

Colorado Springs City Council Candidate Survey

Candidate name: Justin Hermes

District: 5

Website: Justinhermes.com

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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?

I do not believe in raising taxes in Colorado Springs. We are already experiencing an affordability issue in this city. Raising taxes could cripple those who are already being priced out of our wonderful city.

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

Only .5% of Colorado Springs citizens commute to and from work on a bicycle. I think way to much time and effort was put into expanding the bikes lanes. I do agree we need more bike lanes in certain areas but the way they were implemented and the time and energy spent on this topic was concerning.

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?

This is a tricky question as we need to be more flexible with zoning code so we can provide more affordability in town. Infill must be a priority as it is more affordable than building new developments. With the infrastructure, water and sewer and public safety already in place this is a very cost effective way to provide more housing. At the same time proper democracy must be carried out and if a majority of citizens feel the project or land use is not appropriate then concessions need to be made so both the developer and resident feel common ground has been reached.

4. As Colorado Springs expands in population and infill projects press forward, infrastructure is stressed. What is your solution for financing new infrastructure?

Taxes on these new developments and the use of metro districts should help finance the infrastructure needed. We also need to make sure the developers are paying their fair share when it comes to development fees and costs.

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

All businesses should be fully open immediately. It is a constitutional right for Americans to run their businesses as they see fit. I believe those who are at risk will make the decision to stay out of environments

that put them in harms way. We can not continue to cripple these industries any longer with government overreach.

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 think defunding the Police department is the most absurd thing I have ever heard. These men and women protect us day in and day out. We need to make sure they feel our support now more than ever.

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?

I do not believe in raising the storm water fee.

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

I believe citizens of this city deserve the right to vote on this decision. If we want proper democracy when issues are this pressing and important for the city we must let the people voices be heard.

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 remove the red tape and regulations that increase costs for builders and developers. If we offer more flexibility with the zoning code and land use decisions this problem can solve itself. Imagine if we encouraged investors to convert class b office space into affordable housing. With an ample amount of vacant office space we could help solve this issue immediately. We just have to remove the barriers to entry and encourage investors and builders to convert buildings we already have in place.

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 believe the Citadel mall is one of the largest assets in district 5. Currently 93,000 square feet is for sale for only 3.5 million. That's a mere 37 dollars a square foot! If we focus on this area and turn investors back to the Citadel Mall it can be revitalized. Many cities have had success repurposing big box malls.

I absolutely love this Country and feel extremely blessed to be born in one of the best cities in the United States! I'm a proud patriot and don't want to see the city I grew up in turn into another California.