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Candidate Questionnaire | City of Arvada | 2021 Municipal Election

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1. Please tell us about yourself and why you are interested in running (or running for another term) for elected office in the City of Arvada?

I am licensed landscape architect and urban designer with 12 years of experience designing, managing, and leading innovative public realm infrastructure projects and mixed-use developments. I am a LEED Accredited Professional, with the highest scoring LEED ND Gold development in Colorado (Sloan's Lake). I've spent the last 5 years on the Arvada Planning Commission, where I am currently the Vice Chair. Because of my background in design and development, I provide a unique voice on planning commission often negotiating for better outcomes by making amendments to motions and providing critical guidance to City Council.

Arvada is growing rapidly and the choices and decisions we make today will directly impact the quality of life for generations to come. I am running for City Council At-Large because the citizens of Arvada deserve a qualified design voice with a history of service and commitment to guide Arvada's growth. Arvada has proven to be one of the greatest places to live in the county. It is clear the secret is out, and people want to join our community. I believe this is positive for Arvada and that the necessary housing and infrastructure projects that follow are a great opportunity to shape the future of the city while preserving historic charm and empowering existing communities.

2. What do you identify as the top three issues facing the City of Arvada and how do you think they should they be addressed?

The top three issues facing the City of Arvada are public safety, increasing access to housing options/affordability, and investment in roadway infrastructure that keeps regional traffic off local roads.

These issues are directly related to managing growth. My highest priory as a City Council member will be addressing growth with a collaborative and informed approach. I will draw on my leadership background in the design of complete streets

and mixed-use developments to advocate for expanding roadway infrastructure and transportation options (including bike lanes, micro transit, and trails), to build consensus between City staff and my fellow councilors on critical housing issues (relying more on the free market and incentives than restrictive policies), and to ensure public safety remains a hallmark for all of Arvada by investing in our public safety professionals.

3. There are a number of ways local policies, codes, regulations and fees add to the overall cost of housing. Also, when development occurs, there are a number of economic and benefits regarding housing supply that result. What role does residential development play in your vision for the future of Arvada and what do you believe is the appropriate way for the town to guide and/or manage growth?

As I said earlier, Arvada has proven to be one of the greatest places to live in the county and people want to join our community. I believe growth is positive for Arvada and that the necessary housing and infrastructure projects that we now need are a great opportunity to shape the future of the city while preserving historic charm and empowering existing communities.

When I am elected to City Council, I will use my position to encourage partnerships between realtors, developers, builders and the City to find public improvement opportunities throughout Arvada, specifically in underserved neighborhoods. Historically, investment in facilities like recreational centers and parks have proven to build stronger communities and create additional development opportunities

In my vision of the future, increased residential development, especially a diverse mix of housing types, will strengthen communities and help stabilize pricing. However, context is everything and not every housing product needs to be represented in every location. The market responds to shifts in demand quickly and policy change is a slow process. I will look for opportunities to incentivize missing housing products rather than add new restrictions on the market that will drive business elsewhere.

4. Affordable or inclusionary housing has become a major policy discussion in many jurisdictions as builders try to keep up with housing demand. Please share your thoughts on affordable housing and any policy ideas you have on this subject.

Affordable housing is mentioned as a priority in the comprehensive plan but is not a requirement in current city policy or code. I know that markets respond faster than policy changes and I generally prefer to allow markets to freely meet the needs of consumers.

Currently, there are federal programs for housing that subsidize the cost for a few lucky program participants. Because of the program rules, existing Arvada residents have no greater chance of success in their applications than applicants from out of town or even out of state. Thus, these programs do little to help existing residents find affordable options.

I view affordable housing as one tool in the effort to make housing more attainable. Subsidized housing will not solve the affordability issues associated with a white-hot housing market. A select few will benefit but the larger population will still be dealing with an inflated market. There are only two sustainable options to curb or even lower housing costs, -make Arvada a less desirable place to live or build more housing.

That's it, everything else is a micro solution to a macro problem. Building more housing is necessary, I support building diverse housing products across the city that respond well to local needs and character.

5. Water rates and water connection fees, often referred to as tap fees, are the subject of ongoing analysis, review and connection fee increases. Of course, these tap fees factor into the overall cost to develop a home and the affordability of the home to the end purchaser. What are your thoughts on water connection fees and how do you factor in the end result of increasing the cost of housing? Feel free to include any additional thoughts you have on water and water supply as well.

