

MEET *Your* CANDIDATES



SUZANNE MILES

Extra questions from City Council Candidate Forum

Do you feel that the city's "20 is Plenty" campaign has been effective at reducing speeding in neighborhoods? Why or why not?

“Being able to safely walk and ride our neighborhood streets is important to me.

Lowering the posted speed limit sets a community expectation. It sends a message to drivers that they are on a street with pedestrian and bike traffic and that there are safety risks to speeding. But speeding still happens.

Street design and known enforcement are what actually slow cars down. Those things cost money and time and need to be employed strategically. This is where our neighbors can play a key role. Waiting until an accident happens is too late, one child hit by a car is one child too many. Asking our neighborhood leaders to collect observational data and identify road segments with frequent speeding can help the city prioritize where to spend money on traffic calming tools (speed bumps, curb extensions) and targeted enforcement efforts.”

What are you doing as a candidate to inform yourself about community concerns and priorities? And how do you plan to stay informed over the next 4 years if you are elected?

“Over these past months, I have worked to build connections with the community leaders around our city, including our neighborhood associations, School Board, Lake Oswego Sustainability Network, LO for Love, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, the Arts Council. I’ve talked with the Chiefs of Police and Fire. I’ve read the budget, watched commission and council meetings, and read task force minutes.

Having direct lines of communication with our community leaders matters. But I also understand that the “official reports” do not capture everything. I have sat down with firefighters, teachers, small business owners, volunteers, PTO members and parents, and my own neighbors at all life stages.

If elected, I would keep the same habits. I'd hold regular open office hours rotating through neighborhoods and keep a standing schedule of meeting attendance. One of the reasons that I decided to run digital ads was so that people would recognize my face standing in line at the coffee shop, making it easier for me to hear from people who never attend a Council meeting.

Over a decade as a federal prosecutor taught me that the right answer comes from the full record, not the loudest voice. I want to hear it all.”

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Parking around the high schools and some of the parks, especially George Rogers Park, has become a recurring problem for residents of nearby neighborhoods. How do you think the City should approach parking in these areas, and what role do you see for partnership with the Lake Oswego School District in shaping long-term solutions?

“Our parks and schools are an asset to our entire city. They are a big driver of what makes people want to live and visit here. Folks that come to play at George Rogers stay to eat and shop. These resources benefit our whole city, but we have to acknowledge that neighbors around them bear a disproportionate cost.

Parking around our schools and parks is a shared problem that the City, the School District, and the neighborhoods need to work together to solve.

There are tools that can be used, like imposing time-limited or permit parking and developing overflow options around the parks; reevaluating traffic flow rules around school drop-off and pick-up and assessing bus ridership barriers. For both schools and parks, we can work to improve walking and bike access.

I can brainstorm ideas, but the real answers need to be the product of informed decision-making. I would coordinated effort between the City, LOSD, and neighborhood residents to create parking management plans in the areas with these challenges.”

With costs rising across the board and the city having raised utility rates in recent years, how do you weigh affordability issues for local residents with city infrastructure needs?

“Some infrastructure costs are necessities not options. The wastewater plant is a good example. That’s a 60-year-old facility that must be replaced. But just because an investment may be “optional,” like pathways, park improvements, or a library, does not mean that it’s not important. Quality of life infrastructure makes our City a destination for both residents and visitors, and keeps our economy healthy.

Affordability and infrastructure aren't opposing goals. But they require strategic planning to align. A well-run city delivers both by planning ahead. That means prioritizing necessary improvements before they become costly emergencies, either because they fail or because a tight timeline reduces the feasible options. It also means taking opportunities today that will pay off tomorrow, like sustainable technologies.

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As a city councilor, I would hold three guiding principles—sequency, transparency, and equity. We should sequence projects to optimize cost flexibility, availability of outside funding, and space out the taxpayer burden. Any rate increase needs to come with a plain-language explanation of what it funds and what deferral would have cost. And, our community needs to offer protections for residents unable to absorb new costs, for example by promoting utility assistance for seniors and fixed-income residents.”

