

# Colorado Springs City Council Candidate Survey

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Date: 3-5-21

**1. Do you support or oppose increasing taxes or fees, or the establishment of new taxes and fees? If you support increasing taxes and fees (or establishing new taxes and fees), what would be acceptable reasons to you?**

Only taxes when necessary, and particularly if we can really justify, the increase is for a limited time, and within context of what we other taxes voters have already approved. For example, because we lowered 2C by .05% recently, I would support an increase to the TOPS tax by that amount or a little more, if we can make a good case for the need and still keep our total sales tax at 8.25%.

As far as fees go, I know that they are based on the costs of that service. When our gas rates go down, we lower rates at Utilities. If the expenses for the Pikes Peak Highway have to increase because we have to pave the highway, based on the Sierra Club lawsuit, well then, we should be able to raise them. Because of Issue 300, we can't co-mingle our enterprises, so there is really a cost of service particular to each Enterprise that has to be justified. The same for growth impact fees.

I also support a LART increase for overnight stays in the community, particularly now, to help the struggling tourist economy and 90% of that increase would be paid by tourists. But I don't support the same increase on rental cars, because much is paid by locals.

**2. What is your position regarding the elimination of motor vehicle traffic lanes (road-dieting) in favor of installing bicycle lanes? Please explain.**

I am in favor of doing only in places where there is not much traffic, a good amount of bike use and/or it would help with speeding in areas where children and pedestrians frequent. I am not in favor of placing on every new street, or on any major arterial.

**3. What is your opinion of infill projects that receive opposition from neighbors? Should zoning change projects proceed—even with opposition from the majority of neighbors living there?**

It really depends. I understand that many residents purchased their homes thinking that their neighborhood wouldn't change. There are also sometimes impacts to property values that aren't fair for those making that investment. However, the other side is that as we grow as a city, if we keep growing out instead of in, we will have more future impacts on all taxpayers because it is more expensive to provide services to an increasing geographic area. We are already 200 square miles. There needs to be a balance. The other factor that most don't understand is if an area is properly zoned for a use, and the applicant has done all the due diligence and studies for all of the approvals,

then we may not have a legal basis to say no. One example is the Ridge Apartment Complex behind the Safeway on South Academy. It was zoned for that use, there were other uses similar allowed, they dotted all their I's with every transportation, drainage, landslide, ADA study required. If we had said no because neighbors didn't want, then we would have had a Section 106 complaint. Or we would have been sued and lost. One way of being a good steward of taxpayer's money is to not get our government into unnecessary or unwinnable and expensive lawsuits.

- 4. As Colorado Springs expands in population and infill projects press forward, infrastructure is stressed. What is your solution for financing new infrastructure? I agree that we need to increase our Police and Fire impact fees (in the process of), institute a "Park Impact fee" for all new development and continue to assess transportation and Utility impact fees for new development. I also think we should revisit the Park Land Dedication Ordinance decision to lower the acreage donated.**

However, I am a fan of reducing or waiving some of those if Affordable or Attainable Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing (for the chronically homeless) are going to be built. By the way, it is much cheaper to provide services for infill than sprawl (greenfield), but it is more expensive to "build" that infill because it often involves removing old infrastructure and constructing new.

- 5. As COVID-19 closures and restrictions persist, many local businesses are suffering. What should be done for businesses and their employees?**

I can answer this first-hand as we have had to close our restaurant and café since July. We need to continue to look for every opportunity to waive, delay or offer payment plans for all the fees, licenses and charges to small business that would normally occur in a non-COVID time. We need to continue to expedite and simplify the applications for all the Federal and State funding that we receive to get money as easily as possible into local businesses hands. And we need to continue to be creative, like waiving zoning requirements for outdoor dining, liquor sales to go and be as proactive as we can for variances and local control through the State Health Department and the Governor. I wish there was a role for the City in helping employees, but most of that rests with the State and County in terms of job training, placement, and other assistance. But we can certainly be more creative working with the County and non-profits to deliver services, aid, health care through our community centers, city buildings, fire stations and police substations. If we continue to get a good amount of sales tax revenue, I wouldn't be opposed to hiring temporary unemployed workers for city projects.

