

Overland Mountain Bike Association - 2021 City of Fort Collins Mayoral & City Council Candidate Questions Regarding Parks/Open Spaces & Non-Motorized Singletrack Trails

Nick Armstrong – City Council Candidate District 1 – NickForFoCo.com // Nick@NickForFoCo.com and 970-581-3036 for any clarification ☺ Thank you!

1. Do you ever ride a mountain bike on our local trails?

No, but I would like to. The problem is much of District 1 (including the part I live in) is not connected to the rest of Fort Collins by way of bike lanes, trails, or sidewalks. Because we force development to “pay their own way” for EVERY aspect of a community, including trail connections, rather than building out the trail network first and then allowing developers to hook into it (to augment, repair, or reroute as needed), we end up with island neighborhoods that have no connectivity to each other or the rest of Fort Collins.

2. How often do you recreate in any way on our local trails and which trail is your favorite?

Spring Creek trail is my favorite and we often hold the Kessel Runners 5K training runs there in the spring in non-covid years. To reach almost every trail in Fort Collins for most of District 1 requires a car to drive to or a willingness to ride along long stretches of dangerous, unprotected bike lane and/or shoulder routes.

3. Singletrack trails and outdoor recreation in general are a major economic component of northern Colorado. OMBA envisions trail expansion as a substantial economic driver in Fort Collins, similar to the Bentonville and northwest Arkansas area. A study completed by the Walton Family Foundation & People for Bikes demonstrated that recreational trails provide an **annual** economic benefit of \$137M to that area. How do you see recreational trails impacting our local economy & what could you do to increase this value?

Trails are vital connector and cultural hubs, providing a much-needed recreation and alternative transit corridor. We must work to actively connect all of Fort Collins neighborhoods and then Fort Collins to neighboring communities like Windsor, Wellington, and Loveland. When it comes to mountain biking, there’s a significant need for more trails and, in particular, augmenting maintenance and spreading the load across the entire network through creative methodologies. We can bolster our local economy through “mountain bike tours” and other services that can help accomplish both of the above while also creating jobs in our community.

4. Youth mountain biking is exploding in popularity around the state of Colorado and across the nation, but access to mountain biking trails in Fort Collins is extremely limited for non-driving youth. Current options are limited to the more advanced Foothills Trail or riding along busy roadways, such as Taft Hill towards Loveland or CR 38E around the south end of Horsetooth, thus creating significant safety concerns for younger riders. What would you do to improve the safe access to singletrack trails for youth riders & non-driving individuals from our urban areas?

We need to flip the script on City policy requiring development to fund and plan and pay for literally EVERY aspect of infrastructure. We have to commit to investing in our own alternative

transport infrastructure connecting neighborhoods to each other and the rest of Fort Collins, including our amazing trails and recreational areas.

5. Bike parks have become active community hubs in many cities & towns across the US & the world. The City of Boulder opened Valmont Bike Park in 2011 to rave reviews, and it is now the Gold Standard for all community bike parks. With no local options, many Fort Collins residents drive themselves and their kids to Boulder and beyond nearly every weekend for this activity. Do you see this as a local need and would you support developing a large-scale municipal bike park in Fort Collins?

Yes, absolutely. We should seek to develop something like this in the upcoming North East Fort Collins community park.

6. Expanding on the last question...as a complement to the new Poudre Whitewater Park, a downtown area bike park designed & built to fit into the natural environment along the Poudre corridor could create an "outdoor recreation hub" to go along with all the other downtown area amenities, thus providing new opportunities for many residents & families and much improved access for several underserved audiences. Do you see this as a positive or a negative for the City of Fort Collins and why?

Positive – the Whitewater park is easily accessible to the Northside Aztlan Community Center as well, which bolsters recreational opportunities for nearby underserved audiences. Expanding the recreation activities in this area will be a major boon to one of the fastest growing and most densely populated areas in our community.

7. Singletrack trail systems in Fort Collins are seeing more use than ever, with demand growing rapidly every year. The past year's response to the Covid pandemic has given us a window into what our trails & trailheads will look like as our population growth continues, and without appropriate planning, it doesn't look good. It has also shown how critical trails and outdoor recreation are to the health & well-being of our residents. What will you do as a Fort Collins Mayor/City Council member to address these overcrowding issues and expand access on City singletrack trails such as Maxwell/Foothills, Coyote Ridge & Bobcat Ridge? How should the City responsibly expand access to City trails for all residents?

Three key things:

1. Work with the community to build more trails and access points with excellent signage and even some video tours to help spread the load across the entire network.
2. Work with the Economic Health Department, United Way, and OMBA to help establish a volunteer trail maintenance force.
3. Augment this trail maintenance force in the style of FDR's Works Progress Administration to provide a pathway for our community's homeless to have stable jobs with reliable income working on trail creation and maintenance along with housing assistance, medical and mental health services, and other systemic support.
8. Fort Collins has been a leader in developing a robust, interconnected paved trail system throughout our urban areas. One glaring gap, however, is the lack of connectivity to open space trails on the west side of town such as Lory State Park, Horsetooth Mountain and Coyote Ridge, where the vast majority of trail users are forced to drive to already overcrowded parking areas. OMBA's Trails Vision Plan supports the development of new multi-use singletrack trails around the south side of Horsetooth, the

north side of Horsetooth, and between Cathy Fromme & Coyote Ridge to create a fully connected trail system encircling the reservoir. What benefits do you see with this interconnected system, and would you support collaborating with Larimer County and other agencies on this project? Why or why not?

Yes, 100%. This is a key component of my larger platform – reconnecting Fort Collins neighborhoods through policy changes that interconnect neighborhoods through trails and bike lanes without relying on developers to do so. Building out the ENTIRETY of the trail system is a critical quality of life and economic, environmental, and equity investment that we MUST start making today. Car-only access to recreation doesn't net you much benefit and it's a key deterrent for low-income families... and, as you alluded to in the question: it creates rampant overuse of existing trails that then has to be offset in other ways.

9. "People don't need trails, the land does." Conservationists and Recreationists agree that thoughtfully planned, constructed and maintained trails better conserve the land and environment while providing a better experience for users. Mountain bikers tend to be the most engaged of all trail users when it comes to the quality of trails meeting expectations. Mountain bikers also tend to show up in large numbers to provide input for management plans/decisions as well as on-the-ground work. With tens of thousands of mountain bikers residing in Fort Collins and the real potential of significant budget issues over the next several years, what role do you see volunteers playing in regard to trail building, maintenance & patrol assistance on City of Fort Collins singletrack trails?

The mountain bike community is a key resource for the City, and coordinating their feedback and efforts through the OMBA to City Council is important and meaningful work. The City Parks and Recreation department can and should be doing ongoing, purposeful outreach via listening sessions and ride-alongs to help identify key issues and needs, then in reporting back to the Council, we can make policy changes and resource allocation improvements, leveraging volunteers and community members to assist in the work. I'm not sure what programs already exist in this area, but I'd love to learn more about how we can help leverage the work already being done as well as create pathways for more direct partnership.