

2023 FC City Council Candidate Questionnaire: Shirley Peel

Candidate Questions:

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

Sadly, I do not ride a mountain bike. However, when we lived in the middle of town, we biked almost everywhere with our 4 children. When we moved to the edge of town (Shields and Trilby) we fell out of the habit of biking, trying to hurry to get 4 kids where they needed to be all at once. 😊 I recently dusted off my bike and am slowly getting back into the habit of biking. However, I am beginning to realize that I am older now and the hills by my house are harder, so I am looking into an e-bike.

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

I walk almost every day on the Fossil Creek Trail and the Long View Trail and sometimes I ride my bike on those two trails.

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?**

I do see the economic benefit of our trails and I always am pushing for the city to take care of the trails we have as well as advocate for the responsible expansion of trails, using public/private partnerships. Our trails are well-loved (used) and we need to make sure we are caring for them not only as a health benefit, but also as an economic benefit.

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?**

Creating safe and accessible singletrack trails for youth riders in urban areas is a collaborative effort that requires planning, resources, and a commitment to sustainability and inclusivity. We need to start by involving the community, especially youth riders and their families regarding the specific needs and create partnerships within the community to advance the building of trails. Identifying suitable locations that consider factors such as proximity to residential areas, environmental impact and safety is key to the success of singletrack trails. I would like to be a part of this community conversation moving forward.

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 do see this as a local desire of our community and would support efforts to bring a Bike park to Fort Collins. We have enough members of our community who could benefit from a bike park in terms of outdoor exercise, better mental health, community building, etc. We could also see an economic benefit from a bike park as well.

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 do see the benefit of a Bike Park nestled in a natural environment to create access to a high-quality outdoor recreation and nature connections for many area residents & families. I would think this would be a positive benefit, but I would need to have more details of the proposal to look at all the ramifications of building a downtown bike park, including an environmental impact. I am happy to discuss further with our bike community.

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?**

This is what I referenced earlier when I said our trails are well-loved. I do see the benefits of an interconnected system, but again, I would need to see more details regarding this proposal and would be happy to discuss further with our bike community.

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 a council member, I hope I have gained the trust of the community as someone who is open minded to all suggestions and open to continuing dialogue with all members of our community around the many issues that arise. I fully support finding space for a bike park and I am open to discussions with all members of the community regarding the best space for the park, including looking at accessibility, environmental impacts and benefits of the placement.

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.***

Trail-based recreation experiences are obviously important to our community and our trails bring many benefits to our citizens. Continuing to connect our trails and provide easy access in Northern Colorado is an area of regionalism that I believe all our local governments need to continue to pursue together.