

Rob Kaplan

Response submitted: 2025-08-29 12:27:41

1) Do you believe City Council should discuss or take positions on international affairs? Please explain your rationale. If you've previously weighed in on this as a Council member (yes, no, or by calling for a rules change), please comment on any shift in your approach.

I don't think taking positions on international affairs is a good use of time and energy. I believe that in the current environment of Federal cuts, protecting our community from wildfire and natural disaster, budgetary constraints, and the many other critical issues our city is currently facing, the City Council needs to be focused on taking care of our community.

2) In the 2023 community survey, only 34% of residents rated the city's street repair as good or excellent, and 47% rated snow removal positively good or excellent. These are currently budgeted at \$5M and \$1.7M, respectively. Would you increase these budgets — and if so, what would you cut to fund the increase? How would you measure success?

I would support increasing both budgets strategically, but not without careful tradeoffs and measurable accountability. For street repair, \$5 million is insufficient given Boulder manages nearly 300 miles of streets; deferred maintenance only drives costs up in the future. For snow removal, \$1.7 million barely covers priority arterials, leaving neighborhood streets underserved and residents frustrated. To fund I would reprioritize within the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) modestly scale back or defer lower-urgency capital projects to protect essential maintenance. Success must be measured, not assumed. I would track pavement condition scores, time to plow secondary streets, and most importantly community satisfaction, with a goal of lifting both street repair and snow removal ratings above 50% within two years. Strong, well-maintained streets and timely snow response are not extras; they are fundamental to safety, mobility, and trust in city government.

3) Many current city measurements, including budgetary and action items, lack key performance indicators (KPI's) or metrics that are "outcome-based." Would you vote to improve accountability through outcome-based metrics and tie budgets to those metrics? If not - what do you see as a better approach?

Yes, I support improving accountability through outcome-based metrics and tying budgets to those metrics. In the fire service, KPIs were a fundamental tool because if you can measure it, you can manage it. We tracked everything from response times to training hours to equipment readiness, and those metrics weren't just numbers, they told us if we were protecting the community effectively. The same principle applies to city government. Residents deserve to know not only how dollars are being spent, but whether those dollars are delivering real results. Outcome-based KPIs tied directly to budget decisions create transparency, build public trust, and allow us to adjust strategies when the data shows we're falling short. This doesn't mean tracking everything for the sake of reporting, but focusing on the critical measures that align with Boulder's priorities: housing, safety, climate resilience, and economic vitality. Metrics should be practical, understandable to the public, and actionable for staff. That's how we ensure our budgets aren't just spreadsheets, but true reflections of community outcomes.

4) The city is claiming a constrained budget, with Federal cuts and flat sales tax revenue. At the same time, huge capital projects like Alpine Balsam and The Civic Center are moving ahead. Do you think it's important for Council to actively re-evaluate capital projects that past Councils have approved? How should the public be involved?

Yes, Council has a responsibility to re-evaluate major capital projects in light of today's fiscal realities. Federal cuts, flat sales tax, and rising costs mean we can't simply move forward on autopilot with projects approved years ago under different circumstances. In the fire service, we constantly re-assessed priorities based on available resources, because lives and safety depended on it. The same applies here, we need to prioritize critical needs over nice-to-haves. The public must be at the center of that process. Residents deserve transparent data on project costs, trade-offs, and what other priorities may be delayed or cut if projects move forward. That means holding public forums, publishing plain-language cost/benefit analyses, and engaging stakeholders early, not just at the ribbon-cutting stage. Big capital projects can be transformative, but they have to be weighed against essential services like safe public spaces, transportation, and wildfire resilience. Council's role is to ask: is this the right project, at the right time, with the right funding? If not, we need the courage to pause, re-prioritize, or adjust scope to match today's fiscal constraints.

5) What is one thing you would do to encourage the City staff to act faster on in its own implementation of improved fire mitigation on Open Space property?

The one thing I would do is push for the accelerated implementation of shaded fuel breaks on Open Space property. These treatments not only thin the forest, but remove dense understory growth that acts as ladder fuels, preventing flames from climbing into the canopy. By reducing the risk of crown fires, we also reduce the ember casts that can travel more than a mile and ignite new fires.

6) The August 2025 Boulder Homelessness Strategy Update / "Clutch Report" outlines recommendations on single adult homelessness in Boulder. Do you agree with the direction of the City's Homeless Strategy? Why or why not? Please explain your reasoning and any alternative approaches you would support.

