

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 *

David Martus

Why are you running for City Council or Mayor? *

Simply put, I love Boulder. I moved here just over 41 years ago and love it as much today. I am a station in life where I believe my perspective, channeled in a positive and pragmatic way, will help the city deliver more, even in an era of limited resources.

I will listen carefully, lead with integrity, and focus on practical solutions.

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.

I understand Boulder's Council-Manager system as a deliberate division between democratic policy direction and professional administration. Council's job is to set priorities, adopt ordinances, approve the budget and capital plan, establish performance expectations, and hold the City Manager accountable for implementation. The Mayor is an elected Council member with important leadership, agenda-setting, meeting-management, and representative responsibilities, but is not a separate chief executive. The City Manager, appointed by Council, manages day-to-day operations and directs staff. City staff bring professional expertise, develop options, carry out adopted policy, manage contracts, and report results.

As an individual Council member, I would not direct staff or attempt to manage city operations. My role would be to actively listen, work with my Council colleagues to set clear policy and budget direction, ask rigorous questions about cost and outcomes, and hold the City Manager accountable for implementing the policy Council adopts. Council should avoid micromanaging staff, but it should also never become a passive rubber stamp. We should be clear about expected outcomes, cost limits, milestones, and reporting requirements.

For example, on wildfire resilience, I would work with Council colleagues to establish a focused, measurable policy package: prioritize the highest-risk evacuation routes, critical infrastructure, and vulnerable neighborhoods; establish annual targets for defensible-space assessments, home-hardening assistance, acres treated, and evacuation-readiness improvements; and require regular public reporting on costs and results achieved.

Staff would develop technical options, coordinate with Boulder County, fire agencies, utilities, HOAs, and residents, and provide Council with costed alternatives. Council would select the policy direction, funding level, and priority order after public input. The City Manager and staff would manage implementation, while Council would receive regular milestone reports and revisit the policy if costs or results diverged materially from what was approved.

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 one of Council's most important policy documents. It is where priorities become real: every commitment of staff time, debt capacity, tax revenue, and capital funding means fewer resources are available for something else. Council's responsibility is not merely to balance the budget on paper. It is to make deliberate choices, protect essential services and reserves, evaluate long-term operating and maintenance obligations, and ensure residents can see what they are receiving for their money.

Boulder's 2026 approved budget is \$521 million across all funds, including \$407.7 million for operations and \$113.3 million for capital. I would advocate for the addition of Priority Based Budgeting ("PBB"), similar to what Boulder County does to identify which programs deliver the most public value, meet legal obligations, advance city council priorities, and can be made more efficient before services are reduced.

Under a traditional incremental budget, departments often begin with last year's funding and negotiate changes. Boulder County's PBB approach instead evaluates the services and programs supported by the budget.

Departments are asked to consider:

- Which services create the greatest value for residents.
- Which programs are legally required or otherwise essential.
- How well a service aligns with the Board of County Commissioners' strategic priorities.
- Whether process, staffing, purchasing, technology, or delivery changes could lower costs before eliminating or reducing a public service.

The stated aim is to make selective, evidence-informed choices—not simply reduce every department's allocation by the same amount.

Doing this is a transparent way, I believe, would improve results and improve the public's understanding of the inherent trade-offs involved.

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 support maintaining safe, functional public facilities and addressing legitimate deferred maintenance. However, I do not support Ordinance 8758 in its current form because the measure asks voters to authorize up to \$400 million in new debt, with a maximum repayment cost of up to \$650 million, before the city provided sufficient project-level scope, cost certainty, prioritization, and accountability protections. My understating is if Ordinance 8762 does not pass, the city would not be able to issue all of the bonds as it would exceed current limits.

The proposed bond would fund the South and North Boulder recreation centers, fire stations, a public-safety and 911 facility, the Municipal Service Center, and the Penfield Tate II Municipal Building. If fully issued, the city estimates an additional annual property tax cost of about \$400 for a \$1 million home; the levy ends once the debt is paid.

Those are important facilities. Before asking residents to assume this level of long-term debt, Council should show a transparent, independently reviewed project list that distinguishes urgent life-safety needs from desirable improvements; identifies the full cost of each project, including financing and future operating costs; compares renovation, replacement, phased construction, and lower-cost alternatives; and makes clear what work will be deferred if the bond does not pass.

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.

Circa \$150 million for GO debt as the assessed value for Boulder is just over \$5 billion.

Actual valuation is roughly 15x assessed value, so roughly \$75 billion of value and Ord 8762 would change the debt limit to over \$2 billion.

While the 3% on actual value is consistent with Denver, I would advocate for a public debt policy with enforceable guardrails: a lower operational debt ceiling, affordability tests tied to annual debt service and revenues, project-level business cases, clear limits on using debt for routine expenses, and a requirement that major future debt issuances receive voter approval.

Fort Collins, for instance, has a limit of 10% of assessed value. Increasing the limit by circa 15x is not prudent fiscal policy.

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 public discussion of Alpine-Balsam and the concerns about escalating or unclear total project costs. Alpine-Balsam is the type of major, multiyear project that requires Council to actively monitor and repeatedly get updates on: What is the current all-in cost? What has changed since approval? What benefits are still achievable? What are the remaining risks? What alternatives are now available?

Sometimes, challenging decisions will have to be made to keep costs in line with benefits.

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?

Dedicated taxes should be administered professionally, and some legitimate share of citywide services—such as finance, legal, human resources, technology, procurement, and accounting—can be necessary to deliver the voter-approved purpose. But “administrative cost” must never become an opaque mechanism for shifting general-government costs to be paid by restricted funds. The public is entitled to see clearly what it is paying for and why it is reasonably connected to the purpose voters approved.

Budget materials released for 2027 make it difficult to understand these allocations. For instance, The Open Space and Mountain Parks budget includes \$525,000 for "Increase to Transfers & Cost Allocation Guidelines". Without any context for that, it is difficult to understand what the impact is.

I would advocate for greater transparency and simpler metrics in this area.

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?

Wildfire is a life-safety issue, and Boulder must concentrate limited resources where they reduce the greatest risk to people, homes, evacuation, water, energy, and emergency response. I would advocate for three priorities and allocate funds where the benefits are highest.

- 1) Protect people where fire becomes catastrophic: evacuation routes, emergency access, critical utilities, water infrastructure, and the highest-risk wildland-urban-interface neighborhoods.
- 2) Ensure the fire-rescue system is prepared for early detection and rapid initial response
- 3) Focus on home hardening and neighborhood-level preparedness. The city should expand practical support such as detailed home assessments, targeted grants or low-cost financing with special attention to lower-income residents and communities that face disproportionate risk.

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?

I would advocate for actions that do not require a new authority: reducing avoidable permitting complexity & delays; improving cleanliness, lighting, and public safety; supporting small businesses with predictable regulation and exploring how their costs can be reduced; expanding downtown housing where appropriate; and working with property owners to address high occupancy costs and vacant storefronts. We should understand what mix of retail and services downtown visitors would patronize.

We should also understand what segment of downtown visitors has been spending less downtown (recent sales tax declines downtown) and what it will take to get them to return/spend more time and money downtown. Success begets success and I believe we can create momentum for downtown that will build on itself.

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 support establishing a Performance Auditor, provided the office is carefully designed to be independent, appropriately scoped, and focused on improving results.

We should measure its effectiveness and after three years, decide to continue it, modify or eliminate it if the results do not justify the expense.

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?

N/A

This form was created inside of Open Boulder Foundation.

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