

# 2023 FC City Council Candidate Questionnaire: Eric Hamrick

## Candidate Questions:

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

Yes, I do, but very infrequently. I am more of a hard trail/road cyclist. However, I do actively support protecting open spaces and natural areas upon which the trails are constructed. Most of our favorite trails are located on these lands.

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

As an avid hiker and Volunteer Ranger Assistant for Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins, I hike/bike as often as I can, but mainly during the spring, summer, and fall months. My favorite trails would be at the Bobcat Ridge and Coyote Ridge Natural Area, as well as the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space.

As a cyclist I bike on a regular basis primarily sticking to the hard trail system. I live close to the Power Trail, so my favorite ride is out to Watson Lake along the Poudre Trail. I also like riding out to Boyd Lake using the Power Trail heading south. Utilizing the Spring Creek Trail, we ride over to Spring Canyon Park and then head south to Loveland (there has been some great improvements to the trail system).

### **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?**

Since most of the trails are located within or in close proximity to open spaces and natural areas, I take a big picture approach to this question. Open spaces and natural areas attract numerous visitors including cyclists that provide a positive economic benefit for our local economy. What I can do to increase that value is to continue to support efforts to conserve more open spaces and natural areas (before it is too late). These conserved areas will, in turn, provide more possibilities for trails and recreation.

### **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?**

I agree this is an issue that needs attention. Significant areas of our local community bike trails have gaps or intersections and areas that need improvement as it relates to bike safety. In addition to being a safety hazard, they discourage residents from these activities. I support the goals and objectives of The Vision Zero Action Plan which aims to create safer streets so there are no deaths or serious injuries by 2032. Expanded public transportation must be funded to ensure that it is integrated with active transportation modes and infrastructure (e.g., bicycle-sharing stations), and connects with all parts of our community.

Also I would look to Overland Mountain Bike Association for recommendations and prioritization.

**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?**

Yes. Biking is one of the most popular activities in Fort Collins for all ages and skill levels. A bike park is in high demand and would serve the community's interest by providing a place for social gatherings, family-friendly activities, and recreation accessible to people of all ages and abilities. Any park must be connected to the existing trail system to ensure that residents of all ages and skill level can safely access the 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?**

Difficult to answer the question without additional information (i.e., land may already be reserved for other uses or development). For example, if the land is owned by the Natural Areas Department it is not allowed to use for this purpose because of its riparian habitat value. In any case I would prefer an alternative location for the bike park that may be a bit larger and accessible to residents and visitors. Traffic congestion, potential nighttime use and competition with other needs would need to be examined.

**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?**

I see many benefits to connectivity - ease of access, fewer vehicle miles traveled, and safety. I would support collaborating with Larimer County and other agencies on this project because it makes sense to do so.

**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?**

No. I believe an alternative location would be better for the bike park, that would be more accessible to residents and visitors (close to I25 – maybe Montava area). Issues such as traffic congestion, potential nighttime use (lights), ease of access, noise and competition with other needs would definitely be major drawbacks/issues. Bike Parks will generate demand and often stimulate the local economy, attracting business to restaurants, bike stores, and nearby shops.

I also believe what happens at the Hughes site must align with and honor the legislative intent of the citizen-driven ballot measure. Hughes should be preserved mostly as a protected City Natural Area and Open Space. The Hughes site resides in a sensitive ecotone which is highly threatened on the Front Range and is contiguous with other Natural Areas. I support low-impact recreational activities and conservation-focused uses at Hughes (i.e., a low impact multi-use trail, existing disc golf course and sledding hill) that are protective of the ecologically sensitive foothills habitat and existing Natural Areas, and that provide free and equitable public access to nature for all residents in our community.

**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.**

You can begin by placing high demand recreational facilities closer to existing transportation infrastructure for ease of access. However for existing trails, parks, natural areas, and open spaces I would support an integrated approach to transportation that maximizes the different modes to create efficiency for the user in terms of time, cost, comfort, safety, accessibility and convenience.

Expanded public transportation must be funded to ensure that it is integrated with active transportation modes and infrastructure (e.g., bicycle-sharing stations), connects with all parts of our community, especially lower-income levels, and supports public transportation-oriented development. Increased funding in transit is critical in supporting air quality goals and in conforming with EPA compliance standards.