it aspires to (which may be a bad deal for ratepayers) Xcel may achieve a 55% emissions reduction by 2030. Boulder is committed to a carbon-emissions-free electricity system by 2030. The only way for Boulder to meet its climate and energy goals (which I helped to establish and am personally committed to) is a municipal electric utility. The additional benefits of a muni include local democratic control as well as the ability to test and establish new energy provider business models, which can further advance clean energy goals outside of the Boulder footprint. Supporting the muni is foundational to me, and even if Boulder's efforts were to fail, I would continue to support state action towards a rational Modern Path to Municipalization. That state-level push for energy choice would be coupled with additional city incentives for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and electrification of transportation.

9. What transportation solutions would you suggest to ease congestion, especially resulting from 49,000 in-commuters, specifically those that drive alone? Would you favor solutions to improve roads and parking; bus or other transportation; cycling and walking, or some combination thereof? How would you fund transportation improvements? Do you favor higher parking costs and other disincentives to driving?

As Boulder continues to grow, typically at 0.5% residential and 0.7% commercial, traffic congestion will continue to increase. To believe otherwise is foolish. However, every effort should be made to mitigate the increase in congestion and emissions related to transportation. While some parties seem to believe that there will be a miracle solution through autonomous vehicles and transportation network providers like Uber and Lyft, I am highly skeptical that we should count on those technological solutions to make a big dent in congestion and emissions. Instead, I believe that Boulder should incentivize the increased use of electrical transportation modes of all kinds. Autos, scooters, and bicycles are all modes which are being electrified currently, and there are electric versions of all types of modes for sale. For the last year, I have been commuting more and more by electric bike, putting over 1000 miles on the bike during the first year of ownership. The current County programs for electric vehicle sales (including both autos and bikes) are a good start in incentivizing this transition. City codes have been adopted for new construction to require some charging facilities in new buildings, and the City provides 44 charging stations (and counting) across its parking system. Working with RTD to provide the best possible options to encourage high use of transit remains an important strategy, including subsidizing more bus frequency on heavily-used routes, and continuing to work towards a community-wide EcoPass. Finally (and with the most complexity) land use regulation can be used to reduce the number of vehicle-miles travelled through incentivizing developers to build in areas and manners that allow all modes of travel.

10. Despite Boulder's reputation as a "green" community, our per-capita carbon footprint is pretty high. How can we shape our built environment and transportation systems for lower impact?

Increased electrification of all building systems, increased electrification of transportation, and an increasingly carbon-emissions-free system of electricity generation will all contribute to a lower average 'carbon footprint' for Boulder residents and businesses. A community-wide Ecopass for Boulder residents and workers can only help with the emissions issue, and well-considered transit-oriented development (in the TVAP and along Broadway and Arapahoe, among others) are other strategies to reduce emissions. A municipal electric utility in Boulder would put these decisions into the hands of Boulder residents.

11. Do you support Boulder's inclusionary housing ordinance requirements to produce permanently affordable housing? Should the requirements include permanently affordable middle income housing? And, what do you think is the appropriate mix of permanently affordable rental versus ownership units?

I fully support the inclusionary housing requirements as they currently exist, but also support putting commercial development on par with residential development in terms of what new development pays towards affordable housing. Development of commercial space should also pay a roughly 20% share towards affordable housing – taxing housing to pay for housing only makes sense if all development is taxed at the same level. And I also support housing assistance for the bottom half of the middle-income bracket, especially through down-payment assistance that is loaned in exchange for permanent ownership affordability.

12. Accessory dwelling units – otherwise known as “granny flats” – have been considered as one option for expanding affordable housing options in established neighborhoods. Please explain your position on whether or not ADUs are an appropriate affordable housing tool for our community?

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and owner accessory units (OAU) are both potential paths to gentle infill which serve homeowners and the community in various ways. For homeowners, these two dwelling unit types allow for income generation, offsetting high housing prices, and allowing aging in place. For the community, additional housing supply allows for more choice and housing availability. After a sufficient process for public engagement and input, I could support increased ADU/OAU density, removing the ban on these structures in new development, and making the transfer and licensing of these structure much easier.

13. What's your vision for Boulders growth and development over the next 20 years?

I support a continued focus on keeping the Boulder quality of life very high. We live in a beautiful natural setting, and have inherited a community developed by leaders who insisted on environmental considerations and a careful development process which has given us the wonderful City we live in today. We need to continue that thoughtful approach to development, critically questioning whether our land use and zoning designations are serving to steer us to the Boulder in which we want to live. It is exceedingly clear that Boulder is a regional employment center, and our current zoning for 45,000 new jobs but only 6,000 new dwelling units is only going to produce increasing congestion and emissions. If re-elected, one of my goals will be to take a look at the structural issues around commercial vs residential development, and make adjustments which do not exacerbate our in-commuting challenges.

14. What are your specific strategies for promoting civil public discourse around growth and development? Please indicate what level of commitment you would have in regards to collaboration, consensus building and joint problem solving to address this issue?

I have tried to model civility over the last 6 years, even as I have had vigorous disagreements with others in our community on land use and development issues. I am committed to civil discourse on all 'wicked' problems facing Boulder (homelessness, municipalization, climate change response, growth and development, etc). Local politics is the level at which we must model the behavior that we hope to return to our state and federal politics, and I am personally committed to being able to disagree without being disagreeable. I routinely sit down with people that I disagree with on policy but can still wish them the best in their personal life. I consider this one of my strengths as a leader.

Last Question – Your Choice

Open Topic - What is the most important issue to you in Boulder and what kind of leadership will you provide for addressing it?

The two issues that I consider the most challenging for Boulder are climate change which will affect all beings on the planet, and housing affordability, which is emblematic of ever-rising income inequality nationally. On climate change, I think my record is clear, and I will continue to advocate for increased energy efficiency through building codes, cleaner energy generation through a public power utility or a new path with Xcel, and increasing electrification of transportation and building systems. On affordable housing, I will support increasing commercial linkage fees to fund more low-income affordable housing, and I will work to pilot a modern-era down-payment assistance program for middle-income earners which will bring increased housing access and grow the pool of permanently affordable ownership units in Boulder.

Your legacy - As a Boulder City Council member what kind of legacy will you look to leave?

My ideal legacy would include a 100% renewable electrical power supply for Boulder residents and businesses, a diverse economic population not eroded by high housing costs, a continued thriving local economy, and a well-preserved and -maintained parks and open space system for the enjoyment and well-being of the local community.