

2023 FC City Council Candidate Questionnaire: Emily Francis

Candidate Questions:

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

Yes, I do!

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

I am an avid trail runner and new to mountain biking. My favorite trail in town is Maxwell/Pineridge because it is walking distance from my house. I also enjoy Timber and Nomad trails in Lory State Park.

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, which sees an annual economic benefit of over \$150M from recreational trails. How do you see recreational trails impacting our local economy & what will you do as a member of City Council to increase this value for Fort Collins?**

Fort Collins is lucky to have attractive and accessible natural areas and trail systems. These are a benefit to both residents and visitors. Fort Collins has long shown their support for outdoor recreation and I will continue to represent those values at City Hall.

4. **Youth mountain biking is exploding in popularity around the state and the nation. However, access to mountain biking trails for all ability levels in Fort Collins remains extremely limited, especially for non-driving youth. Current options are the more advanced Foothills Trail or otherwise require riding along busy roadways, such as south Taft Hill or CR 38E toward Horsetooth to access county trails, which exposes major safety concerns. What will you do to allow for safe accessible singletrack trails for youth riders of all ages from our urban areas?**

It is important to keep and expand our accessible trail system in Fort Collins. Much of the land suitable for single track is owned by Larimer County. Working with the County on a joint partnership to expand trail access would help riders of all ages, and one I would pursue.

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. We have also seen recent bike park additions to many towns along the Front Range & throughout Colorado, such as Berthoud, Firestone, Erie, Golden, Frisco, Leadville, Minturn, Basalt and more. 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?**

I am supportive of a bike park in Fort Collins. Finding the best location that is accessible and equitable would be important to ensure kids can easily access the bike park.

6. **Expanding on the last question...as a complement to the new Poudre Whitewater Park, a downtown area bike park within Legacy Park has been discussed as a possible location. Designing & building it to fit well within the natural environment along the Poudre River corridor within Legacy Park would create new access to high-quality outdoor recreation & nature connections for many area residents & families, especially for several underserved communities north of the river. Do you see this as a positive or a negative for the City and why?**

I think looking at an array of options to find the best location would be necessary. Ensuring for accessibility, equity, environmental impacts, and other factors would need to be considered. It would be important to have youth at the table to gain their insight and perspective.

7. **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 Open Space and Coyote Ridge, where the vast majority of trail users are forced to drive to already overcrowded trailheads. Nearly every weekend and now many weekdays see hundreds of vehicles turned away from local trailheads due to full parking lots. Most of these vehicles then drive from property to property trying to find parking so they can recreate. Or, they park illegally which leads to additional negative issues. OMBA's Trails Vision Plan supports the development of new multi-use singletrack trails around the south side of Horsetooth Reservoir, the north side of Horsetooth Reservoir, 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 what would you do to support this taking shape?**

Having a connected trail system is beneficial for everyone. It reduces vehicle miles traveled, provides an array of options for different riding abilities, and provides more access. It is great that so many residents want to get outdoors and appreciate our natural environment, it is important we mitigate impacts and plan correctly. As mentioned above, it would be beneficial to work with Larimer County in these endeavors.

8. **Through an open public input process, a significant number of community residents voiced strong support for the inclusion of a bike park as part of a larger multi-use space in the former Hughes Stadium property. In 2021, Fort Collins residents voted to approve a ballot measure requiring the City to attempt to acquire the property for uses such as "parks, recreation, and open lands, natural areas, and wildlife rescue and restoration." Inclusion of a bike park within this property clearly fits well within this ballot language. Do you support the inclusion of a bike park as part of a larger multi-functional space within this property? Why or why not?**

As mentioned above, I think it would be beneficial to expand the scope and see where is the best place to build a bike park in Fort Collins. It would be important to me that people can easily and safely bike to the bike park.

9. **Our Climate Future Plan accurately identifies the need to greatly reduce carbon emissions throughout our community. In the questions above you get a sense of a recurring theme...the need for most of our community residents and visitors to drive to access a highly sought after experience that has high value to many in our community - that being trail-based recreation. Whether that's driving to Boulder for a bike park experience, or driving to Horsetooth for a hike, forcing more people into vehicles so they can recreate outdoors completely goes against everything Our Climate Future Plan represents. Combined with the well-known health & wellness, mental health, stress, and economic benefits of trails, please tell us how you will support efforts to significantly improve safe & well-connected access for these trail-based recreation experiences.**

As an outdoor enthusiast and resident who spends hours on our trail system every week I can personally speak to the benefits (mentally, physically, emotionally, economically) of outdoor recreation and connecting with our natural environment. Having safe, accessible, well connected trails is critical to building a system that is open to all residents. It is important to me to work with our regional partners, youth, and users to understand and build a better system for now and the future.