



**Matt Benjamin**

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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?**

With an unemployment rate of 1.8%, it's hard to improve on what is virtually full employment. The biggest threat to our local economy right now is the cost of office and retail space. This is driving a lot of small businesses out of Boulder and hurting the diversity of our business sector. As property values continue to increase, small businesses will be squeezed the same way low and middle income families are being squeezed out of Boulder. We are already seeing this happen on Pearl Street and other surrounding areas. Turning current and building new space that is truly affordable for office and retail will help maintain economic diversity. Another threat that is related is the lack of affordable housing. Some businesses are choosing to relocate out of Boulder in order to be closer to where their employees live. As housing costs continues to rise we may become victims of our own success. I strongly support affordable housing across an economic spectrum in order to keep the business that we cherish here in Boulder.

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

Housing is the most pressing need in Boulder. The housing crisis is affecting just about every group across the city. From low/middle income individuals and families who can't afford to live in Boulder to those that live on fixed incomes and can't afford the rising property taxes. With a surging economy marked by an unemployment rate of 1.8%, there is simply not enough housing for those that work here. The skyrocketing housing market has disproportionately affected middle class families. They are being forced out and we aren't building enough affordable inventory to draw them back. This is also having an adverse impact on the number of children under the age of 18 in Boulder. In turn this will affect Boulder Valley School District and its schools west of 28th. I will focus on slowing the annual loss of the inventory of affordable housing and aggressively pursue community land trust as a mechanism to establish actual permanence within our affordable housing market.

**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?**

We have an obligation to help those in the greatest need; bottom line is the city is their safety net. The economic and societal effort we make to improve the lives of those in need is emblematic of the character of our community. The City needs to work harder to provide affordable housing across the entire economic spectrum. We need to provide more homeless shelters year-round to provide them with a constant source of security. We have around 300 homeless families register with BVSD. We must make sure that these children know that there is hope and opportunity for them to have a bright future. Food equity is a huge part of helping underserved communities, and the schools carry this load during the school-year - annual programs need our support. Childhood obesity disproportionately affects these groups and we can help limit the huge economic costs of healthcare by providing healthy food and teaching good eating habits.

**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?**

This large central property has the potential to add great value to the community. Some public trust has eroded with council and a project of this scope serves as a great opportunity to build back public trust. We can do this by taking in public comment and using some of the recommendations from the Public Participation Working Group. There is enough space for us to focus on more than one city priority and as it's city owned land, this should be extremely affordable for occupancy. Affordable housing, mixed use, renewable energy, bicycle centric areas and central/open public space should be included in the design. I do think this project should be accelerated but only with the mindset of achieving our larger goals, not just to check a box. This is 8.8 acres in central Boulder and needs to be done right the first time. The public trust and excitement is key to making this a success.

**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 support increasing the mode share of bicycles, but we need to completely rethink the transportation Master plan as in many ways it is already obsolete. At over 3 years old, this plan does not adequately address and/or make recommendations on the explosive growth of electric and autonomous vehicles in the next 10-15 years. In fact, the Master Plan mentions electric vehicles only once and doesn't even use the words "autonomous vehicle". This transportation revolution will happen long before 2035, so thinking about exclusively bicycle goals beyond that is ignorant. This paradigm shift will force us to reevaluate how bicycles, mass transit

and personal vehicles all exist together. We should not be investing in infrastructure changes that we will change again within the next decade. As a city council member I will facilitate the transportation experts to derive solutions that meet our city goals that prepare Boulder for the future of transit.

**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 focusing on efficient land use and zoning. We have many areas that do not support enough density or need to be zoned for housing. We should not put pressure on neighborhoods until we can objectively show that we have maximized the zoning efficiency in and around the center of Boulder. One of the biggest examples of this is the geographic center of Boulder, east side of Foothills between Arapahoe & Pearl. This is a majority warehouses and the land is so valuable the price for renting is astronomical. With a large amount of businesses over off of Pearl & Foothills it makes sense to re-zone some of these warehouses and parking lots to housing and to build affordable housing developments. This would minimize a huge amount of in-commuters. Boulder cannot house all of the 65,000 in-commuters, so I would also work closer with the County and our sister cities to developing strategies that increase public transportation routes.

**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?**

Conservation is the priority of Open Space. The increasing recreational demand means we have to take a closer look at the levels of environmental impacts. Boulder has some very sensitive areas of Open Space and recreation should not impact them negatively. Areas with a lower environmental sensitivity should be given greater latitude to develop recreation. It is vital that the OSMP lay out a strategy that directs people to recreation sites and provides infrastructure to meet those needs. The massive visitation and degradation on Chautauqua could have been managed better if we were proactive. We must look to the next heavy-use areas (NCAR and Sanitas) and plan for increasing impacts. A hypothetical property should be based on what is needed. If it's recreation, then purchase open space that has minimal environmental sensitivity. If the goal is protecting a sensitive area that is under threat, then we should understand it will not be developed.

**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?**

First and foremost I support Boulder's efforts to reach our climate goals of 100% renewable energy by 2030. I have supported the drive to municipalize, but I am concerned that the Muni itself has become the goal. I have always viewed the Muni as one of many avenues to reach our goal. I will be hard pressed to continue to

support the Muni if it's cost dramatically exceed the voter approved \$214Million and/or our projected time table draws out beyond 2030. The Muni should not distract us from implementing several solutions large and small to accomplish our goals. I will push for Boulder to provide a local renewable energy incentive for residential and commercial buildings. We should add a renewable energy requirement to our leading Net Zero program for commercial development. These are concrete steps that get us closer to our goal while we anticipate what the PUC and courts decide about the fate of our Municipal electric utility.

