

2021 City Council Candidate questions

Candidate Name: Lisa Smith!

What is your view about the Jefferson Parkway project?

I understand the desire to complete the parkway, but it seems this project has several challenges that remain unresolved which gives me concern in supporting the parkway. The following are the three core challenges I see with this project that need to be resolved or mitigated:

- We currently do not have adequate funding for this project to be completed. With one nearby partner withdrawing their participation and financial support for this project, it would be fiscally irresponsible for us to support the parkway without ensuring proper funding has been secured and allocated for the project's entirety.
- An outdated [economic impact report](#). The impact report was completed in 2018 with an estimation of 1.2 billion dollars in economic impact. However, the pandemic has shifted the way we operate and do business in our community. For example, some traditional brick and mortar businesses are not all online, and traditional office space is used less frequently, in a shared space dynamic or a hybrid model. The impact report relies heavily on the office and retail spaces expected to be developed around this parkway, but with pre-pandemic assumptions. We need to see the economic impact report as it relates to our new lifestyles and norms before we move forward with outdated assumptions of value and impact.
- Lastly, while the EPA, DOE, CDPHE have cleared the land safe for all uses, I want to keep this topical and continue to do routine examinations of the soil and air to ensure there is consistent safe environment. Having worked alongside nuclear weapons in the military, I certainly do not want to risk exposing employees and residents to potentially harmful particles of plutonium.

What are your views on the Arvada Urban Renewal Authority (AURA)?

A common frustration I hear in the community is that AURA is only funding projects for luxury developments rather than community needs. I would like to see AURA invest in community buildings and needs such as a community center where all residents can use and find value in. Additionally, I would like to see AURA promote developments that have affordable housing units through developers and builders from within our state.

I believe the key to success and community support for programs like AURA is to engage the community, have transparency in their process and/or plans, and to use the funding where the

city really needs it. AURA bring in revenue to our city, but I feel there needs to be more transparency and oversight in how the money is used and how projects are chosen.

What are your views on using tax increment financing (TIFs) as an incentive for businesses to develop in Arvada? And, if so, what do you think should be incentivized?

I understand the need to negotiate incentives to build in blighted areas that require more rigorous cleanup from neglect or environmental hazards. We should not be giving incentives to open, undeveloped land to developers and only incentivize development in areas that need extra support due to significant neglect or environmental problems with the property.

Lastly, a challenge I see with TIF's in our community is that it is tax revenue coming in that residents do not have much say in where that reinvestment of TIF dollars go. The community and city should have more education and engagement of where this money is going within our cities and which projects we select to fund. I believe we should be prioritizing the TIF money to properties that are inclusive to all residents and price ranges – such as community centers, affordable housing units and developments that promote eco-friendly practices and outdoor space.

What should the city's role be in developing broadband internet for Arvada citizens?

I believe now, more than ever, we can see how imperative it is for us to continue to expand our broadband internet access. The city should certainly support bringing broadband internet to Arvada. The pandemic showed us a great disparity among our school children. Many students did not have reliable internet at home and libraries were closed. With so much work, studying and shopping done online, we need to ensure all our residents are able to access reliable internet. Additionally, by supporting broadband internet in Arvada, we are also strengthening our emergency messaging to ensure all people are aware when an emergency is happening.

Currently in our city code, when any company is digging in the street, the city has the ability to pay the contractor the incremental cost to put an empty conduit (tube) where people can lay cable so in the near future, the city has the ability to run those fiber lines for our residents. This kind of agreement is what the city needs to continue to do in partnerships with other groups and companies to move forward knowing what our cities need will be but do so in a smart way where we are saving money and not causing double the construction throughout our city. It is for these reasons stated that I believe the city should continue and expand its support for developing broadband for Arvada citizens.

What is your plan to help the city reach 100% use renewable energy by 2035?

Climate should be at the forefront of our mind and we need to take immediate steps to reduce our impact. I have spent nearly a decade volunteering and deploying to serve in disaster-stricken communities devastated by floods, fires and everything in-between. As I write up these answers there are countless fires in Colorado and we will likely be deploying to those communities soon.

