

2026 Boulder City Council/Mayor Questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to run for office in our city. It's a significant commitment, and we at Open Boulder are grateful. Thank you also for responding to the Open Boulder questionnaire, which will be used for endorsement decisions. This is due on **5 PM on Sunday, August 30**. This gives our board time to review your answers before the forum on September 2. The questions are built around Open Boulder's core priorities:

1. Good governance
2. Financial responsibility, accountability, and transparency
3. Community safety and emergency preparedness
4. Community vibrancy and affordability

Note: we have also provided a Word version that you can use to prepare your responses in advance. Thank you!

What is your full name *

Aaron Brockett

Why are you running for City Council or Mayor? *

I'm proud of all the accomplishments I've been a part of as mayor and city councilmember over the last 11 years in areas including housing, transportation, building our reserves, reducing homelessness and streamlining city processes, but there is more work to do so I'm running for one final 2 year term to continue the progress on housing, wildfire prevention and resilience and making the city easier to work with.

Council-Manager Form of Government *

City Council candidates often campaign on changes they would like to make, but accomplishing those goals requires working within Boulder's Council-Manager form of government. How do you understand the respective roles of Council, the Mayor, the City Manager, and City staff? Using one of your priorities as an example, walk us through how you would work within that structure to move it forward, build support, and ultimately get it implemented. For Mayoral candidates, please answer accordingly.

The city council brings forward policy priorities that, if adopted, are then implemented by city staff under the direction of the city manager. If I'm reelected, I will be bringing forward proposals for implementing the new comprehensive plan. I'll do that by consulting with city staff and colleagues and then proposing one or more specific major policy ideas at the council retreat in 2027. If adopted by council for the workplan (which hopefully they would given that I would have laid the groundwork with colleagues ahead of time), I would then work on the details with city staff, colleagues and interested community members to bring forward an ordinance that council would then adopt and result in the creation of new housing opportunities for the city going forward.

Council's Role in the Budget *

How do you see Council's responsibility in setting and reviewing the budget? Are there changes in the budget process or in budget allocations that you would actively pursue if elected? Why?

The budget is prepared by the city manager and is then reviewed and adopted by city council. I'm looking forward to diving deep into the details of the city manager's proposed budget in the coming weeks and see where opportunities for improvements or changes might exist. One key priority is ensuring that wildfire prevention work is well funded. Given the constrained financial environment, anywhere we want to add funding will require cutting something else, so we'll have to be open-eyed about the trade-offs involved.

Ordinance 8758 / Bond Measure *

Do you support Ordinance 8758 and the associated bond issuance on the November ballot?

☒ Yes

☐ No

For Ordinance 8758, please explain your position. For incumbents who voted to place Ordinance 8758 on the ballot: Has your position changed since that vote? Why or why not? *

I do support the bond because our police and firefighters are working in buildings that make it difficult to do their jobs effectively, and our aging rec centers -- South Boulder Rec in particular of course -- need large renovations or replacement to continue providing the services the community expects. The bond amount is large, but given that construction cost inflation is rising much faster than CPI, if we kick the can down the road on these facility investments, we'll only get further behind and it will be that much harder in the future to catch up.

Ordinance 8762 / Debt Limit *

Do you support Ordinance 8762 and the associated increase to the City of Boulder general obligation (GO) debt limit on the November ballot?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Ordinance 8762 / Debt Limit *

Approximately what do you believe is the dollar value of the 3% of *assessed valuation* limit on City of Boulder indebtedness currently in effect (e.g., what is the current Charter limit on the amount of GO debt the city can issue)?

Approximately what do you believe is the dollar value of the 3% of *actual valuation* limit on City of Boulder indebtedness that is proposed in Ord 8762 (e.g., what is the proposed Charter limit on the amount of GO debt the city can issue)?

Please explain your position, including your understanding of how changing the debt limit from 3% of assessed valuation to 3% of actual valuation would affect the City's borrowing capacity.

The current limit of City of Boulder indebtedness is \$150.7 million. Because the actual value of property is just over 10 times the assessed value the indebtedness limit would increase to approximately \$1.558 billion. While this is substantially more than what would be needed to allow the debt issuance contained in ordinance 8758, any future bond issuances would need to be separately approved by Boulder voters so I do support ordinance 8762 as well.

Alpine-Balsam / Project Oversight *

Have you followed the costs associated with Alpine-Balsam? When the cost of a major city project significantly exceeds its budget, what role should Council play in understanding the causes, overseeing the response, and determining whether changes in management or process are warranted? Are there changes you would make to the way Council oversees major capital projects, or to its oversight of Alpine-Balsam in particular?

