

2023 FC City Council Candidate Questionnaire: Julie Pignataro

Candidate Questions:

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

No, I am more of a leisurely city-rider these days

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

Not as often as I would like, but my activities on our local trails are mostly walking and hiking. The trail to Arthur's rock is one of my favorites.

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?**

The economic benefits of drawing people to our community to use our bike trails and network are huge. I will continue to work on council to make our city a welcoming one for bike tourism and work with our county leadership on where we can improve our trails

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 support the idea of a mountain bike park somewhere in our community as a place for riders of all levels to work on their skills.

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 and I am eager to work with the community to find the appropriate place for it, that is accessible and offers the same opportunities as Valmont (ie. showcasing how amazing our city is!)

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 see this as a positive: it can help with an economic boon to the North side of Fort Collins as well as take advantage of this under-used location.

- 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?**

The obvious benefits are to reduce traffic and help reduce car emissions. As indicated in an earlier answer, we can work with our county officials on the interconnectivity of the entire system – ie. collaboration is key.

- 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?**

I don't believe this is the right place for a bike park, mainly because I think closer to town would be more convenient and better economically. I look forward to continued conversations with the community as to the best use of the Hughes land but am leaning towards more low-impact uses such as cross-country trails, etc.

- 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.**

Ever since being introduced to the Vision Zero concept when I ran for office in 2019, I have been a strong proponent of this plan and am proud to have brought it forth as a priority for this past council. Now that the plan has been passed, we need to put some funding behind it to make active modes of transportation safer for our community.