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 *

Scott Rendleman

Why are you running for City Council or Mayor? *

I am running for City Council because I believe Boulder is the best place in America to raise a family, pursue employment and make a life that is sustainable and culturally enriched. I recognize Boulder is becoming increasing unattainable for many, and my goals on City Council, as discussed throughout my answers on this questionnaire, will reflect my priorities if elected to serve. Together, we can continue Boulder's progress as an inclusive, values-based community that provides meaningful opportunities for living, working and recreation.

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.

I think of Boulder's Council-Manager government similarly to a corporate structure: City Council operates like a board of directors, the Mayor serves as the chair, and the City Manager is the chief executive. Council establishes policy, adopts ordinances and budgets, and holds the City Manager accountable for results. The Mayor participates with and presides over Council, represents the city, and directs agenda-setting through the Council Agenda Committee. The Mayor but has no independent authority to direct departments. The City Manager administers and executes Council policy and supervises city staff. City staff is insulated from political considerations, helping maintain its integrity and professionalism.

One of my priorities is strengthening public confidence in city government. That is not a single program, but it is an important need for the next Council. One way to address it is through independent performance monitoring that gives residents clear information about what city programs cost and whether they are achieving measurable results.

I would begin by building on the interest already expressed by current council members. I would work with my colleagues to define the monitoring principles: major programs should have clear objectives, tangible performance measures, identified funding sources, and regular public reporting. With sufficient Council support, I would ask the City Manager to return with options for an independent performance-monitoring function, including its structure, authority, cost, staffing requirements, and relationship to existing financial auditing and departmental reporting. From my conversations with City Manager Rivera-Vandermyde, I sense she has been working for and welcomes greater transparency and clarity. Having an independent performance monitoring function could truly help establish where we have done well with transparency, and where we can improve.

Developing the system would require input from city staff, advisory boards, community organizations, and residents, especially those who use the services. Staff would contribute operational expertise and recommend useful, reliable measures. Council would approve the overall accountability framework and necessary funding without attempting to manage individual employees or daily operations.

Fort Collins provides a useful model. Its Community Dashboard tracks performance against specific targets, while its OpenData and OpenBook initiatives give residents access to government statistics and spending information. Boulder should examine those tools while designing something applicable to Boulder's priorities.

My preference would be an Office of Performance Monitoring with sufficient independence to provide candid assessments. After reviewing the City Manager's recommendations, Council could authorize and fund the appropriate structure and establish an implementation schedule. I would seek an initial public report within one year, followed by regular reports that allow Council and the public to identify programs that are succeeding, those that need improvement, and whether results justify their costs.

This approach respects the Council-Manager form of government. Council would establish the policy and expectations. The Mayor would help City Council with the policies, while leading through agenda setting. The City Manager would have responsibility for implementing the policy, and the city staff would execute the actions that turn policy into measurable results.

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?

To put it simply, City Council has the responsibility to make sure the city's budget reflects its values and that residents are getting what they pay for. In Boulder's Council-City Manager form of government, the City Manager has both the responsibility of drafting a budget that reflects the policies set by Council, as well as executing and administering the approved budget. City Council must closely review the City Manager's proposed budget, with each item questioning whether this expenditure makes sense considering the priorities.

I also see budgeting as process of making choices among valuable competing priorities. Someone recently asked me why Boulder's budget is so much more than other communities. While I didn't necessarily agree with the premise of the question, it raises a fair point. Our values are reflected in what we choose to pay for.

For example, we are a community that values inclusion, and Boulder should spend to make the city easier to navigate for people with mobility challenges. We improve sidewalks, ramps and crossings, and we make bus stops ADA-accessible. Not every community will prioritize these expenditures. I support money well spent to translate our values into meaningful improvements across the city. At the same time, City Council should check to make sure those expenditures are well planned and accomplish their goals.

If I am elected to City Council, I will pursue more regular review of spending and results throughout the year, rather than focusing on the budget primarily when it is time to adopt the next one.

My first budgeting priority would be to protect essential services and maintain public assets. I would also emphasize budget allocations to help implement the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The more homes in the Wildland Urban Interface that become wildfire resilient, the more we can reduce the risk of a catastrophic fire spreading throughout Boulder.