We will fall victim to climate change sooner than later if we continue to do nothing or not bring this topic up with meaningful action steps. We need to push new developments in our area to incorporate more wind and solar energy sources and use smart building technology to ensure a more resilient home. We should incorporate policies that promote carbon neutral developments like the GEOS neighborhood in West Arvada. We need to update our city buildings and vehicles to more environmentally friendly options and require all future housing developments have electric charging stations.

We need to continue to develop multi-modal transit options. Bike lanes should be included in resurfacing projects to both promote alternative and safe travel options outside of cars. While I love all the bike paths in our parks and open space, we need to create bike lanes that allow us to bike to King Soopers or the local library without fearing you'll be run over by a huge truck.

Water is fundamental in our lives. We need to increase our efforts around water conservation and use, which is part of the city's comprehensive plan and goals. Having programs that help promote education on use will be helpful in encouraging residents to be aware of their water use. City programs that promote education and reduce waste like the "smart meters" program roll out is a great way to help reduce water waste while also educating residents on smart water use. The city will give these smart meters out to any resident interested. We need to promote more programs like this. Another strategy is around our parks, we all know how thirsty traditional grass is, we need to explore and leverage grants through Colorado State University and other nonprofits that will help develop landscape with native plants and trees that require less maintenance and water, saving our residents tax dollars and water!

We need to improve our air quality, especially with the ongoing fires in our state. We need to expand our low-cost tree program and community grants to allow for more trees and native plants to be added to our great city. We should leverage our low-water need plants to encourage this kind of growth in our community. This will not only help our environment but also help reduce noise pollution and the need for extreme watering.

With all the ideas discussed, the most important is education. Many people do not see the value in trying to reduce their footprint, they don't see climate change as an issue, and many do not know where to even start if they wanted to opt into solar panels or what kind of programs are out there. If we educate our community more on the risk, the benefits and the programs the

help support these climate-positive behaviors, then we will see more acceptance to these types of policies and practices.

We understand that the city is working with other Jeffco governments to create Housing Navigation Centers to help the homeless achieve housing with needed supportive services. How do you plan to educate the residents of Arvada to help them understand the causes of homelessness and most importantly, support these Navigation Centers to avoid NIMBY-ism at the chosen locations?

As a case manager in Colorado, I worked with low-income Medicaid clients trying to find them housing and home-based services. This was a huge challenge because there were limited services and a stigma that low-income people did not need our help because it was their own fault they were poor and unable to succeed in life.

If people spent more time with low-income residents, they would see that many are there because of trauma from their lives, mental health issues or disabilities. They would see that often there is not path out of living on these social services because the gap from poverty to self sufficiency is often too big to grasp without transitional support.

We need to add significantly more support to our safety net programs and leverage our community partnerships. When we look at how to strengthen support for housing programs, I think we need to break down the wall between our low-income residents and middle class or wealthier residents through partnerships and volunteerism within our nonprofit and faith based communities.

One goal of mine is to create more education and engagement in the city for residents to learn more about what programs are out there and their value. There are many people that do not know of the programs that we even have in our city. We need to change that and work on educating on how by helping our vulnerable community members, everyone wins.

It appears that existing city policies maintain the current "two Arvada's" -- wealthier and less diverse West Arvada versus older, less affluent East Arvada. How specifically do you think the city can increase affordable housing, rental and for-sale products, to provide more diversity and affordability throughout the Arvada?

Housing diversity is also key to building out affordability and diversifying our population. Not everyone in Arvada or who wants to live in Arvada can afford a single family home, myself included as my nonprofit salary would not allow me to buy a home here. We need to have better options for a starter home to include condos and townhomes. The more we can diversify our housing stock and price points, the more we become an inclusive community where all are welcome.

While a goal of mine is to create more affordable housing units within Arvada for our homeless and at-risk families, we should focus on how we get people from renting and into homeownership. One of the cities goals is to develop more affordable owner occupied homes which is what I will continue to push for. Currently, there is no focus or support on trying to get people from being in affordable units to self-sufficiency which creates low turnover in those units. People end up spending years upon years in the units and thus not opening them up for others in need. I want to build on existing programs like first time home buyer programs, rent to own units, loan assistance and financial literacy classes to help elevate those already in affordable housing units.

Another option to build on more housing diversity is revisiting how we approach the formulas for our housing fees. The tap fees are universal rather than rated on impact. I would like to see our housing fees to be more consistent with the impact of the home and its use. This would promote more of the micro homes that many people who are downsizing in their older years or just getting started and don't need a lot of space could use.