Lake Oswego is a predominantly white, aging community. Do you favor efforts to make it more diverse and, if so, how would you suggest we get there?

“Yes. Our demographics flow from housing cost. A town where a modest home costs almost a million dollars will skew older and less diverse no matter what. But that lack of diversity hurts us as a community. If the people that we depend on—our city staff, teachers, firefighters, nurses, police, and small business owners—cannot afford to live here, we risk high turnover in those positions. Attrition takes a toll. My parents were a public school teacher and a social worker who worked in the town where we lived. It mattered.

The same is true for racial diversity. We can talk and teach about equity and inclusion. But social change comes from living them.

A city cannot engineer outcomes, but it can remove barriers. Implementing the Housing Production Strategy as a neighborhood-driven initiative will help remove not only economic, but also social, barriers to diversity. No one wants to live where they are not welcome, even if they can afford it. Community engagement in planning can help ensure that neighbors are partnering in the change we will all benefit from.

A community is stronger when every resident feels it belongs to them. That requires collaboration.

Lake Oswego’s 460 acres of natural area parks and open space and 53 percent tree canopy are treasured assets and make LO one of the most desirable places to live. What would you do as a City Councilor to protect and preserve those assets?

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Lake Oswego's green space is a defining feature. It takes work to protect both the trees and us.

First, I support our Fire Department's focus and efforts on wildfire prevention. Reducing ground litter in our parks goes a long way to reducing our risks during fire season.

Second, we need to get the Tree Code update right. The rules must be clear enough for residents and staff to apply consistently. Time spent at LUBA, whether because of ambiguous or objected-to rules is time and tax-payer money wasted. This is one area, among many, where my regulatory law background can help.

Finally, we need to be good stewards. Just as important as wildfire prevention, we need to protect our trees from invasive species and we need to protect our infrastructure from dead and vulnerable trees.

All of these efforts can be maximized by community education and engagement. Lake Oswego Sustainability Network is a tremendous resource. Neighborhood trail-cleaning events and school-organized student engagement efforts can be ways to bolster the City's fire and parks staff and harness that pride-of-place that defines Lake Oswego.

If you are elected to City Council, what are your highest priority issues that you believe the City Council should address?

"Public safety and a City Hall that works.

Public safety is foundational. It means staffing and supporting our police and fire departments. It also takes more. Supporting our business communities keeps our commercial districts bustling with foot traffic. Maintaining our parks and pathways does the same there. Keeping our neighborhood associations strong supports neighbor connectivity, which contributes directly to safety. Providing safe routes to walk or bike to school and community centers matters too.

Beyond that, I am coming into this role with values—good schools, environmental stewardship, fiscal responsibility—not with a specific agenda. I am devoted to providing a city government that works across all issues. As a federal employee, I served under five administrations. I have seen government function and dysfunction.

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In a leadership role, my priority is to set clear guidance for our city staff, so that they can maximize their time and expertise. Government efficiency comes from clear objectives and open lines of communication between staff, leadership, and the community.

Providing that leadership means being informed and prepared. I will listen to every stakeholder, read the record, ask hard questions, and engage meaningfully with my colleagues on the council and the staff.

Lake Oswego has some large scale projects on the horizon including the new wastewater treatment facility and a new public library. What are your thoughts about prioritizing major infrastructure projects both from a perspective of fiscal constraints and also the ability to manage these projects for success?

The City needs to prioritize by necessity and legal obligation, and pace appropriately. The wastewater plant is non-discretionary and needs to happen now. The library is a community investment that I strongly support, but its timing must respect what residents are already carrying from the fire station bond and utility rates.

Council was right to form groups to study the financial impacts of identified options before committing to a plan and a timeline.

In short, infrastructure projects require strong oversight from inception to completion.

Stable leadership matters; a City Manager and City Attorney hired for the long term are prerequisites for projects of this scale, as is a City Council that looks at the city's infrastructure needs as an interconnected matrix, not on a project-by-project basis.

I spent years supervising complex federal appeals. The lesson is the same: the record, the deadlines, and the details decide the outcome, both for the problem presented and the downstream effects on future needs. Lake Oswego should run its projects that way.