Because many of the current requirements are triggered when a building permit is issued and are limited to the proposed scope of work, voluntary participation by owners of existing properties will be important. There is room for greater participation, at least on some measures. For example, maybe we can't get a homeowner to pay to replace a wooden fence, but that homeowner might be willing to remove combustible junipers if financial or practical assistance were available. I would support expanding programs that help property owners take as many of these smaller steps as possible. Individually, each step may not seem like much, but together they would make the entire community safer.

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 not support Ordinance 8758, the Recreation and Safety Bond measure, which would authorize $400 million in debt and up to $650 million in total repayment. This appears to be the largest property-tax increase in Boulder's history. The city estimates an additional $400 annually per $1 million of residential value. In 2026, however, the median single-family sale price is $1.3 million, which translates to an additional $520 per year for a median-priced home. Commercial properties would pay an additional $1,588 annually per $1 million of value. I recognize the need to address years, maybe decades, of deferred maintenance and that further delay will increase costs. The city, however, has not adequately identified which facilities face the greatest risk of failure, which are essential to vital services, or which properties could be sold or repurposed. With clearer priorities and stronger cost controls, I could support a smaller, more targeted bond measure.

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.

I do not support Ordinance 8762, which would amend Section 97 of Boulder's Home Rule Charter and substantially increase the city's general obligation debt limit. It is a companion to Ordinance 8758 and would be necessary for the city to issue the full $400 million Recreation and Safety Bond.

Section 97 currently limits applicable city debt to 3% of the assessed value of taxable property. Boulder County's latest certified assessed valuation of taxable property in the city is approximately $5.02 billion. Accordingly, the current general obligation debt limit is approximately $151 million.

Ordinance 8762 would calculate the GO debt limit based on 3% of actual value of taxable property. The Boulder County Assessor reports approximately $51.7 billion in actual real-property value within the city. Using that figure as an estimate, the amendment would raise the city's GO debt limit to approximately $1.55 billion. The exact amount may be slightly different because the assessor's published actual value does not correspond precisely to the category of taxable property in the City.

Ordinance 8762 would not issue debt or raise taxes, and future property-tax-supported borrowing generally would remain subject to voter approval. Still, Ordinance 8762 would establish a dramatic increase in the city's potential borrowing capacity.

Boulder's current assessed valuation formula may be unduly restrictive in today's environment. Many other Colorado governments calculate their debt limits using actual value. I could support an amendment to Section 97 that moves to an actual valuation formula, but at a percentage lower than 3%. For example, a 1% limit would provide a general obligation debt limit of approximately $517 million. Setting the percentage should come after a robust public discussion about appropriate fiscal safeguards, the city's long-term capital priorities, and which existing city properties and facilities are essential, which could be consolidated or repurposed, and which could be sold. The apparent lack of public support for Ordinances 8758 and 8762 suggests that this community discussion did not occur before the measures were placed on the ballot.

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 have followed the Alpine-Balsam project and watched its scope and costs grow substantially. Boulder purchased the former Boulder Community Hospital campus in 2015 for $40 million. At the time, no fixed redevelopment plan firmly existed, although there were broad discussions about possible uses for the land and hospital buildings.

More definite plans emerged between 2016 and 2017. These included adding housing and moving city offices into the Pavilion, BCH's medical office building next to the main hospital. In early 2019, the estimated cost of renovating the Pavilion for city offices was between $49 million and $58 million. That estimate did not include the land purchase, deconstruction of the main hospital, housing, or all the flood-mitigation and infrastructure work. Including the cost of financing the Pavilion renovation increased the estimate to between $90 million and $120 million.

Council expressed serious concerns about these costs and considered selling the property but ultimately decided to continue with the project. In 2021, the Facilities Master Plan made the Western City Campus part of the city's broader strategy for consolidating offices, reducing lease expenses and avoiding some of the maintenance costs associated with older buildings.

The city now estimates the Western City Campus itself at approximately $128 million. It has also used a $140 million appropriation figure for broader work at the site. Neither figure includes the $40 million land purchase or the approximately $16 million spent to deconstruct the hospital. Other estimates include decades of financing costs. For example, Open Boulder's Terri Brncic recently wrote the Alpine-Balsam project will cost at least $304 million, which does not include any amounts projected for Phase II affordable housing expenditures. The difficultly identifying one clear, comprehensive cost for the project has shaken the public's confidence in its city government.