- 6. Local activists raised the issue of defunding the Colorado Springs Police Department. Do you support or oppose increasing the number of Colorado Springs police officers? Please explain.**

I support increasing to the level that we need to have rapid response times to priority one calls. We are better than a decade ago, but have more recruiting to go to get to a 8-12 minute response time. We are also suffering a tremendous rise in substance-use disorder, mental health crisis's, traffic accidents and domestic violence. I do favor a broader outreach for those particular calls to service if there is little threat of serious violence. And I do believe in Community Policing, like Trenton, NJ, that can help diffuse violence before it occurs, which also increases the need for more officers.

- 7. Colorado Springs has a stormwater fee of \$5 per home, and \$30 per acre for businesses. The current council members appear to be in favor of a fee increase and will likely increase it soon. Many of the violations ruled on in a recent EPA lawsuit found that the City failed to enforce requirements that construction site operators implement appropriate measures to prevent polluted stormwater from running off active construction sites. During your term, will you vote to raise the stormwater fee?**

Yes, we already have. We knew this would happen as the EPA lawsuit got settled as we put an increase in as a placeholder in the initiative. Here's the deal. When we had a Stormwater Enterprise in 2005 and kept the 1 cent sales tax for capital infrastructure in 1991, that would have prevented the above. But as you know, the old Council took the Enterprise away in 09 because of Issue 300 and we been seriously underfunded for building out stormwater infrastructure and monitoring it for three decades. Thus the lawsuit. And yes, we could maybe go back to developers who we didn't require enough from or didn't have the staff to monitor, but that's not going to do anything but get us sued. Today, we have a good Drainage Criteria Manuel in place and lots of monitoring. But most of the problems stem from our old development. We have a perfect storm (excuse the pun) with our geography. Highly erodible soil (shale and sandstone), huge elevation drops, bringing in lots of new water to the community and one receptacle for all of the above - Fountain Creek. Fountain Creek was meant to be dry half the year. And its shores are made of sand. As one the Founders of the Fountain Creek Watershed District, the creator of the Lower Ark Water Conservancy District, a key player in getting SDS and having been on the Council that created the first Stormwater Enterprise, I have my master's degree in CS stormwater problems.

- 8. Do you support or oppose the implementation of recreational marijuana within the City of Colorado Springs in order to capture additional tax revenue?**

Yes. The two dispensaries in Manitou could be the highest volume in the Country, except maybe for the old Pinon truck stop on 1-25 right over the El Paso County border. Probably losing 8-12 million dollars a year in revenue, maybe more. And I think that the Council and the Mayor should control instead of forcing proponents to collect signatures and petition on to the ballot. They want the 128 current medical dispensaries to allow for co-sales. I think that is way too many. And we need funding for our police department to help handle "driving while impaired," for drug education in the schools, and certainly could use more money for Affordable Housing and the Homeless.

- 9. There is a push in the City for separate affordable housing complexes. According to the National Association of Realtors, the average price of a home in Colorado Springs increased from \$175,000 to \$371,900 in 10 years. Wages have not kept up with that increase. What is your solution to help residents afford housing?**

We need to pull out all the stops that we can to incent the marketplace to build more affordable units. As I mentioned above with fees and exactions. But we can also be more creative. We need to create "land banking" like other cities have done, both with City and Utility land, but also to allow Churches and non-profits to donate land as well. Land is often the most expensive part of building. And we need to stand up to neighborhoods that don't want "those people" living there, when appropriate. And finally, we can be more creative with voluntary inclusionary zoning, where we allow for more height, less setback, less parking, etc., if the multifamily builder is willing to set aside a percentage that is not market rate.

**10. Is there anything else you want the taxpayers to know about you, or is there an important topic we didn't ask about that you want to share?**

I know this may not be what you support, but how CSU builds out distributed energy (solar panels on private homes and businesses) with battery storage and a smart grid (broadband for all), is going to be an important investment that we make today that ensure an energy future that is reasonable for ratepayers, particularly as we heat up and have to saturate our built environment with energy consuming air conditioners. Also, Regional growth and transportation planning will be critical as we grow.