

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 *

Tina Marquis

Why are you running for City Council or Mayor? *

I love living in Boulder and am committed to the health of our city for future generations, including my own kids. I am running to work on the following priorities: attainable and affordable housing that works for families, addressing homelessness and public safety, strengthening wildfire resilience, economic vitality and ensuring effective, accountable governance. In addition, I am committed to increasing trust with the community through clearer communication and understanding of how our budget and policies align with our priorities.

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.

In the Council-Manager form of government, the council sets policy, approves the budget, and manages three employees: the City Manager, the City Attorney and the Municipal Judge. The City Manager then creates the strategic plan and related work, which directs the work of staff. The Council also sets priorities each time a new Council is seated in addition to the day-to-day work of providing core services, like clean water, sewage, public safety, roads and sidewalks.

The Mayor and the Mayor Pro Tem do have an elevated role in that they both always sit on the Agenda Setting meeting with a third, rotating council member. That being said, a nod of 5 council members can at anytime have something scheduled, outside of the CAC process. The Mayor also runs the meetings and attends more events as the city representative.

One of my priorities this year was power reliability and resiliency for both businesses and residents, following the safety power shut offs last fall. Based on feedback and stories from business owners, residents and my own experience, reliable power and clear back up strategies was a priority. I then connected with the staff and city manager about whether this was already being specifically addressed in the city workplan. I wrote a description of the work priority, which is to understand gaps in power reliability and resiliency, whether XCEL is addressing these gaps and when, and how can the city help during a prolonged shut off. I consulted with my colleagues about the priority and made sure it reflected their interests as well. Finally, I introduced it at our priority setting meeting and my colleagues and I selected it. Seven months later in August, staff shared the results. The Mayor has no elevated role in this process.

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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 a year-long process, and Council is responsible for shaping and approving the budget. I would make several changes to the budgeting process. First, while we are moving toward outcome-based budgeting, it is still difficult to understand how we are measuring programs - whether it is by completing an activity or advancing a higher level outcome. The Council and City Manager need to be clearer about the outcomes we are looking for to better choose how to fund the programs or people to achieve the outcome.

While I don't support zero based budgeting every year, I support ongoing reviews of all the programs that have been funded and making sure they continue to deliver the right outcomes. Every year, there are new taxes being passed or fees being collected at every level of government, so we need to review how this impacts our budget, maybe by freeing up funding in one place, or requiring more funding in another. In addition, the City continues to provide significant funding for human services, including grants, but it is unclear how well we are coordinating with our primary human services provider, the County, and how we are jointly measuring our impact to the community. While we did make a positive change to add fiscal notes to our packets when we discuss new ideas, we need to do better as a council to understand tradeoffs. Finally, we need to recognize how difficult it is to end programs. Pilots can be a great idea, but we need to prepare for ending them if we haven't identified a long-term source of funding in a time when our budget is being cut. The Elevate program was a pilot funded with one time ARPA funding and no identified future funding. Ending the program was deeply disappointing to the participants and program champions, but the reality is we had never committed to funding it.

Structurally, I would suggest two additional changes: an auditor and a Capital improvement Program Advisory panel (or something like that). An auditor can help the city reach outcomes based budgeting faster, and identify how to make our funding work better and more efficiently. In addition, I would look for an auditor to help understand the funding goals on the County and City together, and create a clearer idea of what the City's role is. The Capital improvement Program Advisory panel is something I've been advocating and I believe we are now moving forward with it. This group serves multiple purposes: It elevates the work and investments we are making in our infrastructure. For instance, this year's budget is \$113 million including, but it gets little notice as it is essential, basic maintenance to provide core services, like upgrades to a pipeline and sewage treatment. The group can also provide more accountability over large projects. If a project is going to require more funding than budgeted, this group can consider that recommendation, then advise city council. This should result in more transparency around how large projects are funded and tracked over multiple years, even when councils change frequently.

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 continue to support the bond measure as a way to save money over time by addressing the critical maintenance and facility needs now rather than at a future date. However, it did not poll well and I don't expect it to pass. We need to provide more transparency and accountability around our facility and maintenance projects so that a future bond can pass. Additionally, the city is already committed to setting more money aside to pay for maintenance, and has grown its reserves back to 20%.

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.

As stated in the packet, "assessed value as of 2025 for Boulder is \$5.0 billion and the city is limited to \$150.7 million in general obligation debt. Actual value as of 2025 for Boulder is \$51.7 billion. The change from assessed to actual value significantly increases the city's borrowing capacity." I agree with the analysis in the packet and support increasing our borrowing capacity, especially given some of the recent legislation that reduced assessed property values to soften recent property tax increases statewide. Most of our surrounding communities use actual value successfully.

However, increasing our debt capacity does not mean we should hit even close to that cap. Assessed value is less volatile than actual value, which would be more sensitive to market swings in real estate. I believe that we can take advantage of some of the new capacity but proceed very cautiously. I also believe this is part of the role of Capital Improvement Advisory Panel and would suggest that there is a clear process to notify not only council but the panel when we increase debt. We need to constantly evaluate our risk and need a consistent focus on our CIP and financing, especially as councils change.

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?

Yes, I have followed the costs, particularly because I live in the area and was here when the decision was made to purchase the land in 2015, and vaguely remember the decision to move forward after the first large increase in costs in 2019. In addition, during my campaign, I specifically discussed with Nuria whether getting office space out East due to the high vacancy rates in that area was an option. However, that door had been closed before I got on council. I also agree that there is a long-term benefit to owning our offices rather than renting, as well as bringing the employees that work in offices together. Boulder has a history of working in silos and the city will benefit from having the employees in one place.

