



Bend City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Deadline for submission: 5:00PM PDT, October 4, 2024

The City of Bend has a vibrant business community, comprised of small, medium and large businesses. As a City Council member, you will play a crucial role in supporting and fostering its growth through the policies you adopt.

To help Chamber members understand your stance on business-related issues and Chamber priorities, we kindly request your responses to the following questions. **Please limit your answers to 250 words per question.**

Completed questionnaires will be posted on the Bend Chamber website in PDF format for both Chamber members and the general public to view.

Bend Chamber Priorities and Policy Principles

Whether reviewing local city and county ordinances or weighing in on legislative proposals in Salem, the Chamber has an active and effective advocacy program.

We are a 501(c6) organization and engage in direct advocacy at all levels of government. Our guiding policy principles, set by the Chamber Board of Directors, include:

- Re-build a state where businesses thrive in our community and ensure sustainable funding sources absent additional impacts on businesses
 - Increase the supply of attainable housing, prioritizing workforce housing at 80-120 percent AMI
 - Promote economic vitality, workforce development and innovation for a vibrant business community
 - Support for transportation and infrastructure projects to alleviate traffic congestion and plan for future growth
 - Increase access to affordable, high-quality childcare; and ensure adequate funding for K-12 public education
 - Advocate for a thoughtful balance between environmental sustainability and economic health
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Please provide your name and answer the questions under each of the categories.

First / Last name*

Megan|

Norris

Economic Development & Small Business Support

1. What specific strategies do you propose to attract and retain businesses in Bend?*

The City has an important role in retaining and supporting existing businesses in Bend and in attracting new enterprises and jobs to our community. In this vein, the City has a responsibility to adopt policies and take actions to provide the foundation for future economic progress. Specifically, the City should focus on the following key areas to bolster our economic strength:

1. Investing in the infrastructure needed to support growth, including improving and expanding our roadway, bikeway, and pedestrian networks as well as our public transportation system.
2. Taking the range of actions needed to increase the supply of affordable housing, including workforce housing serving Bend residents with incomes of 80% to 120% of area median income, to help ensure that workers can afford to live and remain in our community and that businesses have the workers they need to succeed.
3. Supporting the local economy by prioritizing contracting with local businesses and finding ways to increase opportunities for local vendors to participate in major infrastructure and development projects.
4. Working with the Chamber and the local business community to identify key challenges and barriers to retaining and attracting businesses – such as the lack of affordable, quality childcare and the adequacy of our local health care system – and partnering with the private sector and other local governmental entities to support efforts to address these challenges.
5. Undertaking regionally coordinated efforts to attract new businesses that can bring high quality, good paying jobs to our city.

2. How do you plan to incorporate business issues into the biennial Council Goals?*

When the new City Council convenes in January 2025 to consider and adopt the next biennial Council Goals and Work Plan, we should bring a sharper focus on the actions we should take to help foster a supportive environment for the businesses operating in our community and to attract new high-quality jobs to Bend. While Bend has enjoyed significant economic growth in recent years, we cannot take our continued progress for granted.

Working with the Bend Economic Development Advisory Board, the Council should proactively engage the Chamber, local businesses and entrepreneurs, and community leaders to:

1. Identify the key challenges that existing businesses face and the barriers to attracting new businesses and jobs and, based on that review,
2. Develop a credible and actionable economic development strategy as was called for in the 2023-25 Council Goals and Work Plan. Developing and implementing this strategy should be a priority.

Workforce Housing & Growth

1. What specific policies do you propose to accelerate housing development for Bend's workforce?*

During my tenure on the City Council, we have worked hard to address the rising cost of housing – one of the greatest threats to Bend's sustained prosperity and one of the biggest challenges faced by working families in our community. We have supported hundreds of new affordable homes; successfully pursued federal and state funding for affordable housing including obtaining a \$5 million HUD grant; launched a new pilot Middle Housing program to provide housing opportunities for families earning between 80%-120% of the area median income; approved needed, high-quality market-rate housing; and made policy changes to facilitate the development of new housing.

While we have made progress, we have much more to do. In the years to come, we need to re-double our efforts to:

1. Create new incentives for the production of workforce housing.
2. Pursue and leverage federal and state funding to expand the supply of affordable housing.
3. Utilize feasible local funding mechanisms such as tax increment financing to spur the construction of new units.

I will work hard to continue and accelerate the progress we are making.

2. How do you plan to encourage development in the Central District, specifically mixed use commercial and residential development?*

It is important that we support development in the Central District to meet the demand for new urban mixed use commercial and residential development, to grow in an environmentally responsible manner, and to strengthen the heart of our city.

In addition to undertaking the steps needed to increase the creation of new housing on a citywide basis, the City should encourage development in the Central District by, among other things:

1. Utilizing tax increment financing to support high quality, mixed use commercial and residential development that will create a vibrant, walkable, bikable urban core for our community.
2. Making investments in infrastructure projects that provide the foundation for increased density and development in the Central District. Examples include projects such as the Hawthorne Overcrossing which create greater connectivity in the Central District; roadway, bikeway, and sidewalk improvements; and well-designed urban public spaces.
3. Recognizing in the City's permitting and regulatory process that infill development in the Central District can pose unique challenges and ensuring that the process is nimble and flexible enough to facilitate mixed use development in the urban core.

Regulatory Environment

How would you streamline bureaucracy and reduce regulatory burdens to make it easier for businesses to operate in Bend?*

We should always have as our objective an efficient city government regulatory system that protects the public interest and does so in a manner which also supports a strong local economy and business environment. The City of Bend should consistently strive to meet this standard.

A successful regulatory system is one that is, among other things, transparent, easy to navigate, has clear standards, acts on permits and other matters expeditiously, recognizes and has clear mechanisms for resolving unique situations, and holds itself accountable for the timelines and other metrics to which it has committed.

We should ensure that our regulatory functions meet best practices and, as part of the upcoming process to adopt the next biennial Council Goals and Work Plan, we should consider what specific actions we can take to achieve that goal.
