

Stephen Barr
Candidate - District 3
Littleton Business Chamber Candidate Forum 2021

1) What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the downtown Littleton area? Give us three positive and three negative responses with a short explanation.

3 Positive: Great balance of restaurants vs. commercial businesses, historic nature of the downtown adds to the unique look of buildings, lot of diversity in restaurant and bar choices.

3 Weakness: Walkability of the businesses is poor, the properties on the edge of the main commercial area detract from the appeal of the whole downtown, traffic and parking are not well managed.

2) What is your priority for development in the city and why?

- a) New residential homes
- b) New commercial business
- c) Revitalizing and utilizing current spaces

a) New residential homes – I hope to embrace the diversity of housing options available to us to find the right “fit” for a neighborhood or a part of town where that housing option would complement and add to the character of the City. I hope these new residential areas are built with business accessibility in mind, be that infill or in areas with ready access to transit corridors.

b) New commercial business – I see Littleton’s future as one where housing and small business are partners in creating unique spaces and neighborhoods, that are walkable and accessible to a wide variety of residents.

c) Revitalizing and utilizing current spaces – There are many opportunities to revitalize the economic corridors in Littleton. I want to use these aging commercial spaces to invite in new partners that reflect the commerce of a post-COVID world.

3) The Littleton Business Chamber (LBC) advocated for a \$.50 tax increase to be placed on the ballot in November, City Council voted for a \$.75. increase. LBC has requested that the City Council sunset the \$.75 tax increase down to \$.50, after the city has met its capital improvement requirements. Are you for or against sunsetting \$.25 of the tax increase? Explain why or why not.

I think the idea of sunsetting the tax increase is one that needs to be taken into consideration, but be based on evidence and data. One factor to weigh is the idea that the city will meet its capital improvement requirement needs, but the sales tax increase only accounts for a small percentage of the total of the deferred maintenance for the city (while it is the most critical). I think that it would be worth running a robust monitoring and evaluation program on the sales tax increase to determine the impact on commercial sales, in sales volume and dollar value and by commercial industry, to determine where and if there are impacts to our business and

where those impacts are hardest felt. With this information, I would be more comfortable making a decision to sunset the sales tax increase.

4) Other than the proposed sales tax increase, what three steps would you take to get the City in a more stable financial position?

The most realistic options to increase the city's revenue and meet future needs are to increase the tax base (people) and how they frequency the shop in Littleton. As a first step, I believe we can tackle marijuana and lodging taxes almost immediately and grow them over time, specifically looking at increasing the number of marijuana retail permits in the city. My second action would be to find opportunities to create housing and commercial businesses along economic corridors, using our new ULUC, and to find opportunities for neighborhood businesses as well. My third action would look towards the long term large commercial retailers that we can attract to the City, specifically in areas like Littleton Village, and to build accessible infrastructure around them.

5) Why do you feel you are the best choice for City Council? Why should someone vote for you?

I am the best choice for City Council because I have the more relevant professional and personal experiences to be able to create policy that is in the best interest of the city's future. I have intimate and direct experience working with public offices and city staff and can work as a partner with public entities to achieve very tangible and visible results. I also have experience in creating monitoring and evaluation systems for public programs, and I feel that I can distill complex data into easily accessible information. Someone should vote for me because I understand that a city and public governance operates in an imperfect world, one that is unpredictable and where human fallibility is on full display. But I have the dynamic versatility to change with the changing needs of the City; to examine the data, admit where I'm wrong, and move forward for the good of the residents of Littleton. I have the personal drive to listen, and change, and grow with the experience of being in Council. I won't be endlessly paralyzed by the fear of making an imperfect decision at the expense of any progress being made at all. Most importantly, I am the best choice for City Council because I deeply care about people, from all walks of life, and am endlessly driven by a desire to do what I can to bring meaningful and lasting change to their lives.

6) What is your plan to involve businesses outside the "football" in your decision-making process?

I feel that businesses partners need to be sought out and invited to the table that compliment and respond to the needs of the residents. We need to dive deep on what are critical commercial partners that would fit the needs of residents that are not currently being served right now, and to do that takes a robust system of citizen engagement and feedback. I want to hear from new families, long-time residents, seniors, what are the critical things they need in their daily lives that aren't being met by the businesses in the city, and to look around the

corner as to the changing nature of white-collar work to see how we can be a city that adapts to those changing needs.

7) How do you plan to get input regarding business in Littleton other than through City staff?

First by talking to businesses owners and business interest groups like the LBC. Second, as I mentioned previously, I want to meet the critical needs that are not being locally met (childcare, senior living, essential commercial retail, etc). I'd also like to explore what the region has available and find opportunities to capitalize on what is lacking in other neighboring cities. I don't want to change the face of Littleton, but I do want to make sure that residents don't have to travel outside our city to get an experience or a service that they feel is essential to being a Coloradan.

8) What would be your plan to handle the increasing issue with the homeless disrupting businesses and how would you expect the police department to handle these problems?

Homelessness is an issue that will continue to chronically impact Littleton unless we get at root causes at a regional level. Businesses and residents alike will continue to feel the impacts unless we make the investments in the social welfare programs needed to get them headed in the right direction. The police are facing critical shortages in staffing, and if an inordinately high percentage of police responses are going to handle the homeless or substance abuse issues, then that's one less officer that is taking care of other critical needs. We need to follow in the steps of other forward-thinking police forces around Denver to supplement our first responders with healthcare and social service professionals and allow for the police to tackle the truly dangerous issues at hand.