

Housing

Boulder has a housing crisis, driven by both a shortage of housing and rapidly rising rents and home prices.

All of the candidates this year agree on the need to add more housing. Where they tend to split is *how* (government interventions and subsidies vs. allowing more types of housing *plus* government interventions) and *where* (near access to buses/bike paths only vs. throughout the city — including existing single-family neighborhoods).

Learn more: [Land use dampens enthusiasm for racial equity plan](#)
[Boulder county, city talk affordable housing tax](#)

Homelessness

Boulder in 2017 joined a countywide effort to combat homelessness by using a housing-first approach. The city has done a good job of housing people, but has reduced its shelter beds and consolidated services. Boulder still has more than 100 people living outside, typically in public parks or along creeks and paths.

Living outside is illegal, meaning these people are violating the city's camping and tent bans. As such, they are subject to ticketing and removal.

Across the board, candidates say they support investments in mental health and drug addiction treatment, two areas the city acknowledges are gaps. Where they tend to split is whether or not they support enforcement of the camping ban or whether they would like to see more city investment in services and alternatives to unsheltered living.

Learn more: [Boulder's unhoused have lost hope in the system](#)
[Resource fair shows need for centralized system](#)
[As hundreds wait for housing, Boulder will spend \\$3M removing camps](#)

Budget

Boulder's budget is growing, but revenue from sales tax (which makes up a huge portion of the city's more flexible spending money, known as the general fund) is slowing as the population ages and shrinks. Several departments have millions of dollars in unfunded needs, and the city has a list of \$300 million worth of big projects that, as yet, it has no way to pay for.

The focus this year has been on ways to grow revenue (through new taxes or fees) or to make better use of the existing budget by shifting where that money goes within the city organization.

This is where the candidates tend to have divergent opinions; many who do want to reprioritize city spending want to do so by spending less on police and more on the social safety net (things like housing, mental health, etc.)

Learn more: [Boulder exploring new taxes, fees as revenues falter](#)

Transportation

Boulder has big goals about reducing private automobile use, primarily to reduce emissions. The shift has been painful at times, because so many people still rely on cars to get around.

It's hard to point to different "camps" among candidates when it comes to this issue; opinions are all over the place. Some believe we simply need to replace more combustion engines with electric vehicles. Others believe we need to make the city more walkable and bikeable through the way we design and place housing, businesses, shopping, etc. Some would like us to continue to work with RTD, our Regional Transportation District; others would like us to chase more local solutions.

If there were a sharp dividing line, it would be around how quickly Boulder needs to de-prioritize car travel and to what degree.

Learn more: [Boulder will start counting emissions from in-commuters](#)

CU South annexation

The city in 2015 identified this land as the best option for building a flood wall, dam and detention pond to protect more than 2,000 residents from flooding, such as occurred in the 2013 flood.

CU will provide the land in exchange for being annexed or added into city limits. For this, they receive water and sewer services, which allow them to build out a southern campus.

Council approved an agreement on Sept. 21, but some candidates continue to criticize the annexation and development of the land. There are many more steps ahead before flood mitigation and annexation are a done deal, so candidates' position on this issue will be relevant far into the future.

Learn more: [Boulder city council approves annexation of CU South](#)
[CU South Annexation: A Primer](#)

Library district

Council this year gave direction to explore the formation of a library district to ensure stable funding. (Boulder Public Library relies primarily on sales tax, which fluctuates wildly.) It's not really up to city council whether that happens — advocates can take the question to voters via a petition, which they already did in 2019 before making a deal with elected officials to wait.

Council can also form a district by resolution, eliminating the need for a petition and election.

Candidates are generally supportive, but many have been skeptical and/or noncommittal to the idea of a district. Ultimately, it will be the voters' call.

Learn more: [Boulder takes definitive step toward library district](#)