Boulder's updated strategy clarifies who we help with what: prioritize people with long histories of homelessness who intend to stay in Boulder for scarce housing resources, while offering short-term aid (e.g., hotel stays, reunification/bus tickets) for newcomers. It also sets an ambitious goal to end unsheltered homelessness by 2028, though staff and the consultant estimate it would require ~\$11M/year, which is a real stretch in today's budget. What I'd strengthen (my pragmatic tweaks) Grid the plan with KPIs and funding reality. In the fire service, KPIs were fundamental: if you can measure it, you can manage it. Tie dollars to outcomes e.g., housing exits per \$1M; length of time unsheltered; shelter length of stay targeting a reduction from ~73 to ~46 days. Publish a monthly dashboard. Protect scarce housing for long-time Boulder residents while keeping short-term crisis options for newcomers, as the plan outlines. This maintains fairness and public trust when vouchers and funding are tight. Expand rapid-rehousing/master-leasing to backfill dwindling vouchers; use time-limited subsidies plus light services to move people quickly from shelter to units, then "step down." Keep basic shelter capacity and reduce average stay through faster housing placement—not by shrinking beds. (The update aims to hit the 46-day LOS without expanding All Roads; that only works if housing exits accelerate.) Coordinate with county & state on prevention (eviction diversion, rental assistance) so inflow shrinks while we work the outflow. Maintain safe, welcoming public spaces by pairing encampment resolution with immediate offers of shelter/services, so enforcement and services move together. This is consistent with the city's stated goals of creating safe public spaces and a data-driven system. Public involvement: Quarterly public KPI briefings with Clutch/City staff: what's working, what isn't, and course-corrections. Neighborhood & business roundtables focused on impacts near corridors/creek path and how the plan addresses them. Bottom line: I support the strategy's focus and triage with funding realism and outcome accountability. We should prioritize people with the longest histories here, keep short-term options for newcomers, and measure

everything, so limited dollars buy visible reductions in unsheltered nights, faster shelter flow, and safer public spaces.

7) How do you weigh the tradeoffs of increasing Boulder's minimum wage, particularly the impacts on small businesses and restaurants? Have you previously taken a position on this issue? Do you support increasing the tipped wage credit—or what information would you need to make that decision?

I believe Boulder has to balance two important priorities: keeping our local small businesses and restaurants solvent, and making sure workers earn a fair, competitive wage. I support increasing the minimum wage in a way that is phased and predictable so businesses can plan ahead, but I also support tying the tipped minimum wage to a percentage of the minimum wage rather than leaving it at the outdated \$3.02, which was set when the base wage was \$7.25, which is a 41.6% differential v.s. the current 19.3% differential. This approach gives tipped workers a fairer floor while recognizing the unique structure of restaurants and bars. I haven't taken a formal position before, but I would rely on data from our local business community, labor groups, and surrounding cities to make sure Boulder's wage policies are competitive regionally and do not unintentionally drive businesses to close or relocate. The goal should be stability for employers and livability for employees, both essential to Boulder's economic vitality.

8) Pearl Street is one of Boulder's top tourist attractions and a main economic artery. It currently has a 30% vacancy rate and a 30% corporate chain occupancy. What are your ideas for ensuring that downtown remains vital and inclusive of local, small businesses?

Pearl Street is one of Boulder's greatest assets, but a 30% vacancy rate alongside 30% corporate chain occupancy shows that we're losing the balance that makes it unique. To keep downtown vital and welcoming to local businesses, we need a multi-pronged approach. First, make it easier and faster for small businesses to open by streamlining permitting and lowering start-up barriers. Second, work with property owners to incentivize leasing to local businesses, whether through flexible lease structures, temporary pop-ups, or city-supported incubator spaces. We should also continue activating downtown with events, arts, and cultural programming that draw people in year-round, not just in the summer. At the same time, exploring the potential for office-to-housing conversions can bring more residents downtown, increasing foot traffic for local shops and restaurants. Finally, keeping downtown safe and accessible with visible public safety presence, clean spaces, and reliable transportation connections is essential. Pearl Street thrives when it feels vibrant, safe, and uniquely Boulder. That means protecting opportunities for small, local businesses while ensuring downtown remains an inclusive place for residents, students, and visitors alike.

9) Give us an example of a situation in which you had to take a tough stand, perhaps against popular opinion, your colleagues, etc. and were you able to swing people to your side?

One example was at Boulder Rural Fire Rescue, where I spearheaded a large project to update our outdated IT system. At the time, only a couple of people had administrative rights, and there was resistance to change. Some believed a new system would be less secure and felt it was safer to stick with the way things had been done for decades. I knew that relying on a proprietary system with no redundancy created a single point of failure, which was not acceptable for an emergency response organization. To move the conversation forward, I brought in subject matter experts to validate the risks and demonstrate how modern, standardized systems could actually improve security and resiliency. I also listened carefully to my colleagues' concerns and addressed them directly, rather than dismissing them. In the end, by focusing on our long-term goals of redundancy, security, and

operational reliability, I was able to build consensus and move us to a new system. That experience reinforced for me the value of combining data-driven expertise with patient listening to make tough but necessary decision.

10) Is there anything else specific you would like us to know about your service or background to help us evaluate your candidacy? Please share a link to a community or civic achievement you are proud of – this could be a Council meeting moment, public testimony, advocacy effort, op-ed or letter to the editor. This helps us understand where you are on the record and what issues matter most to you.

I have invested my time and energy into Boulder since I moved here in 1993. Through starting up a small business and 18+ years serving in the fire service, and now on the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, being involved in my community is a natural part of who I am. I'm not a politician, not an ideologue, I am a driven person that looks for pragmatic solutions and achievable long term visions to add value, form, and function. I have comments on my website from colleagues I have worked with: <https://www.rob4boulder.com/> I also had an opinion piece published after the June 1st attack on Pearl St.: <https://www.dailycamera.com/2025/06/05/letters-to-the-editor-when-hate-speech-is-allowed-to-masquerade-as-free-speech-our-community-must-become-more-care-and-caring/> Thank you for your time and consideration, Rob Kaplan