**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?**

Based on city data there are roughly 65,000 people and 49,000 vehicles commuting daily into Boulder. The solution to ease this congestion is a combination. We need to rethink our Transportation Master Plan to focus on the transportation revolution to electric and autonomous vehicles within 10-15 years. The last thing we should do is spend money now on a problem that will either not exist or will be completely different in the next decade. One solution that will help prepare for the next decade is to decouple pedestrian/bicycle movement from that of vehicles. A prime example is that of the hill and the traffic on Broadway from Baseline to University. There are 10 traffic lights and one underpass in 1.7 miles. We should look at additional under or overpasses for pedestrians and bicycles to increase their safety and movement. The Chautauqua pilot program this summer was a huge success and should be implemented daily in the summer.

**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?**

In many ways the Transportation revolution I have mentioned brings with it an energy revolution. Some recent studies point to between 7,000 and 10,000 electric vehicles in Boulder in less than 10 years. We can make a loose estimate that the average battery will hold 30 kW of electricity. By 2028 we will have roughly 300 MW of stored electricity moving throughout Boulder. There are a plethora of creative solutions that leverage this new abundance. We have every ability and reason to plan for this future and that means we can start taking steps now. We should partner with our newest neighbor, Google, to explore and analyze the transportation and energy revolution. Google is the backbone of autonomous vehicles and will be crucial in shaping the future of Boulder. This partnership should provide insight on how to prepare policy, infrastructure and management to prepare for this new future.

**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?**

We should aim to increase our middle-income housing inventory. We have done a good job in the past few years building up permanently affordable housing stock so it's time to keep balance in the economic diversity of our overall housing inventory. The middle class is being squeezed out of Boulder and these working families are essential to the vibrancy of our businesses and schools. Before changing the percentage mix of affordable versus ownership units we have bigger priorities. First modify our "Cash in lieu" program so that we are no longer creating a financial incentive to buy out of and dilute our housing goals. We also need to slow the loss of affordable units from our inventory. I strongly support studying and implementing "community land trusts" to stabilize the affordable housing inventory. If we don't stop the hemorrhaging of the units we will be building in pursuit of our affordable housing goals in perpetuity.

**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?**

First of all I don't like the term "granny flats". We have a tremendously active population of people over the age of 60. Many of them can run, bike and ski circles around their middle age counterparts. Plus in this town these units are valuable to more than other groups like researchers on sabbatical and artists to name a few. Let's stick with the term ADU's. I support the use of ADU's as a tool for addressing affordable housing. These units are more than just affordable places to live. They also offer a means of auxiliary income to many in Boulder who are on fixed income and struggling to keep up with our increasing property taxes. To avoid the same frustration and fear we had centered around Co-Ops, I will work hard to engage these neighborhoods in a constructive conversations align their needs with that of the rest of our community.

**What's your vision for Boulders growth and development over the next 20 years?**

There are really three parts to growth and development: commercial development, residential development and transportation. Balanced communities recognize that these three pillars of growth and development must be planned for and implemented in lock-step with each other. As soon as one of them gets out of sync the others will suffer. We are seeing this uneven shift here in Boulder. Our commercial development has gotten ahead of our housing and our transportation system lags even further behind that. We must put our efforts into our housing and transportation solutions to get them back on par with our commercial development. We have a transportation revolution coming in the next 10-15 years that we must prepare for. In many ways the future of transportation will likely become the driving force of what, how and where

we develop in the years to come and not the other way around like it is today.

**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?**

This years report from the Public Participation Working Group identified a lot of problems and laid out some very good strategies. This report needs to be taken seriously in order for us to lower the temperature and reduce the polarization that is crippling our community. In particular the "9 steps to public engagement" offers a compelling mechanism from which we can build trust and foster and inclusive public process. I will support "sub community plans" to help align neighborhood and City goals. By focusing on areas of agreement we build a foundation of trust that sets us up for success when we face more challenging issues.

**What is the most important issue to you in Boulder and what kind of leadership will you provide for addressing it?**

Effective Governance is the most important issue in Boulder.. It is the umbrella from which all the issues we have discussed either succeeds or fails. Effective governance starts with building trust and accountability within the community. In order to build back that trust, city council must take the time to listen, engage and facilitate public participation on the issues facing our community. This takes time, and with the City's current agenda we don't provide adequate time for it to be fruitful. This means that we have to choose "quality" issues over "quantity" to foster the changes needed for an inclusive community and democracy. We need to resist the national polarization and remember that change percolates up, it doesn't trickle down.

**As a Boulder City Council member what kind of legacy will you look to leave?**

Many Native American cultures planned for seven generation out. We struggle to plan for two years out. Protecting and preparing our environment and community for future generations is the greatest legacy any of us can leave behind. In the 21st century, change happens much faster than ever before. As a result, our future seems to arrive sooner than many of us expect. It is in this modern reality that my time on council will be spent putting our future first. I want my legacy on council to be remembered for preparing Boulder for tomorrow and bringing back trust and accountability in local government. I will be a balanced participant and independent thinker as I collaborate on crafting policy for our future generations.