

Colorado Springs Mayor Candidate Survey

Date: March 28, 2023

Name: Yemi Mobolade

Office: Mayor

1. Do you support or oppose the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR)? Feel free to comment on projects you would support using TABOR refunds for —i.e., subsidized housing, parks, pothole repair, etc. (200 words maximum)

TABOR is part of the Colorado Constitution limiting the amount of revenue the government can retain and spend. I support the spirit of TABOR aimed at protecting Colorado taxpayers by helping to keep government spending in check. As mayor, I will responsibly steward the hard earned tax dollars of our constituents, and honor the democratic process by which the people of our city can express their public fiscal priorities. I will enforce the TABOR requirement to refund excess revenue to our local taxpayers, but I will also explore voter willingness to allow excess revenue to be retained and invested in our city's infrastructure, including fire mitigation, road repairs, housing, and public safety. The granting of these excess funds to the City demands great accountability and transparency, which I welcome and will promote. Maintaining fiscal discipline is essential to running a good business. I will bring this discipline to the mayor's office to include creating a budget, tracking spending, keeping costs down, identifying waste, building savings, employing low-cost creative solutions, and having a contingency plan.

2. Do you believe private companies should deliver goods and services to consumers and businesses? Or, should government funded enterprises be involved, such as Municipal Broadband? Please explain. (250 words maximum)

Understanding the government's role and relationship in serving our residents is non-negotiable for me. I believe the institution of government is an instrument of grace to advance the common good, elevate human dignity, protect human rights, and promote public safety for all. Therefore the three primary responsibilities of city government as established by the City Charter pertain to the administration of public safety, public infrastructure and public parks. Beyond these core services, I believe city government is sometimes necessary, but it should not interfere where it is not needed. Solutions to city problems should be developed and employed as much as possible at the most local level. As mayor, I will work in partnership with residents, families, local businesses, churches, and non-profit organizations to champion local interests while minimizing reliance on government. When it's needed, the city government must intervene with involvement scaling up gradually.

3. Do you support “road-dieting” traffic lanes in favor of bike lanes and bus lanes in Colorado Springs? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

With the exponential growth of our city, traffic crime is also growing. Keeping our residents safe is one of the most essential functions of your city government. The news of the death of the 17-year-old Doherty High School student hit and killed by a car breaks my heart and I mourn with our community. These cases are unfortunately becoming far too common in our community. The reduction of vehicle lanes and narrowing of travel lanes, “road-dieting,” offer proven traffic safety benefits including slower vehicle speeds, reducing the frequency and severity of traffic accidents, and improving safety for students, pedestrians and bicyclists. While other traffic safety measures must be considered, road-dieting compared to other traffic safety measures is an inexpensive, low-cost solution to address our traffic safety concerns, and in the end benefits all road users.

4. Do you support a study to explore expanding Constitution Avenue? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

City Council recently approved ConnectCOS, the new city-wide multimodal transportation plan, which excludes the controversial study of the possibility of extending Constitution Avenue to I-25. This study received significant pushback and the residents have spoken. I support the democratic process of citizens actively participating with the government, the amplification of voices, and residents taking part in decisions that impact their neighborhoods.

When I canvassed the neighborhoods directly impacted by the extension, one of the residents stated, “This project is 20-30 years too late, our neighborhood is already established.” I support the neighbor’s sentiment because the character of their neighborhood has already been established. However, I am supportive of addressing our east to west roadway deficiencies as our city continues to grow.

5. The Colorado Springs Red Light Camera Program has expanded over the past several years. Will you continue to support the expansion of the program or will you discontinue it? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

Two months ago, a local resident reached out to me informing me that her son was hit last October. He had the right of way with the crosswalk but the driver wanted to beat the traffic light and turned into the intersection at an accelerated speed. As a parent to three children, I can’t even imagine the pain this parent went through. With the exponential growth of our city, traffic crime is also growing. As mayor, I will prioritize public safety including safer streets for our families. My approach will include expanding the city’s Red Light Camera Program to make it safer for pedestrians and residents using all modes of transportation.

Taxpayers are currently not billed for the Red Light Camera Program. Instead, the program is funded through fines paid by those in violation. The red light cameras help change driver behavior and improve traffic safety by reducing red-light running violations. Reduction in these violations in turn reduces the number of crashes as well as the cost to our emergency services. According to the Federal Highway Administration, red-light safety cameras save communities \$39,000 to \$50,000 annually.

6. Will you support taxpayer-funded Front Range Rail? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

While Colorado Springs is currently a car-dependent city, there will be demand for new public transportation options to help meet the needs and demands of our growing community. By the year 2045, the population of the Pikes Peak region is expected to be just over one million people, approximately 50% more than in 2015. Similarly, by the year 2045, the state of Colorado will increase in population to almost 8 million Coloradoans, an increase of 47%. The expected growth in population and increase in jobs will put heavy demands on our existing transportation system and will create the need for new travel and public transit options. A passenger rail connecting the majority of the Front Range cities including Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Denver, Boulder, and Fort Collins, will benefit Colorado Springs residents in addition to the state at large. Because of this benefit, I support the Front Range Rail and believe it will help relieve traffic congestion along with fostering statewide planning and partnership. The city of Colorado Springs has conducted a study identifying a future station location in the event that the anticipated passenger rail plans materialize.

