



**John Gerstle**

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**What do you see as the vital components to the future of Boulder's economic vitality and what specific strategies would you support as a City Councilmember to maintain a vibrant economy?**

Boulder's economy has been described as a pyramid, with employment by Federal Labs, CU, County and City representing much of the triangle. In the past, small service businesses and entrepreneurial ventures formed much of the rest of the pyramid; however today development and tech businesses are taking over much of that portion of the economy, and local small service and entrepreneurial ventures suffer from economic downturns. Specific action is required to protect our small businesses to maintain a diverse and resilient economy. This must be a focus of our City policy documents, from the Comprehensive Plan to the Land Use Code. I envision the Boulder Chamber of Commerce playing an important role as a partner with the City in identifying and developing effective actions. I expect that these actions might include arrangements for the preservation of affordable space and accommodations required for these businesses and services. Tools to preserve affordable commercial space could include programs as diverse as: landmarking local businesses themselves and providing tax credits to landlords who extend long-term, reasonable-cost leases; requiring smaller and thus more affordable commercial spaces in new developments; ensuring displaced businesses have the right of first refusal for affordable spaces in new developments; and several other policy options.

**What do you believe are the most pressing human service needs in the City of Boulder and why?**

The most pressing human service needs are related to the impact on low wage earners of the cost of living in Boulder. For too many, housing takes an unacceptably high percentage of income, so that affordable housing is a critical need. Homelessness is one symptom of how difficult it can be to find affordable housing in Boulder, and continuing the City's focus on a programmatic approach to moving people out of homelessness is critical. Improving the state of emergency support services and integrating the provision of those services would create a more accessible and efficient system for quick response for those in need.

**What do you believe is the appropriate role for the City of Boulder in addressing human service needs (e.g. housing, food, health care) for low income/marginalized people in our community?**

The City of Boulder's role in addressing human service needs is provide funds, policy initiatives and leadership in developing collaborative solutions for Boulder's low income/marginalized population. Boulder should support County-wide efforts, including the regional housing plan, addressing homelessness, and enhancing coordination of service providers by providing input on lessons learned from our City programs related to affordable housing, homelessness and emergency services.

**The City has spent a considerable amount of money on buying the Boulder Community Hospital site. The site currently sits vacant and debt service accrues. Should this project be accelerated and how should it be developed?**

The project should not be accelerated and it should be developed based largely on community input. The Boulder Community Hospital site is not entirely vacant. There is an important medical Hospice facility located there, and there are also other facilities that provide key health services to the Boulder community. Plans to refurbish one of the buildings on the site for temporary uses have already been announced. The City Council intends to involve the larger community in plans for using this site, and several planning initiatives have already been started. I support continuing to develop an excellent plan that makes maximum use of this unique site. It is an opportunity that is unlikely to come along again, and we should do the absolute best with it that we can.

**Do you support the Transportation Master Plan's goal of increasing the mode share of bicycles from 10% to 30% by 2035 to achieve the community's environmental and livability goals? If so, what concrete steps do you propose to achieve this and how do you anticipate doing that while maintaining safety for cyclists and motorists alike?**

I believe the real goals of the Transportation Master Plan should be to improve mobility, reduce congestion and decrease emissions. Increasing the mode share of bicycles is one of a number of ways to achieve those goals. I have never seen the calculations that produced the 30% goal by 2035, so I do not know if that is the right objective, but I support providing more bike routes, lanes and paths of adequate size for safety of bicyclists, and improved maintenance of biking infrastructure. The Transportation Master Plan should be updated periodically with funding identified in the Transportation CIP to fund this infrastructure and its maintenance.

**What strategies do you support regarding land use, housing and transportation policies and programs to address the impacts of our in-commuting workforce?**

I support a focus on dealing with in-commuters more efficiently. To accommodate this population with housing would require doubling or tripling the population of Boulder, which is unacceptable. I would support remote parking and shuttles, van pools, better

bus service and user fees. I would support a requirement for users to pay for all parking. I would also support a community-wide Ecopass for all residents, and would also support a requirement for Boulder employers to provide an Ecopass to all employees working in Boulder. Money is the best incentive/disincentive and there is fairness in charging the source of the problem in order to change behavior, and to raise funds for the provision of alternative transport measures.

**Tell us your vision for open space moving forward, including specifically the challenges regarding the success of huge visitation. Would you prioritize either protection or recreation on a hypothetical new property?**

My vision is that, on the 50th anniversary of the citizens of Boulder voting to tax ourselves to create Boulder's Open Space program, existing eco-systems and large blocks of habitat are preserved for the next 50 years. Achieving this vision will require careful management of the growing visitation to Open Space, currently approaching 6 million visits per year. This vision includes acknowledgement by all of us who love to visit Open Space that we all have impacts, even the least and most careful of us, and that we may have to restrict ourselves in some ways to preserve this iconic treasure that makes Boulder what it is. Active management of the growing use of our Open Space is essential if we are to avoid a "Tragedy of the Commons" situation, in which overuse results in degradation and destruction of the resource we have worked so hard to protect. Without knowing the location size and habitat of a hypothetical new acquisition, it is impossible to hypothetically prioritize protection or recreation.

Boulder has already adopted its Open Space Acquisition Plan (in 2013) and is moving ahead with the development of the Open Space Master Plan.

