

Melanie Kebler

Candidate for Mayor – City of Bend

www.melaniekebler.com

Economic Development & Business Climate

Bend businesses face rising operating costs, workforce challenges, and an evolving regulatory environment.

What specific actions can the City of Bend take to retain and grow existing businesses, attract new investment, and strengthen Bend's business climate? How would you ensure the cumulative impact of new fees, taxes, and regulations on businesses is considered in City decision-making?

I want Bend to be a place where employees can afford to live, existing businesses are supported, and new businesses can thrive. I will continue my strong focus on housing affordability, which is huge barrier cited by our employers. I supported the creation of the City's Economic Development Department, and the adoption of our Economic Development Strategic Plan. We can retain and grow businesses by executing this plan and using tools like Tax Increment Financing and Enterprise Zones to attract new, good paying jobs and invest in small businesses. I also support the study of a Port of Central Oregon and the idea of a free trade zone extension to Bend. These changes can make us more competitive in the manufacturing and movement of goods from and through our city. I opposed raising business license fees through a per-employee system this year, and have been grateful for, and supported the recommendations of our Bend Economic Development Advisory Board to mitigate policy impacts on businesses in the past. I will continue to consider the cumulative impact of fees, taxes, and regulations with the help of community inputs like our recent developer roundtable, input from BEDAB, and input from staff going forward.

Housing & Development

Housing affordability continues to affect Bend's workforce and employers' ability to recruit and retain employees. The City also plays a significant role in permitting, land use, infrastructure requirements, and development costs.

What City-controlled policies would you prioritize to increase housing production in Bend and streamline the development process? How would you address buildable

land supply, zoning and development standards, and the need for predictable permitting timelines?

I have made it a focus to increase housing production and streamline development, as this is critical to addressing housing affordability in Bend. Under my leadership, Bend is the only city to take advantage of three legislative opportunities to expand our Urban Growth Boundary to bring in deed-restricted affordable housing alongside market rate housing. I will follow through with our commitment to bring this much needed housing in areas like Legacy Village and Caldera Ranch, while also leveraging Tax Increment Financing, infrastructure loans, code updates, and other tools to help create additional infill housing across the city. I have also led the city to receive significant grants to help us in our housing work, including a \$5 million federal grant with \$1 million going towards improving our permitting processes. We have already reduced permitting times, but we can and must do more. I will continue transparency through our permitting dashboard and regular updates to Council from our development department, and support Council goals to continue reduce permitting times and simplify our process for both residential and commercial development.

Transportation & Infrastructure

Continued growth is increasing demand on Bend's transportation system and the infrastructure needed to support housing, businesses, and economic activity.

What specific transportation, utility, or other infrastructure investments should Bend prioritize over the next four years to support economic growth and regional connectivity? What role should the City play in advancing those priorities, and how should Bend address its infrastructure needs outside of new taxes and fees?

As Bend's population increased in the last two decades, and federal investment in infrastructure declined, we have struggled to create the infrastructure improvements needed to keep up with our growth. I have led the effort to make those investments now, including winning tens of millions of dollars in state and federal grants to fund key bridge connections like the Reed Market Overcrossing. I will continue to push for improvements that connect our region, like at the Empire interchange, as well as cross town connections and safety improvements, which will help more people easily travel to retail hubs like downtown or the Bend Central District. We will need to continue to carefully shepherd our local dollars, apply for state and federal grants, and seek balanced revenue sources to ensure we have the proper infrastructure. I supported a pause on the third phase of our Transportation

Fee and I also went to Salem to win the ability to use more of our tourism revenue dollars on local priorities like infrastructure. I will continue to advocate for state investment in infrastructure to support our housing and transportation needs.

Managing Growth & Bend's Future

Bend continues to grow, creating both opportunities and challenges related to housing, employment, transportation, infrastructure, and quality of life.

How should Bend accommodate continued growth while maintaining a vibrant and livable community? How would you seek out and consider community input when making decisions as a City Councilor? When perspectives are divided, what would guide your decision-making?

I am excited for our community to embark on our comprehensive plan update, an opportunity to envision how the city will change to accommodate the housing, jobs, and infrastructure we will need in the next twenty years. I will work to create a smart, sustainable plan that will help us maintain the spirit of Bend as we continue to evolve into a city of over 110,000 people. I look forward to inviting our residents into the process in many different ways. I want to create a plan that truly allows our city to become more connected across income levels, backgrounds, ages, and geography.

I speak directly with residents, attend events, read all my emails, answer questions on the news and the radio, and talk with stakeholders to gather input. I recognize that not all have the resources or time to engage with their city government, and that future residents and workers who are priced out of Bend need to be considered in our decision making too. No matter if residents agree with me exactly or not, I will always strive to find common ground with anyone who cares enough to give input on city issues and policy decisions.