

Wheat Ridge 2020 Candidate Questionnaire 2011
Responses submitted by Zachary David Urban
Candidate for City Council District II

Why are you the best candidate to represent your district? Please relate your answer to your background, qualifications and values.

The summer after I turned 12, I wanted to find a job. The first place I applied to was in Wheat Ridge. I applied for a job as a dishwasher at Valente's. They would be the first to tell me I was too young. By my junior year at Colorado State University, I was interviewed on 9NEWS showcasing my leadership on a program which strives to provide the first level of intervention with student fans at athletic events. This [program](#) acted as a mediator between rowdy fans and police, insuring that alcohol abuse was not tolerated. The reporter quip "Seems like such a young kid to be leading such a great program!" After graduating college I got a job at a mortgage company, within six month on the job, I was invited to Washington D.C. to attend a [Federal Reserve Community Affairs Research Conference](#) where I met none other than the Federal Reserve chairman, Mr. Alan Greenspan. The chairman remarked "Aren't you a little young to be coming to a conference like this?" When I started investing in real estate, buying houses and fixing them up, buying my first house at age 23, the mortgage banker I used asked me a familiar question, "Aren't you a little young to be investing in real estate?" When I was profiled in the Denver Post regarding my leadership on the issues of mortgage fraud and foreclosures at the age of 26, the reporter asked me "How did you gain so much knowledge about these financial issues, you're only 26?", I answered "Money treats everyone the same age." At age 27 I led a team to create the nation's first statewide [foreclosure prevention](#) program; some people said I was too young. At the age of 29 I was appointed by Governor Ritter to the Colorado Board of Real Estate Appraisers. During my appointment hearing in front of the Senate, one of the Senators noticed that I had put my rank of Eagle Scout on my resume. He asked me to recite the [Boy Scout Law](#), an obvious nod to my youth. I rattled it off as any good boy scout would; shortly thereafter I had the unanimous vote of the Colorado Senate to confirm my appointment. Throughout all of these experiences, I have leveraged the energy of my youth to benefit those I have served. Voting for me will infuse this energy into City Council. I have strong leadership skills coupled with a desire to listen and work together. I would not have these skills and this depth of experience had I listened to any of these naysayers. Too young to lead is the drum beat of those who would have you believe I am some kind of whippersnapper. I am asking for your vote for City Council. I am here to *Whip* up business for Wheat Ridge and *Snap* the economic doldrums and the discordant tone of City Council we have currently.

What are your top two policy goals and how should they be addressed?

My top policy goal is the need to increase the economic vitality and sustainability of our business corridors, not just 38th, but in each of the business districts. I will work hard to insure citizen input is a top priority in this process and that we take a common sense approach to making sure more businesses open their doors in Wheat Ridge, and stay open. This includes getting the city to be a better partner, a less intrusive partner, and a more supportive partner in this economic development process.

My second priority is the future of the Martensen Elementary School Property and it's future. The [Jeffco school board](#) is currently talking about selling the property, but to whom?, For how

much? What are they going to do with the property? Housing? A Park? Retail? Who knows? I do, because I listen, get involved, and get results. As your city council member I will work hard to insure each neighborhood is given the resources, attention, and voice that are given to all Wheat Ridge Citizens. Go to www.MartensenSite.org to take a survey about what you want to see happen on this property.

I would recommend the School Board lease the property to the City for a \$1 per year for a period of five years, allowing the city to utilize the property as park and possible community center, government services center, and other community functions. This could be revisited and the city could look at purchasing the property down the road, or if a charter school or Jeffco found the need to re-open the school, this could still be an option.

The role of Wheat Ridge 2020 is to catalyze community and economic development to advance Wheat Ridge as a vibrant and sustainable City. How should the City fund and support that role?

I have fundraised, budgeted, and controlled millions of dollars for non-profit organizations, quasi-governmental agencies, and government agencies during my career. My experience in helping non-profit agencies leverage funding, fundraise, and overall capacity building will help insure that all partners and vendors of the City of Wheat Ridge have an enhanced ability to support the economic and social sustainability of our community, all while keeping a frugal eye on our limited and restricted tax payer dollars. I would advise Wheat Ridge 2020 to continue to leverage outside sources of support as they continue to show taxpayers return on the investments made by the City of Wheat Ridge.

What ideas would you promote to strengthen the City's revenue base?

