

Open Space Questionnaire

1. Survey after survey has shown that people who get out into nature have a stronger desire to save the environment. Fostering this love of nature means finding ways to excite people with different backgrounds who may not simply want to slowly hike through our open spaces. But, we know that more users means more impact. Where do you draw the line in terms of increased access for groups who may want to enjoy our open spaces in different ways like picnic areas, biking trails, fishing, etc? Can we increase and improve the recreation opportunities on Boulder's open space and also save our more-wild places like designated wilderness areas?

I agree with your statement about the desirability of outdoor experience, but I do not think there is a hard and fast line with respect to balancing impacts against access. Everything depends upon context. What is the nature of the activity, what is the projected impact, what is the sensitivity of the land in terms of danger from degradation (i.e., what is its present condition), what are the protected species on that land, etc.? I am open to selective increases in recreation opportunities where that can be done in a manner that calculates and minimizes impacts and does not endanger threatened species.

2. The North Sky Trail, a vital multi-use connector trail between Boulder City and open space areas to the north, was approved after lengthy discussion during the North Trail Study Area process but has been stalled for nearly five years. If elected to council, how would you unstick this process and complete the trail within your first term?

As I understand it, staff is actively working on the analysis and design of the trails necessary to carry out the mandate for the North Sky Trail. However, this will be an entirely new trail, which will require substantial allocations of funds to construct and complete, in an environment in which OSMP lacks the funds even for the maintenance of existing trails, and if the passage of Ballot Measure 2H does not occur, their budget will be cut by 30%. So I suggest that a necessary step in bringing the NST into reality is the passage of 2H, with the knowledge that new sources of capital funding will still be necessary to actually construct this project. I support NST, but to suggest that some regulatory roadblock is all that stands between the approval and the opening of the trail is a simplification of the issue. And if the concern is that staff is not implementing the mandate of the approval of NST quickly enough, I point out that that in this questionnaire you have solicited support for expedited processing of the North Sky Trail, the Front Range Trail, the Union-Pacific Trail and the Trail Around Boulder, each of which will require enormous amounts of work, and unidentified capital sources. Without identifying a proper funding mechanism for these projects, none of the work performed on them will actually be executed. I can support them all, but the conversation about how to get from here to there is a bit more nuanced than your question implies.

3. What is your position related to acquisition versus maintenance of our current OSMP land stock? On what grounds should we acquire new properties?

In the current economic climate, and with so many unmet maintenance needs relating to our Open Space, I lean towards maintenance rather than acquisition. That does not mean that we should abandon all efforts to acquire properties when they represent special opportunities in terms of advantageous pricing, or represent particularly desirable parcels that would be important additions to our current open space; I merely suggest that maintenance is the higher immediate priority, subject to special opportunities that may present themselves. I am not happy about it, and hope that with passage of Ballot Measure 2H (which I support) and a better economic climate we can provide more resources for acquisition over time.

4. How would you address increased visitation of OSMP?

I am somewhat skeptical about the initiation of parking and user fees, due to their inherently regressive nature, but I recognize that, if current patterns continue, we will need even more funds than will be available via Ballot Measure 2H to preserve and maintain our Open Space, and achieve any of the goals specified in this questionnaire. With 6 million annual visitors impacting these lands, and with all maintenance expenses currently funded by a city of 108,000 people, the situation is increasingly untenable. Perhaps we can begin to discuss the possibility of a more regional approach to funding our Open Space in order to deal with these large-scale impacts, but if that is not feasible, we will need to look at user or parking fees, or limitations on visitors to the most impacted areas of Open Space.

5. What role does recreation play in a healthy society? How would you support that in future policy?

It should play an enormous role; the alternative is a society of couch potatoes. We already support the importance of recreation through the preservation of an environment that attracts hikers, bikers, and runners. We are probably the outdoor recreation capital of America, and I believe that we are already properly elevating recreation to a place of critical importance in Boulder, both in its own right and as a driver of our critical tourist industry.

6. Where do you see yourself on the conservation vs. recreation spectrum with regards to Open Space? Specifically, as a council member would you likely vote against an OSMP-recommended new trail or other recreation facility because of conservation or environmental concerns, or would you support it if the research showed that those concerns were insignificant or could be mitigated?

While I am receptive to the creation of additional resources for active recreationists I always seek to balance that against our requirements for conservation. Our Open Space has been handed down to us from prior generations. We are merely its current stewards, and it is our obligation to pass it down to the next generation in no less a condition than we received it. And I say that as an active recreationist, who has climbed in Eldorado, the Flatirons and Boulder Canyon for 40 years (and please, no comments permitted on the current feebleness of my climbing abilities.). Of course, I am inclined to accept a trail recommended in the OSMP if the research shows insignificant impacts, or easily mitigated impacts. But the reverse is equally true: I would be disinclined to reject an OSMP recommendation not to proceed if the impacts were substantial or not easily mitigated.