If the City would like to see a larger diversity of housing products, including micro units and cottages, their needs to be some incentive for developers and homebuilders to deliver these products. The economics of the construction industry have become wildly unpredictable, and a middle ground is needed. As a City Councilor, I would look for incentives that put some skin in the game for the City by potentially having a sliding scale for tap fees based on square footages and housing type. I think there are several reasons why a market for cottages or micro units could work in Arvada; age-in-place, affordability, workforce, college, etc. We should work together to find an amicable solution to lowering housing cost rather than simply force restrictions on home builders.

In our high desert environment water is life. Arvada is well ahead of neighboring municipalities with our well-balanced water fund. The city has proven that conservative fiscal responsibility leads to better long-term resource security.

As a licensed landscape architect, I know there are several low barrier-to-entry solutions for water conservation in how we use plant material across the city. Low water use turf and ground cover is preferred over traditional lawn, but even better is native grass and low water tree canopy. I would work with our parks department to make sure we are getting the most out of our limited water resources in public spaces and ensure better options for city funded landscape improvement grants for residents.

6. Metropolitan Districts play a big role toward developing communities including, but not limited to: roads, water, sewer systems, parks and open spaces, landscaping, common area amenities, safety and traffic lights, intersections, pest control and more. They also enable the ability to offer considerably more attainable/affordable housing than if they are not used when developing a community. Given that Metro Districts can be the determining factor of whether a project can actually work or not, what are your thoughts or position on this subject?

Metro District, like TIFs are a tool, and an important option for keeping options on the table when we take a broader look at what the city needs. I am a big fan of options when considering long-term growth and investment strategies. Metro Districts may not always be necessary, but when looking at a redevelopment site in an area that needs a complete infrastructure overhaul or an entirely new series of infrastructure investments along with housing etc., creating a Metro District may be the only option for developers.

I understand there is some concern about Metro District from community members. They are basically their own mini governments with budgets and expenditures and there is additional tax collected within the borders. However, it is important to understand that without this particular finance tool there would be far less development opportunities in our city, especially in areas with limited resources and service, these are typically the areas that need reinvestment the most.

7. Given the adoption of a limited residential growth initiative in Lakewood and a limited growth initiative for the 11 Front Range communities that may come back in the future, please explain your thoughts and position on limited residential growth policies.

I do not support growth caps like the one implemented in Lakewood. I view growth caps as a short-sided solution to a long-term issue. Cities with growth caps have solved little with these policies. Traffic, parking, and housing prices are still issues, even more so in some cases. I prefer to be more proactive and look to the market to help solve gaps in product type and inventory.

8. New or infill development often creates controversy in surrounding neighborhoods and communities. How do you look at these types of situations and what do you think is a successful model for community and developer interaction?

This is an excellent question; I encourage reviewers to read this published article I wrote on the subject. [Infill Article by Michael P. Griffith](#)

It is important to speak two languages when working with a community on a new development. We must be fluent in both “designer” and “neighbor.” Infill development or even new development can be challenging. On one hand, redevelopment can expand economic opportunities; provide new, affordable, and missing middle housing; offer better-connected streets; enhance food and retail options; and create more sustainable developments. On the other hand, managing such change can be difficult, especially when members of the affected community aren’t sure what it will mean for their neighborhood.

It is not enough to simply listen to the concerns of the community in which you are developing. It is not even enough to design your master plan with their needs in mind. You will face an uphill battle every time if you fail to actively listen and then communicate back what you are doing and why. This is critical.

In the absence of clear and consistent updates, people will speculate. The last thing you want is misinformation about the development spreading. Make it a priority from the beginning to establish clear communication plans for every step of the process. Have methods in place for both effectively listening as well as for communicating.

Successful infill and new development projects maintain a two-way dialogue throughout the planning and design process, acknowledge challenges and work through them rather than steamrolling ahead, and demonstrate a commitment to long-term success of the project by investing in the physical and economic longevity as well as the resilience of a new place.

9. If elected, how would you involve and work with the home building industry?

Along with calls for more affordable housing there is interest in more single-family homes, paired homes, condos, micro units, and apartments. Housing in Arvada is in high demand, and I believe that isn't going to change anytime soon. As a City Councilor, I would look for opportunities for the City to partner with members of the home building industry to share notes on market trends, sustainability goals, economic drivers, and geographic research.

I would support identifying historically underserved and undervalued neighborhoods in Arvada to be evaluated for public improvement projects that would open opportunities for developers and realtors. We are all in this together and I intend on working with residents, staff, developers, and home builders to find right sized solutions to fit any context.