To put it simply, Council should make sure residents are getting what they pay for. Council should not manage construction, but it should ask difficult questions, insist on timely and understandable information, and hold the City Manager accountable. For major capital projects, I would require regular public reports comparing current cost estimates with approved budgets, explaining changes in scope, identifying the risk of further costs or delays, and showing expected construction, financing, operating and maintenance costs.

When a project significantly exceeds its budget, Council should require an independent review. That review should separate inflation and genuinely unforeseen conditions from estimating errors, avoidable delays, changes in scope and failures in management. Decisions about whether changes in management or city processes are needed should be based on what that review finds.

For the Western City Campus, I would seek one consolidated accounting of the entire project: land acquisition, deconstruction, infrastructure, construction, financing, expected property-sale proceeds, operating savings and ongoing maintenance. My purpose would not be to find someone to blame. It would be to give Boulder residents a clear account of what happened, learn from it and establish a better framework for future capital projects. That fits directly with one of the central purposes of my campaign: strengthening public confidence in city government.

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?

Using some amount of a dedicated tax funds for shared administrative costs is a legitimate use of dedicated tax revenue. Reasonable administrative expenses are part of carrying out the purposes voters approved. However, not every administrative cost should be assumed to relate to responsibly carrying out the purpose of a dedicated tax. The city should be able to show how each charge supported the dedicated purpose and how the amount was calculated.

For example, Open Space funds may appropriately pay for legal work involving land transactions, conservation easements, and regulatory compliance. Accounting and HR support may also be necessary to operate the department. Those are real costs of delivering the program voters approved. Conversely, a broad administrative charge based primarily on a department’s budget size rather than the actual administrative services the department receives could cause a dedicated fund to subsidize part of the city’s general operations. The same concern applies to Transportation and Mobility, where administrative costs should be examined alongside project spending, particularly because much of the department’s revenue is restricted.

I would strengthen transparency around these administrative costs by pushing the city to publish, for each dedicated fund, the amount charged for shared services, the allocation method, and the services provided. Council should review significant increases rather than treating them as automatic. Periodic independent audits should also determine whether the charges are reasonable and necessary, consistently applied, and permitted by the ballot language.

The standard should be straightforward: a dedicated fund should pay its fair share of the administrative cost burden necessary to accomplish its voter-approved purpose. Dedicated funds should not become a way to cover unrelated expenses. Clear reporting and regular review would help protect essential programs while giving voters confidence that their instructions are being honored.

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?

Given Boulder’s significant wildfire risk and limited resources, I would put the greatest emphasis on making homes in the highest-risk areas more wildfire-resilient, followed closely by evacuation preparedness. I think these two priorities are related. If residents seriously think about how they would evacuate during a wildfire, the danger becomes more real. That may also make them more willing to improve the wildfire resilience of their property.

Many of Boulder’s current wildfire requirements apply when a property owner seeks a building permit. That means voluntary participation by owners of existing homes will remain important. The city should help residents take practical steps, including removing combustible vegetation and creating defensible space. Maybe we cannot persuade a homeowner to replace an entire wooden fence, but that homeowner might accept help removing junipers next to the house. Individually, some of these steps may not seem like much. Taken together across many properties, however, they can make the entire community safer.

Evacuation preparedness should mean more than writing a plan and publishing it on the city’s website. Residents need reliable alerts and clear information about where to go and how to get there. Plans should be practiced and regularly updated, with particular attention to people who may need transportation or other assistance.

Jacksonville, Florida, provides a useful example, in the context of hurricane evacuation. It has maintained a nationally accredited emergency-management program, uses several methods to reach residents, provides address-specific evacuation information, and plans for people with special needs. Boulder’s circumstances are different, but we can learn from Jacksonville’s efforts to make sure residents understand the plan before an emergency occurs. If Boulder residents actually practiced evacuating, the possibility of a catastrophic wildfire would become less abstract. That might also encourage more homeowners to make even small improvements to their properties.

If elected, I would also continue efforts to reduce hazardous fuels on city land and improve coordination with Boulder County, neighboring communities, fire districts, utilities, and federal agencies. Wildfire does not stop at a jurisdictional boundary. These agencies need to identify the greatest risks and coordinate their work accordingly.

