



2023 Mayoral and City Council Candidates:

Silas Atkins

On behalf of the Downtown Boulder Partnership, thank you for your time and interest in responding to questions that directly impact the downtown district and business community.

We are looking forward to hearing your solutions to the three questions posed below. We appreciate all of the hard work that goes into running for an elected position and we wish you all the best in the coming weeks. Regardless of the outcome, DBP would like to encourage an open line of communication and partnership in the years to come and look forward to working with the newly elected mayor and city council in 2024!

Thank you.

Questions:

- 1) For the past three years, the downtown district has seen an unprecedented increase in unsheltered individuals. In addition there has been a noticeable increase in the number of people experiencing mental health crises and drug addiction. What tools / resources and partnerships are needed to combat this growing crisis?

Response:

The main resource missing is investment in viable solutions to meet basic needs. We need to fund and fast track building of housing, additional mental health and substance recovery services, a safe use site to prevent overdose deaths, and temporary sheltering. We also need a livable wage, rental assistance to prevent evictions, direct cash assistance, and arts and culture opportunities. We must come together as a community to ensure that we meet the needs of everyone, from a personal and business perspective.

- 2) While the Boulder County Commissioners have plans to introduce a wage increase for unincorporated Boulder County in 2024, Boulder, alongside its partner cities, aims for an increase starting in 2025. Do you believe Boulder should have aligned with the county's 2024 timeline? Furthermore, how do you anticipate this wage increase impacting downtown's workforce, businesses, and overall economy, and what strategies would you suggest to offset potential negative impacts?

Response:

Yes, Boulder had an opportunity to lead the way in meeting basic needs and supporting the other communities in the County to do the same and we should have gone ahead with it. The impact of a wage increase is positive for a workforce that is struggling to make ends meet. See the recent Daily camera article featuring a family with two parents working 7 days a week and still needing EFAA assistance. When we have enough money for basic needs, we can spend some in Boulder and help the economy. Denver has done so successfully and The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment report reinforces this. I have heard a counter around studies on other metros where unemployment increased. What those fail to account for is household impact. Did a higher wage mean a household could give up an extra job they were working and have more time with each other? In terms of negative impacts, what specific impacts are Boulder businesses concerned with? We should come together and work through those. If a business relies on paying a starvation wage, what about that business's operations can we adjust to correct for that?

- 3) Given the significant developments taking place on University Hill, connectivity between The Hill and downtown is crucial for fluid urban movement and enhancing community experiences. What are the primary challenges you foresee in connecting The Hill to downtown, and how would you leverage or create opportunities to maximize this connection?

Response:

This question was asked at the Boulder Chamber Forum and there were some great responses from candidates. We should be looking at how it will enhance the businesses on the hill. Possibly a bridge like the ones recently installed along the Creek Path to link

Broadway/University and 13th street. Enhancing the Broadway/University intersection to improve biker and pedestrian safety. Restructuring the sidewalks and bike paths along Broadway for increased safety(the addition of a slip lane on the east side is not paed/bike friendly for example).