**Do you support Boulder's drive to municipalize its electric utility? If so, what are the limits on taxpayer dollars and time you are prepared to spend to achieve that goal and, if not, how do you propose to achieve Boulder's renewable energy goals?**

I do support Boulder's effort to municipalize our electric utility. We are at a critical point where the cost of wind is cheaper than coal and solar is getting close. If we can keep the costs of becoming a municipal electric utility within a reasonable range, we should have cleaner energy at comparable prices and reliability to Xcel. If the cost of municipalizing turns out to be too great, we should press to convert Colorado to competitive energy supply, where customers can choose their energy suppliers, a system that is common in other parts of the US and elsewhere, and to increase the statewide renewable energy requirements that all electric energy suppliers must meet.

**What transportation solutions would you suggest to ease congestion, especially resulting from 49,000 in-commuters, specifically those that drive alone? Would you favor solutions to improve roads and parking; bus or other transportation; cycling and walking, or some combination thereof? How would you fund transportation improvements? Do you favor higher parking costs and other disincentives to driving?**

We currently have around 100,000 residents of Boulder, 97,000 jobs in the city, and 30,000 Boulder residents working in Boulder. This means significant traffic congestion impacts from workers driving into Boulder. I would support improved bus service, remote parking with better transit and/or shuttles, van pools, delivery services, and charging for all parking. We should also have a city-wide Ecopass system, and require all employers to provide Ecopasses for employees working in Boulder, as well as charging employees for parking facilities, so that the cost is made clear and obvious both to employers and employees.

**Despite Boulder's reputation as a "green" community, our per-capita carbon footprint is pretty high. How can we shape our built environment and transportation systems for lower impact?**

There are a number of measures we can implement to lower the carbon impact of our built environment and transportation systems: require new development to be net zero; combine jobs, services and housing in careful mixed development based on area or neighborhood plans; transition to the use of electric vehicles; implement incentives and disincentives to shift to alternative modes of transportation, which have been described in above questions; require servers for big tech companies to run on renewable energy sources. The City should also develop and incentive program to encourage the improvement of energy performance of existing housing, and establish a community-wide Ecopass to encourage use of public transit.

**Do you support Boulder's inclusionary housing ordinance requirements to produce permanently affordable housing? Should the requirements include permanently affordable middle income housing? And, what do you think is the appropriate mix of permanently affordable rental versus ownership units?**

Yes, but improvements are needed, which the council is currently considering. These include increasing the percentage of affordable units from 20% to 25% and creating incentives for more of the units to be constructed on the project site rather than through use of the cash in lieu option. Permanently affordable housing for middle income residents is an increasing need as housing prices continue to climb steeply, and requirements to provide this range of housing affordability should be included in the updated Inclusionary Housing program. Currently and in past years, the mix of rental versus ownership units in Boulder has been split about 50/50. The market determines what the mix will be, and as a practical matter, at the present time the market and general real estate environment doesn't favor permanently affordable housing units that are owned by the occupant. I believe that the City should become more active in developing deed-restricted occupant-ownership

affordable housing which would remain permanently affordable but provide the additional long-term security and other desirable aspects of ownership.

**Accessory dwelling units – otherwise known as “granny flats” – have been considered as one option for expanding affordable housing options in established neighborhoods. Please explain your position on whether or not ADUs are an appropriate affordable housing tool for our community?**

As part of a neighborhood plan, the addition of ADU’s would provide a useful housing option. It is not a solution to long-term affordability since the value of the residence to which an ADU is attached will increase with the added value of another unit as part of the property. The owner who develops the ADU will reap a windfall when selling his/her property, and then the price will respond to the housing market by escalating. It would, however, provide some additional housing supply to the market in a manner which may be more acceptable to neighborhoods than other measures.

**What’s your vision for Boulder’s growth and development over the next 20 years?**

My vision for Boulder’s growth is that it should be limited to the extent necessary to preserve the quality of the community that we have invested in over the years. The City’s thoughtfulness, care and restraint has given us a city that has accessible governance, its citizens, who can know their city council members by their first names, can call or email them and get responses, and feel that we have some control over the future of our community. I want to preserve that aspect of Boulder. I also want to ensure that Boulder keeps its character and the desirable physical aspects which have been so successful in making this where we want to live.

**What are your specific strategies for promoting civil public discourse around growth and development? Please indicate what level of commitment you would have in regards to collaboration, consensus building and joint problem solving to address this issue?**

I would support strong leadership by city council to implement the recommendations of the Public Participation Committee Report. I think there should be significant citizen involvement earlier in the development process. I would strongly support amendments to bring more clarity and certainty to our Development Review process. Currently it is so flexible and uncertain that many developments turn into a lengthy battle over what seems a City’ “let’s make a deal” development process. This is an inefficient and expensive process for the developer, the City and for the public, evidence of which is that very few are happy with the results. My approach to this conundrum would be for the City to take a much more active role in the conceptual and practical decision-making associated with new development project, so that it can provide clearer and more useful guidance at an early stage, rather than reacting to proposals from developers. I have a very high level of commitment to collaboration, consensus building and joint problem solving; however, I would start with a process designed to get the results that we want, not thrash around trying to get agreement out of our current unsatisfactory procedures.