Wildfire mitigation should be treated as an essential public-safety responsibility within the existing budget. Boulder should also pursue state and federal grants and partnerships to make local dollars go further. For any dedicated wildfire funding, Council and the public should be able to see what was completed, what it cost, and what the community received for its money.

The city cannot eliminate wildfire risk or pay for every improvement on private property. Its role should be to identify the greatest risks, manage city land responsibly, coordinate among agencies, enforce reasonable standards, and make it easier for residents to participate.

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?

I was disappointed that City Council failed to advance the proposed Downtown Development Authority to the November ballot, where its formation would have been determined by qualified voters within the proposed district. Downtown Boulder is one of our city's most important economic and community assets, but it faces real challenges. Storefront vacancies, high rents, public safety concerns, homelessness, and changing shopping and work habits are all affecting downtown. At the same time, we have an opportunity to bring more housing, local businesses, arts, events and everyday activity into the area.

Council's decision not to advance the DDA does not change the need to address these issues. The city, property owners, businesses, residents and community organizations still need to work together on a clear plan for downtown, by identifying priorities and funding sources.

One of my priorities would be to help downtown feel welcoming, clean and safe. That includes beautification, but it also means enforcing laws in public spaces, connecting people experiencing homelessness or behavioral-health crises with shelter, treatment and housing. We need both accountability and effective services. The city should report publicly on the actions it is taking and whether conditions are improving.

We also need to make it easier for local businesses to open and succeed. Boulder should simplify permitting for tenant improvements, outdoor dining and changes in how commercial spaces are used. Business owners should have clear requirements, predictable timelines and a city staff member who can help them navigate the process. We should also support small, locally owned and minority-owned businesses through technical assistance, improved access to affordable commercial space, and help throughout the business cycle, as these businesses operate and grow. For example, I would like to enlist the Chamber of Commerce as a resource for new businesses to rely on its expertise in opening and doing business in Boulder.

Bringing more people downtown throughout the day and evening is also important. Additional housing, including affordable workforce housing, would allow more people to live close to jobs, services and transit while providing a dependable customer base for downtown businesses. Arts, performances, markets and family activities can make downtown more active and inviting to a wider range of residents and visitors.

Finally, we need to measure whether our efforts are working. I would support public reporting on storefront vacancies, business openings and closures, permitting times, public safety, pedestrian activity and housing production. If a DDA is not moving forward now, we still need a lasting partnership with clear responsibilities, measurable goals and accountability for results.

Downtown is more than a business district. It is also a neighborhood, a gathering place and an important part of Boulder's identity. Visitors should see Downtown Boulder as one of Boulder's iconic destinations, alongside Chautauqua Park, CU and soon, the Sundance Film Festival. Downtown's future will require the city and the private sector to work together, with the public able to see what is being done, what it costs and whether it produces results.

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 support the proposal for an independent performance monitoring function. City Council's responsibility does not end when it adopts the annual budget. Council should also know whether major programs are accomplishing their stated goals and whether residents are receiving the value for what they pay for. A financial audit can tell us whether money was accounted for properly; a performance audit would ask the equally important questions of whether a program is working, whether it is operating efficiently, and whether there is a better way to achieve the same result.

I have consistently supported more regular review of spending and results throughout the year. Boulder faces many valuable but competing priorities, along with ongoing pressure to protect essential services and maintain the public assets we already own. Before Council adds programs, eliminates positions or reduces services, it should have reliable and independent information about costs, staffing, outcomes and comparisons with similar cities.

For this office to be effective, the performance audit must be genuinely independent of city management, while remaining fair to city employees and departments. Performance audits should use clear standards, allow departments to respond to findings and make recommendations, not dictate policy. The resident-based Audit Committee could provide useful public oversight, but its membership and procedures should be designed to prevent the process from becoming partisan or focused on predetermined conclusions.

Because the city is already facing budget constraints, I would want the office to begin small, establish priorities based on potential public benefit. I would want public reports on whether its recommendations produce measurable savings or improved services. Properly structured, this proposal would help Council oversight, improve transparency and help strengthen confidence that Boulder is using public money responsibly.

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?

Not applicable.