There is a lot of transition both in council and staff. We have had 3 different finance directors in the last 5 years, and several council transitions. Therefore, we need stronger processes to track multi-year projects over time. The first is to ensure that the annual budget process includes a more detailed review of CIP projects, including forecast and actual spending. In addition, we need more information in tables/numbers/etc rather than essay form to find present day and historical information more quickly. I have also been strongly advocating for a Capital Improvement Advisory Panel (called something like) comprised of staff, community members with technical skills and a council member that looks at our portfolio of physical assets, how we fund maintenance and construction, and is made aware of changes to our forecast budgets and timelines. The school district has a similar committee used just for specific oversight of bonds that is successful in providing a clear understanding of how buildings are built and maintained in the district. I would prefer a broader role to include new and ongoing projects, not just those funded by a specific bond or tax. It looks like this will happen soon in some format.

With these changes, there would have been a clear way to communicate changes to the Alipne Balsam project or any other project and build a consistent understanding of how we are doing compared to our forecast funding. Sometimes, overages are reasonable - the council in 2015 and even in 2019 and again in 2021 didn't know construction costs would change so much. However, there needs to be a clear accounting of the changes for every project with council approval to move forward. This will be particularly important for CU South.

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?

Last year, the budget included these new allocations. Historically, programs and people funded out of general funds pay the entire amount of administrative costs for all the dedicated funds. I think it makes sense to allocate the costs but it needs to be transparent how the costs are being allocated. Each fund is different, depending on the size of the fund. For instance, I think Open Space is clearly using its fund for Open Space purposes approved by the voters. The Arts funding is trickier, where I feel the expectation from the Arts community after the compromise with the city was that a bigger portion would be directed to artists and art organization than staffing at the city level. I think the boards and commissions can play a bigger role communicating to council if they identify areas where the voter approved funds are not being spent as expected.

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?

The city just presented the response to the Wildfire priority the council put forward in January to both develop a home hardening hub to make it much easier for homeowners to harden their homes, and to identify all the work going on regarding wildfire mitigation, what the highest impact work is, and what the costs to accelerate work are. This final piece about cost is still being worked on but I am interested in accelerating home hardening in the highest risk areas, as well as making sure we reach the goal of managing fuels in 100% of the WUI and finally having clear evacuation tactics that the community understands. The hub is already in process with current funding and will play a significant role in home hardening, as homeowners have indicated not knowing what to do is a significant issue. In addition, the work to manage fuels seems reasonably on track. However, hardening homes is where more funding could be allocated. We need to set a specific goal on how many homes need to be hardened. Then, we can find out how many will do the work on their own and then determine what the funding and regulatory gap is to harden the rest. Once that gap is identified, we can work to find the funding in the next budget cycle to complete the work in a 3-year timeline.

Additionally, I believe we can do more to invite community in to work together and take pride in this work. We have provided grant funding for block parties (although we have reduced it) but I would love to help encourage neighborhoods to host their own events to showcase homes that have been hardened and how to do it, as well as communicate about how to receive emergency notifications and understand evacuation plans for each neighborhood.

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?

Downtown Boulder continues to contend with the significant changes after COVID as remote work increased and downtown office space vacancy increased, decreasing midday foot traffic. In addition, while we just recorded the lowest July and January Point in Count numbers of unsheltered homeless since 2023, there continue to be issues with public safety in our downtown areas. Finally, since I moved here in 2002, new restaurants have opened throughout Boulder, bolstering 15 minute neighborhoods, but possibly comite but outside of downtown, still contributing to tax revenue but not to the downtown itself, particularly during the week.

However, there are multiple positive initiatives moving forward. The work to activate the East Bookend, if done well and with clear connections to downtown and the Hill, should vitalize the whole area as a destination. It's important to ensure the Bookend complements rather than competes with our downtown businesses. In addition, the sale of the Spruce parking lot to develop a hotel should also activate the very heart of downtown. The Sundance Film Festival will bring much needed vitality in January and hopefully accelerate our innovation economy. It was reassuring that Sundance believes in the vitality of Boulder as well as the hotel operator. I will be interested to learn what the level of interest is for the RFPs issued for the East Bookend Development.

Finally, while the DDA was not moved forward, I think we should revisit the tools that were presented in the December Council meeting, including the DDA. Uniting the Downtown and the Hill is important, whether through combining the UHGID and CAGID and combining a joint BID, or pursuing a DDA with much more comprehensive community engagement, including the taxing districts and representatives from the dedicated funds like Open Space.

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 do support this proposal and believe that it would benefit both the city council and the city manager. The shift to outcome-based budgeting has been challenging. Measuring programs and services is time-consuming, especially when you are dealing with the day-to-day management of a city. A performance auditor can look at how our programs and services are working with a new lens. The need is clear. The city manager herself recognized the need for better internal monitoring of programs and hired an internal monitor, starting with an audit into our purchasing practices. By moving the function under the oversight of council, the city manager will be able to suggest areas to be audited as well as council.

It is critical in this work to shape the auditor as a constructive function to truly improve our ability to serve the community. It will help build community trust and ideally validate the work of our staff by adding more transparency about where we are seeing success, and where we adjust our work and do better.

I am particularly interested in an audit that includes both county and city investments and grants. While this would require buy-in from the County, I believe understanding how our funding and programs fit into or alongside the county is important.

Finally, I'll add that it's important to also do the CIP advisory panel. There's no guarantee that future councils will choose to include maintenance and infrastructure in their future audits. Given that this infrastructure is how we deliver core services, I will continue to advocate for this committee.

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?

None

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