

2023 FC City Council Candidate Questionnaire: Melanie Potyondy

Candidate Questions:

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

I do not. However, my husband gets out on the trails on his Black Sheep bikes as often as he can, and my two sons (especially my 7-year-old) both enjoy the Spring Canyon bike park and the singletrack trails through the open space near our home.

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

I frequently hike at Pine Ridge Natural Area, our family hikes at Reservoir Ridge and Picnic Boulders, and my 7-year-old enjoys biking at Pine Ridge with my husband.

3. Singletrack trails and outdoor recreation in general are a major economic component of northern Colorado. OMBAs 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?

With the continuity of trails stretching from Loveland to LaPorte, our craft brewery scene, and our unique downtown, I could see Fort Collins becoming a northern Colorado mountain biking destination. Expansion of mountain biking trails and/or the creation of a bike park might help us to maximize our potential in this domain.

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?

Extension of the Fossil Creek Bike Trail, west of Taft, southward to Coyote Ridge might mitigate safety concerns for individuals seeking to access the single-track trails at Coyote Ridge without needing a car. In general, increased connection between City bike infrastructure and mountain bike trails might prove fruitful.

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?

Our city prides itself on being healthy, active, and bicycle-friendly and I think a bike park fits right in with those values. An easily accessible bike terrain park would provide Fort Collins residents with ample

opportunities for recreation and social connection, fitness, and enjoyment of nature, all while enhancing our climate future by minimizing miles driven to access bike parks in surrounding communities. Having spoken with many neighbors in District 4 while campaigning, a local bike park appears to be a high priority for a wide variety of residents.

- 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 am generally in favor of expanding recreational opportunities for our city, and like the idea of more trails in proximity to the whitewater park and Old Town. However, I am hesitant to support proposals for any sort of development in the North College area that have not been vetted by the existing (primarily Latino) community that lives there. I support the City's efforts to meaningfully transform the North College corridor in conjunction with those citizens most likely to be impacted, with specific emphasis on enhancement vs. gentrification, and I would not support deviations from that mission. However, as stated earlier, I believe a bike park in Fort Collins would be a beneficial project to explore; I believe the city can and should identify an appropriate, accessible venue for this resource, assuming Legacy Park is not the ideal spot.

- 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 am in support of trail systems that would divert bikers off roads to the greatest extent possible, which this proposal seems to accommodate. I would support a collaborative approach to expanding our mountain biking trail system, and this could potentially be a boon to both the safety of bike riders and our climate goals. With members of my family wanting to access trails on the other side of the reservoir and not having a bike-friendly route to do so, I have a personal interest in expanding the trail system.

- 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?**

The city is currently in the process of collecting data from community members about what the most desired uses for the Hughes property are. Hughes is a very large property that our city is fortunate to have acquired. I believe a bike terrain park could be integrated into a portion of it in a thoughtful, attractive, and relatively low-impact manner that fits with the values of Fort Collins residents.

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.***

Reducing travel by car, especially single-occupant vehicles, is critical to the city reaching its ambitious climate goals. The more individuals we can get into the habit of using active alternatives to cars for leisure and transportation, the closer we will get to carbon neutrality. I support programming, infrastructure, and equipment subsidies that enhance residents' ability to navigate our city car-free; scooters, skateboards, traditional bikes, and e-bikes, paired with low-emission buses and ride shares, are all key components of our city's climate action plan.