I wasn't part of the council that approved the purchase of Alpine-Balsam in 2015 but I have followed the process followed since then as well as the costs involved. It's important as costs increase for council to review and make sure any increase in costs is reasonable. In this case, the costs have increased due to a number of factors, with the largest being the enormous increase in construction costs over the last few years. Municipal and other civic projects are costing eye popping amounts, often well over \$1,000/sf. In the case of Alpine-Balsam, a substantial portion of the costs aren't only related to the new Western City Campus but to the flood mitigation, infrastructure and parking structure that will serve the whole site including over 200 units of housing, most of it affordable. Overall, the project will result in moving out of 10 aging city buildings and save the city many millions of dollars over the decades it will be in use. All to say that I do think oversight has been exercised on this project.

Administrative Costs Charged to Dedicated Taxes *

Boulder voters have approved dedicated taxes for purposes such as Open Space, Transportation, and the Arts. A portion of these revenues may be used to cover shared administrative costs such as HR, legal, and accounting. Do you believe these funds are being used effectively and consistently with the purposes voters approved them for? Why or why not? Please provide an example. What, if anything, would you change to strengthen accountability and public confidence in how these funds are used?

I do think cost allocations are a reasonable thing to do. Each department with dedicated funds including Open Space, Parks and Recreation, Transportation and the Arts uses centralized services like those mentioned above and it's reasonable for each department to pay their pro-rata share of those services. Those departments couldn't function without those shared services so I don't think it counts as a deviation from each department's mission. This isn't unique to Boulder -- from my work in the private sector I've seen that it's a standard practice as a fair way to allocate costs.

Wildfire



Given Boulder's wildfire risk and limited resources, what two or three wildfire mitigation or preparedness measures should Council prioritize? What role should the City play, and how should those priorities be funded?

As we saw at our study session just this week, the city has come up with a prioritization matrix around the many wildfire mitigation activities we are working on, along with accompanying metrics and time frames, all of which is a huge positive step forward and is a result of city council making wildfire work a core priority for 2026. Going forward, in addition to the work already being done, I think it's time to make some home hardening measures retroactive with a clear timeframe for implementation as well as grant assistance for those unable to afford the work themselves, and I'll be supporting developing such a program as part of the 2027 workplan if reelected.

Downtown



Council recently rejected the formation of a Downtown Development Authority. What do you see as the most important opportunities or challenges facing downtown Boulder, and what actions, efforts or initiatives would you suggest to address them?

High commercial and retail vacancy rates are the biggest challenge facing downtown, along with affordability concerns for small businesses that make it difficult for them to survive. I would like to see the city to make it much easier for businesses to open in the downtown (and the rest of Boulder!). This should involve improving the flexibility and speed of the permitting process for construction and renovations as well as flexibility around fees for things like outdoor dining. I would also like to see the city work with Downtown Boulder Partnership on helping small businesses do short-term pop-up retail or service spaces that are quick and cheap to implement and don't require long term leases.

Performance Auditor *

An Open Boulder-affiliated committee has proposed that the City establish a Performance Auditor (different from a financial auditor), supported by a small office reporting to City Council and a resident-based Audit Committee, beginning in the 2027 budget. Do you support or oppose this proposal? Please explain why or why not?

I'm definitely supportive of doing this or something similar. At a minimum, the recently hired performance auditor should report to the Financial Strategy committee on a regular basis, as well as report to and take direction from the city council as a whole. I'm also interested in exploring whether the charter gives the council authority to hire a performance auditor in addition to a financial auditor and move forward with that approach if allowed.

Question for Mayoral candidates only: Council Agendas and Prioritization *

How should the Mayor approach setting and prioritizing Council agendas? Do you believe the current process effectively advances community priorities? If elected, what, if anything, would you change?

As I have been the mayor for the last 5 years, it may come as no surprise to hear that I do think that the current process does effectively advance community priorities :). When the job is done properly, the mayor should work collaboratively with city council colleagues and the city manager to advance the adopted priorities of the city council as well as the regular work of the city with a steady hand on the tiller to make sure that all voices are heard and progress is made steadily. In my time as mayor, I have put many hours into the unglamorous work of mastering all the details of the process, monitoring all of the issues the city is working on, and ensuring that the business of the city is done appropriately and effectively. A city is a forever project and being mayor is of course temporary. During my time on the job I've endeavored to take the baton handed on to me from Sam Weaver, Suzanne Jones and the mayors who came before them, and when my time in the office is done, I'll pass it on with best wishes and a few words of advice to the mayor who comes after me.

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