Arvada has such a large geographic footprint that it will always be hard to bring people together all the time. However, there is value in bringing more of a micro-community style development to Arvada that leverages mixed-use zoning to build a community meeting place. These micro-community developments would have those coffee shops, parks, restaurants and small stores that are within a short walk or bike ride. This helps build relationships within neighborhoods in addition to the neighborhood grants for projects and events. The micro-community areas are where people would recognize other neighbors' dogs and partners while they could connect more broadly by using the festivals and bigger events to bring the entire community together. Events like the Harvest parade, 4th of July fireworks, and concerts or Olde Town events will bring the entire community together while having micro communities serve for the rest of the days.

Do you support formation of a citizen's Housing Advisory Committee?"

Yes, I have actively been working with community housing advocates like Mindy Mohr and Harriet Hall in pushing this committee forward. I would like to take the housing report and strategy developed by Root Policy that was presented to council and have the housing advisory committee dive into how we can put into action some of the ideas or elevate what the city is already doing.

Walk-ability and bike paths are increasingly popular, what are your ideas to increase the walk-ability of neighborhoods and assist the ease and safety of riding bikes?

The first focus is closing the loop of unfinished sidewalks. We still have over 25 miles of unfinished sidewalks in Arvada, we need to complete these to allow for a consistent and safe method of walking across our city. Too many people have expressed frustration of not being able to walk their dog or take the stroller around the block without having to worry about a fast driver hitting them because there is no sidewalk. We need to finish these sidewalks.

In the comprehensive plan, four of the top six needs identified by the community regarding transportation involved biking and walking needs. This tells us that many people want more transportation options outside of a car. The city completed a master bike plan for our city that mapped out our entire bike bath system, missing parts, density and traffic across the entire area. We have \$700,000 a year for the next ten years to help with building out bike paths but this amount barely scratches the surface. I'd like for us to continue to apply for grants like the "healthy city" grant from the Colorado Health Foundation that would give funding for more bike paths and sidewalks.

Health Care is an issue most Americans are worried about. A health care resolution was presented to the City Council asking in the recent past asking the Arvada City Council to support a single payer universal health care system. If a similar resolution were again presented asking government leaders to support such a system, would you vote to sign and send to state and federal leaders?

As someone that uses the VA healthcare system which is similar to a single payer system, I am grateful for this healthcare service that has been offered to me. It comes with many headaches and pain points but is still good for emergency care. I believe and support a single payer healthcare program while also allowing for other insurance options if people desire more care outside of the single payer system. This method is the same system and process that many other European countries offer. For example, in Italy, where I lived briefly, you could use the single payer healthcare service and wait 2 months for a non-emergency service or pay \$150 to go through private healthcare. I believe there is value in having both options available for our American citizens should they want more care than offered with a single payer system.

City policing is an issue foremost in many citizen's minds. There are many suggestions, concerns, and needs in Arvada. What are your thoughts on alternatives to uniformed police making mental health and public safety/nuisance calls?

As a former policewomen in the Air Force and Social Worker who has worked directly with mentally health patients, I believe this is essential in helping the residents in Arvada and the community as whole. It helps reduce the potential escalation of the person who they are responding to. It helps save tax dollars and is a better dynamic since the person responding knows how to handle manic or people in crisis. I support this approach 100%.

What will you do to get body cameras on uniforms before the state mandated date of July 1, 2023?

This is a mandated state law so the only barrier is finding funding for the cameras and equipment required to store all the data. We have a grant writer in the city that can research state and federal grant funding to help offset the startup costs to get this program off the ground. For example, I know the DOJ has allocated some grant money to help pay for body cameras as well as other cities, states and organizations which can be searched for [here](#). I would also look at nonprofit funding options or partnerships to find additional support or funding.

Do you support a citizen's advisory committee to APD?

Yes, I believe having external residents and internal representation as well as subject matter experts to form a citizens advisory committee. I have lived in towns that have a citizen review board and it went really well. It was honest and transparent and engaged the community. The important part of this type of committee is ensure there are people that have knowledge or background in some kind of investigation or first response so there is some awareness of the process, experience and background.