7. How do you plan to ensure public safety with an understaffed police department? (250 words maximum)

The last three years have been tough for law enforcement. Improper use of force by some has positively resulted in greater accountability and better policing for all. However, the political pressures have put undue stress on officers, leading to an unprecedented police shortage as many are quitting and retiring early. To address our 70-person police staffing shortage and ensure public safety, I will specifically do the following:

1. Address police staffing shortages by adding more police academy training classes, increasing training facilities, and bolstering recruitment efforts.
2. Close the back door, prevent early retirement and improve retention, by investing resources to boost morale within the department. These efforts will include providing (a) recognition for exemplary performance. (b) Encourage work-life balance. And (c) provide additional training and leadership development opportunities.
3. Invest in our community's relationship with law enforcement by expanding community initiatives and youth programs. These initiatives include The Illumination Project, Pikes

Peak United Way's Productive Dialogue, CSPD's Community Relations Programs, the Police Athletic League (PAL) and Play COS.

4. Prevent crime through increased partnership with policymakers and local nonprofit providers, focusing especially on expanding mental health and substance abuse treatment to the community.

8. *The Martin Drake Coal Power Plant was decommissioned 9 years earlier than required. Was that the correct decision? Please explain. (200 words maximum)*

For about 100 years, the Martin Drake Coal Power Plant provided Colorado Springs residents with reliable and cost effective energy. The decommissioning of Drake is part of our city's plan to significantly reduce carbon emissions and retire coal generation by 2030. I support the city's Sustainable Energy Plan, and our move towards cleaner energy that is environmentally safe, reliable, and affordable. Like many residents, I have questioned the expediency of the project and cannot speak intelligently into the reasons why it was decommissioned earlier than required. As mayor, I will ensure that the execution of our city plans are both transparent and in the best interest of the half a million residents that I am serving.

9. *What expenditures in the Colorado Springs City budget can be reduced or eliminated? As our future Mayor, will you commit to those reductions? Please explain. (250 words maximum)*

Maintaining fiscal discipline is essential to running a good business. I will bring this discipline to the mayor's office to include creating a budget, tracking spending, keeping costs down, identifying waste, building savings, employing low-cost creative solutions, and having a contingency plan. In addition to facilitating a smooth leadership transition, my actions within the first 30 days of taking office will be to ensure the 2023 budget priorities are being met, submit to the citizens a financial condition of the City on or before June 30th, and start the 2024 budget process on July 10th. The 2024 budget priorities will be informed by resident's top priorities to include public safety, infrastructure, and our economic vitality. The budget process will also require identifying waste and assessing the efficiency at which city departments are running.

10. *What would you consider responsible growth in Colorado Springs? Examples might include infill, expansion to the east, annexation, etc. (200 words maximum)*

As mayor, I will promote responsible growth, guided by intelligent and sustainable principles that strengthen our city infrastructure, so we can meet existing city demand and prepare for an expanding population. As we work to build communities and neighborhoods, I will lead in a way that is socially responsible, environmentally sustainable, and economically prosperous.

This includes expanded transportation options to make it easy to get around without a car, the strengthening of our sidewalk infrastructure, and improving our cycling infrastructure. This also includes protecting our water supply through new land use policies to help conserve water and water conservation efforts through education, programs and incentives to encourage residents to use water efficiently. This also includes water reuse, and the creation of new supply through water sharing with agricultural outfits in the Lower Arkansas River Valley.

As Colorado Springs grows and as we make decisions around mix-land use options, diverse housing opportunities, preserving our open spaces, and connecting our roadways, I will invite public participation and welcome diverse stakeholder input. I will lead in a way that serves citizen interest while elevating the input of our traffic engineers, water experts, and wildfire mitigation specialists in these decisions.

11. What is your plan to tackle the issues that come with a growing homeless population? (250 words maximum)

Homelessness is a complex issue caused by many different factors including substance abuse, poverty, escape from domestic violence, the lack of affordable housing, and mental illness. I have served on the Board of Springs Rescue Mission and attended 80 meet and greets across the city. The most consistent feedback I am receiving is the need to balance compassion to residents experiencing homelessness with maintaining the safety of our neighborhoods. As a pastor, I will care for our neighbors in need. As a parent of young children, my family's safety is my greatest concern. As mayor, I will prioritize both.

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless recently reported that 71 percent of people experiencing homelessness have a mental illness. Therefore my specific steps I will implement as mayor include:

1. Boost the city's partnerships with local providers that focus on mental health care.
2. Increase the number of permanent supportive housing options in our community through local partnerships, including Homeward Pikes Peak, Springs Rescue Mission, The Place, and other local providers. Supportive housing combines longer term housing with behavioral health care and intensive case management and services.
3. Expand the city's street behavioral health outreach programs to address homeless encampments and ensure our residents experiencing homelessness have access to the needed care and services to get them off the street and into housing, health services, and work.

12. Optional: Anything else you want voters to know about what you would do if elected? (200 words maximum)

My actions within first 90 days of taking office:

- **Facilitate a Smooth Leadership Transition:** Review Mayor John Suthers' transition plan and onboard my leadership, processes, and systems.
- **Fiscal Management:** Ensure the 2023 budget priorities are being met. Submit to the citizens a financial condition of the City on or before June 30th. Start 2024 transparent budget process on July 10th to include identifying waste and assessing city departments that may not be running as efficiently.
- **City and Regional Relationship:** Pursue leadership meetings to establish a collaborative working relationship with the City Council and County Commissioners.
- **Community Engagement:** Proactively enlist the help of community stakeholders in order to improve how the City engages our diverse residents on the important decisions around public safety, infrastructure, and our city's economic vitality.