

Mark Wallach

Response submitted: 2025-08-20 18:47:17

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.

Absolutely not. In addition to any such involvement being completely ineffectual, it is a distraction from the business we were elected to Council to address. I have voted against any such involvement and will continue to do so.

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 do not know if staff will provide additional funds for those purposes in the 2026 budget (scheduled to be made public in a few weeks), but at the very least we should provide money for street repair/maintenance from the funds to be generated by the CCRS tax, assuming it is passed. If not, yes, I would look to appropriate additional funds. And, as you may recall, last winter I was the leading voice on Council complaining about our then-new policy of not plowing streets in a "light" snowstorm of 3 inches or less. That policy had disastrous results on the many steep streets in Boulder, which became sheets of ice more appropriate for a toboggan run than for vehicular traffic. In a Hotline I emphasized to our staff that this policy simply was not working. I am an advocate of providing sufficient funds to Transportation to address this issue of life, health and safety.

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?

In the 2026 budget, many of the changes, both in terms of the allocation of personnel and dollars, will be based on an assessment of the outcomes of programs and services. This is essentially a new perspective on creating our budget and I support it. I believe staff is attempting to use KPIs - either formally or informally - in next year's budget. I have been pressing for more concrete measures of achievement in our programs for several years.

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?

I am not a fan of Alpine-Balsam, and if the vote to acquire that property were to be revisited today, I believe that the Council would not proceed with it. But as a practical matter the funds that would be lost in abandoning the project would be enormous and not worth doing. I am always willing to revisit capital expenditures when circumstances have changed and they are no longer properly funded or needed, but once they have been commenced it is difficult to abandon them. But I have advocated for doing just this. For example, we are building a bridge at Chapman Drive in Boulder Canyon that is immediately adjacent to an existing bridge. There have been no accidents on the existing bridge, and there was no one on staff who had been here when the decision to build a 2nd bridge was made. The

only rationale offered for the project was that the County was picking up half the cost and so we were getting the second bridge at a bargain price. We are the stewards of our public money, not bargain shoppers at K-Mart; the project should have been cancelled. By the time I became involved the parts of the 2nd bridge had already been purchased and cancellation would provide no benefit. I believe this was a pure waste of taxpayer funds. But by the time we recognize the changes that would warrant a reconsideration of a capital project it is often too late to do so.

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?

I hope to make fire mitigation a Council priority next year and address a number of aspects of this challenge. I also hope that we can pass legislation to begin to address this problem, such as prohibiting junipers from touching the homes where they are located and requiring a defensible area around any existing junipers. I also want to push staff to begin a serious consideration of creating fire breaks on Open Space land. It is impractical to require every homeowner to change their siding, and we do not have the resources to subsidize that effort. Fire breaks may be one of the answers. As we are in the 97th percentile of vulnerability for wildfire, the question is not if we will experience wildfires, but when. We must do more to protect our community and avoid a repetition of the Marshall Fire here.

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.

I agree with parts of it. I believe the emphasis on diversion and taking a stronger position on rough sleeping are long overdue, as is the consolidation of services at the day shelter, rather than Central Park. I remain concerned about the projected number of housing units the report anticipates for sheltering the unhoused (projected to be 250 units/year), as this could be very detrimental to the basic mission of Boulder Housing Partners to provide affordable housing for low-income residents of Boulder. I also wish there had been an explicit recognition of the need to prioritize providing services and shelter for those with a longer-standing connection with this community, rather than just off the bus from Ann Arbor. Where I have substantial problems with the plan is that it anticipates a 50% growth in the budget for Housing and Human Services in the next 5 years, in a difficult economic climate, and requires, on top of that, \$13MM of additional funding per year in order to be carried out. I do not appreciate action plans that are so entirely unrealistic.

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?

This is always a delicate balancing act, in our desire to increase income for workers while protecting the mostly small businesses who employ them. I believe we hit the correct balance in not following the lead of the County or Denver, and in providing 8% increases, which I both supported and voted for. I would support a modest increase in the tipped wage credit as helping our restaurants; on this I agree with State Senator Amabile.

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?

I think the Mall refresh contemplated to be funded by CCRS proceeds will favorably impact the business climate on Pearl Street, as will the impact of the Sundance Film Festival. But some of the vacancy may be due to overly high rental rates; if landlords want to fill their spaces they have to be responsive to the market. I once did a development project where the original owner of the building retained ownership of the ground floor; he decided on a rental rate he wanted and the space was vacant for 5 years before he obtained a tenant at that price. Sometimes landlords act in a manner that makes no economic sense. I do not believe in subsidies for landlords to rent at a lower level, but I do believe in better marketing and promotion to make the Mall a safer, more attractive location for businesses to operate, and a greater emphasis on public safety to make Pearl Street a safer destination for residents and tourists 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?

I was endorsed by groups who opposed the CU South project, and faced considerable opposition to my ultimate decision to reverse myself and endorse the project. I did so because I believed it was the best deal we could negotiate, it was necessary for public safety, and because many of the provisions I advocated were ultimately incorporated into the final agreement. I doubt that many of those individuals reversed themselves and came to my side, but I thought it was the right decision, and I stand by it.

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 served for 6 years, and hope that my record is clear. But if I could choose a couple of items it would be: 1) The landmarking of the interior of the Dushanbe Teahouse. I had to fight with the City Attorney who claimed that we could not do so, and had to get my colleagues to agree that we could and to support my efforts. It is a small thing, but one I am proud of. 2) I am proud that I spoke out against antisemitism at the Council, even to the unpleasant point of criticizing one of my colleagues. It should not have been necessary to do so, but when it was I spoke out strongly. 3) I issued a very strong Hotline criticizing an official of the NAACP for his bullying tactics against staff, including the City Manager, and Police Chief Redfearn. Many of my friends strongly urged me not to do so, but I cannot abide a bully, and released the letter. It was the first step in building a consensus against that individual, who is no longer a part of the NAACP.