I also want to be clear that I am not opposed to active recreational uses of the Open Space. As a climber for 47 years, it would be a bit odd if that were the case. But I emphasize the need to balance that objective with an ethic that seeks to maintain the most sensitive lands and habitats in a manner that is consistent with our Open Space mission for the past 50 years

7. Do you feel that hikers, mountain bikers, trail runners, equestrians, and other trail users can all have a positive experience on a shared multi-use trail in OSMP?

As a hiker I have never had a problem with trail runners on the same trail. It is easy enough for runners to alert hikers that they are passing through when approaching them from behind, and it is visually simple to spot a trail runner who coming toward you. Consequently, I have never experienced any conflict with those two uses: I stop, the runner passes, usually with a friendly greeting, and we all move on. Equestrians and bikers are more problematic. With equestrians there is the issue of waste material and impacts upon the trail itself. With mountain bikers, the issue is the desire for speed, and the safety of those in the way. In my experience, a multi-use trail that permits hikers and bikers often becomes a bike trail for all but the most intrepid hikers, and certainly not for families with children. So I believe there is some inherent conflict there. Where bike trails or equestrian trails are feasible and appropriate, I prefer to designate them as such and make those uses primary. The issue is not so much requiring all users to coexist on the same trail as it is providing enough trails for all users.

8. Several multi-use regional trails have been proposed over the years (including the Front Range Trail, the Boulder-to-Erie Union Pacific Rail-Trail conversion, and others) but the connectivity stalls when there is a need to include OSMP land in the process. Would you support these regional trails, and why or why not?

I would point out that an update on the Union Pacific Trail is scheduled for an updated on the January agenda of OSBT, and we will presumably know more at that time. I certainly support more regional trails, but, the process for bringing them into reality requires: 1) Approval by all regulatory agencies; 2) Necessary land must be acquired; 3) Detailed plans must be developed for construction; 4) Money must be allocated in the capital improvements budget; and 5) Construction must occur. Accordingly, these are all multi-year projects. In addition, here again, we run into the issue of funding new construction in an environment of declining revenues for that purpose, problematic passage of 2H, and an inability to fund even the maintenance of existing trails. The question seems to imply that OSMP is the roadblock for the realization of these objectives. I suggest that the lack of resources is the primary culprit. More support for more funding is the way to bring these projects into reality, and I support both the concept of the regional trails, and the funding necessary to make them possible.

9. One of BATCO's initiatives is the Trail Around Boulder, a 34-mile multi-use trail encircling the City of Boulder, which would allow access to, and appreciation of, Boulder's amazing geographic setting. It would connect neighborhoods and would offer transportation alternatives to the car, encourage a healthy lifestyle, attract visitors to Boulder, and make trails fun again. It would link existing trails, 80% of which are already in place, and would require only about 7 miles of new trails all of which could be

carefully designed to avoid sensitive habitats. Yet the City of Boulder (OSMP) has resisted all attempts to complete the Trail Around Boulder. Would you support this trail, and why or why not?

I confess that I am not deeply informed about this issue, but your question assumes that there is no basis for OSMP's determination and that they are arbitrarily and improperly denying approval of a trail that you support. Can you demonstrate that that all of the required new trails will avoid sensitive habitats? Is there any other basis for their objections? If you suggest that, as a member of Council, I should defer to OSMP's determination in favor of a new trail (see your Question 6), should I not also defer to a contrary determination? However, having said that, I will certainly avail myself of the opportunity to learn more about the history of the Trail Around Boulder and attempt to come to my own conclusion as to its benefits, and the reasons it has not been completed.

10. Recent articles in the local media have spotlighted communication issues within several City departments, including Planning, Public Works, and Transportation. A consulting firm hired by the City found that arduous, slow, and unpredictable decision making, a lack of discipline in implementing procedures, and lack of support from Council, resulted in staff dissatisfaction. The same problems plague Open Space and Mountain Parks but the issue is much larger than staff dissatisfaction. Many members of the public have contributed thousands of hours of volunteer time, expertise, and effort to OSMP management -- only to experience similar frustration with Council overriding sensitive negotiations in seemingly arbitrary votes that promote a different preconceived agenda. As a Council member, how would you improve relations between the City and the public?

Welcome to representative democracy. It is messy and uncertain, and results in disappointed constituencies and a great deal of frustration. As anyone would, I prefer staff to be contented and satisfied to the extent possible. However, that satisfaction is not the exclusive purpose of approval processes, getting to the correct answer for Boulder is. And I am not sure what the evidence is that Council acts in an arbitrary manner based on a preconceived agenda, and I state that as someone who has experienced disappointment on any number of Council decisions. I know all of the members of Council, and while I often disagree with their conclusions, I have not found one member who does not perform their role in a serious, thoughtful manner, even if not in the manner I would have desired. You raise issues that are valid, but solutions will not be advanced by this kind of characterization of those who are presently deciding them.

11. Do you feel that recreation is adequately represented on the current OSBT? Why or why not?

I am not a supporter of atomizing the OSBT: one climber, one biker, one conservationist etc. That is contrary to the manner in which I believe it should work. I expect Council to appoint serious, qualified individuals to serve in this important capacity, with a perspective that can accommodate all of the voices concerned with Open Space issues, and I am less concerned that they represent a particular constituency.