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Candidate for Bend City Council

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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?

Retaining, growing, and recruiting businesses are the focus of the city's newly expanded Economic Development Department. Together, with input from the Bend Economic Advisory Board, the city can gather information on things like the cumulative impact of fees and whether efforts to improve permitting are succeeding. Permitting and licensing in particular are areas that council often hears are ripe for improvement. The city's dashboard shows that our permitting process tends to meet our timeline goals, and the number of commercial and industrial permits opened (as well as the number of square feet covered by these applications) has grown substantially in the past two years compared to the previous two years.

That improvement is the result of focused programs such as tax rebates offered for qualifying business expansions in Bend enterprise zones. Council also recently considered targeted SDC exemptions and the ability to trade SDC credits for qualifying applicants in the Core Area, along with streamlining tree code requirements to promote industrial land that is shovel-ready. Further improvements to the permitting process, such as allowing site plan and development plans to proceed concurrently may also help. Commercial land is not always available where businesses would like to operate, so some targeted relaxing of zoning should be considered. I am very supportive of following up with grocery stores to find out what the city can do to support opening grocery stores in areas that are currently underserved.

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?

Permit timelines are something we hear about pretty consistently and I think they are worth continuing to examine. I would like to create an expanded in-lieu of fee program for things like transportation improvements where a developer could pay a fee to the city instead of building a "sidewalk to nowhere." I think the development process should be consistent and predictable without shortchanging infrastructure needs. With respect to increasing housing production, this city is going just about as fast as it can. I know many people are calling for more, but consider that Bend adds about as many homes per year as San Francisco, CA does, despite having a fraction of the population. We are building a lot! Our biggest opportunities are using the site-specific TIF when merited. I think we need to be very careful in evaluating those applications and ensure that we are not providing an incentive for a developer to build something that remains vacant because they are reluctant to lower prices.

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?

Bend has to undergo a shift in how people get around. With roughly 50% more people expected to move here in the next 20 years, we simply don't have room to accommodate 50% more driving. Transit is our biggest opportunity, but transit requires consistent operating revenue which is a challenge. Investments that allow people to make short trips (under 2 miles) without a car will pay off for generations to come. Looking at our SDC methodology to incorporate other modes of transportation can reduce costs. As far as utilities go, I would like to see more support for energy independence. Rooftop and plug-in solar are big opportunities

that can provide reduced grid demand and also save people money. We should also consider additional solar farming and continue to pursue in-conduit hydroelectric.

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?

Striking a balance between the needs of a growing city and preserving the quality of life that Bend residents deserve is a challenge. I often feel we need to focus more on the needs of existing residents rather than focus so much on the needs of future residents. Regulating the times and manner of construction so that people can continue to live and get around without constant disruption are important. If it were solely up to developers, some would build neighborhoods with zero commercial and no open space. It is up to the city to ensure that those are provided, even if they don't pencil in the short-term, to preserve people's quality of life.

When there is disagreement, I do my best to learn about the arguments on both sides before making a decision based on what I think is best for the community as a whole while meeting the needs of individual residents.