I have been endorsed by the [Jefferson County Association of Realtors](#) for the simple reason that I have the experience and the vision to be an effective city council person. The homeownership plan I have created will help increase the City's revenue while also promoting responsible and sustainable homeownership opportunities for Wheat Ridge's citizens who currently rent. This will also provide an avenue for others in the Denver Area to learn about how wonderful it is to live in the City of Wheat Ridge.

I would also entertain the development of a loyalty card program like what Safeway has, but for the entire city. This free card would be for residents to use in locally owned businesses, this could be called a "[Localty](#)" card, each business owner could determine the value of the discount offered, and each resident could earn points, or receive discounts based on the frequency of their loyalty to shop locally.

I would take a close look at our existing [Intergovernmental Agreements](#) which involve cost sharing. This is an area where if there are services, program, or projects where we are one of several municipalities benefiting from some intergovernmental agreement, I would want to verify we are getting our fair share, and investigate if there are further cost sharing opportunities out there for us to explore.

Please comment on the 38th Avenue Corridor Plan and how you would work to support and advance that plan. Would that support include funding WR2020's role?

Not being on City Council presently, and not wanting to offer a blank check to any organization prior to reviewing a specific funding proposal, I won't offer any comment on supporting funding for any vendor or partner of the City of Wheat Ridge. That being said, I think WR2020 has a role to serve in

enhancing our prospects for a revitalized 38th Avenue. This is the same of other community partners, business partners and government agencies which all have a vested interest in seeing increased economic activity on our main thoroughfares. This includes a little more love and attention to our too often forgotten street known as 44th Ave. I do think that the current 38th Avenue Corridor Plan puts way too much emphasis on the "Road Diet" as though this will somehow be the saving grace of our fair city. I have listened to business owners, neighbors and traffic engineers who have all expressed concerns about the high dollar investment in a yet-unproven traffic calming technique. If the current city council votes to move forward to fund this road diet, I would ask that there be an amendment to insure that the work is completed by a Road-Striping company located in Wheat Ridge so that at least one local business will actually benefit from this exercise. I would much rather see the several hundred thousand dollars which will be spent to make this road diet, be used instead to leverage existing businesses' investment in their facades, increasing their marketing, or simply low interest commercial loans.

What do you think is the most important issue facing Wheat Ridge over the next two years and how would you propose to address it?

Citizen involvement in our future progress towards a greater economically vibrant community. I will commit to involving the citizens of District II in our decision making processes, as currently evidenced by my promotion of the first ever online [Citizen's Survey](#). You already know that I have plans to help bring our business corridors out of the doldrums through my ideas for a Economic Development Plan, Homeownership Plan, and Vacant Property Task Force. But enough about me already, here is what you said in my online survey about what you want to see have happen. These are unedited comments from just a few of you who went online to www.ZachUrban.org to take this one-of-a-kind survey.

From Zach Urban's Citizens Survey

Question 22. What changes would most improve Wheat Ridge?

- development of rundown areas, attract some big anchors besides walmart, bring more sales tax revenue to the city
- Update the older retail areas, which would help attract more new retailers to the area. And finish projects, i.e.-the park at 44th and Kendall and any other projects with city signage which are sitting at a standstill.
- business friendly environment
- Intelligent community development.
- Better middle school and high school option for those of us east of Wadsworth. 38th Ave improvements, including develop area on SW corner of 38th and Wadsworth, develop land on SE corner of 44th and Wads.
- We need a microbrewery to make "Wheat Ridge Wheat" and put it on the map!
- Sweep the streets more often.
- I would love to see more stores within walking distance on 38th and 44th between Harlan and Pierce such as gift shops, quaint little stores and coffee shops would be nice. We had a great one off of 38th and Jay "Sweet Java Cafe" but the economy crashed and now the building is up for sale. Too many vacant buildings and lots of foreclosed or empty homes.
- More businesses
- Turn 38th corridor into a vibrant arts, business, and socializing area of the city. Attract businesses to the area including the nearby Mountain View area. Make progressive actions that

may not fit with the older demographic population of Wheat Ridge. Do this for the future of the city, otherwise we will get passed by. (taxes, business development, schools, zoning)

- Obviously we need to attract businesses to the city and lower commercial vacancies. However, the city can only throw so much money at the occupancy and development issue before the market has to lead that charge. I think the city could take greater advantage of the fantastic amenity that is the green belt and clear creek...look what Golden has done with its access to clear creek....while we essentially turn our back on it...
- more street sweeping in neighborhoods
- bring in businesses to fill up all those empty buildings----like Valentines and Marks

These are just a few of the comments from the [Citizen's Survey](#). Take your survey today.