

Indivisible Benton County — Candidate Questionnaire November 2026 Midterm Election

Thank you for your interest in an endorsement from Indivisible Benton County. **Please complete this questionnaire and return it to voter@indivisiblebc.org by Aug. 12.** Responses will be reviewed by our candidate research committee, and excerpts may be shared with our members.

Please do not use generative AI (artificial intelligence) when completing this questionnaire. We would much rather see grammatical errors in answers that reflect you personally than perfect writing that doesn't originate from your own thoughts!

Please reach out to voter@indivisiblebc.org if you have any questions about the questionnaire or our endorsement process.

SECTION 1: CANDIDATE & CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

1. Full name: **Brennan Colberg**
2. Office sought: **Corvallis City Council, Ward 6**
3. Campaign website and social media accounts (if applicable): **campaign website not active yet but will be at <https://colbergforcorvallis.com> (last time's archive [here](#), nothing has meaningfully changed but I hope to add a lot more detail); am not active on socials but have a dormant personal X account here <https://x.com/brennancolberg> and website (with some writing etc) here <https://brennancolberg.com>**

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND & MOTIVATION

4. Why are you running for this office? What do you hope to accomplish if elected?

I am running for this office because of the request of various community members in the Garfield Avenue area. Earlier this year as the parking was proposed to be eliminated, they were entirely unable to contact their elected Councilor (Bowden), and in desperation reached out to me—the runner-up in the last election—instead! I helped listen and explain the situation to community members, and attended the open house (which Bowden *recommended attending* from the dias but *did not personally attend!*) on this topic. The community members, based on this, asked me to run again and I did (getting their signatures to become the first councilor on the ballot on the entire city). Bowden, in the face of the ire of this dedicated opposition group, apparently thought it wise not for re-election, instead swapping out for and endorsing Greg Shiffer.

If elected, at minimum, I will be a present and councilor. I will respond to *all* my emails within a week (ideally a day); I will meet with *all* constituents who want; I will treat them *all* with respect and patience no matter how much they disagree with me; and I will attend *all* the meetings to which I am assigned in my capacity as a councilor. If for any reason I become structurally unable to do this, I will do the honorable thing and resign.

Within and beyond that structural “table stakes”—I hope to yank every possible lever available in government to give Corvallis’ local economy a giant boost. Every one of our woes as a government and as a community comes down to our struggling local economy. A weak economy pays bad wages, making our rents the most burdened in the state; a weak (and nonprofit/govt-heavy) economy does not pay many property taxes, meaning that the burden must fall on fees or other hurtful tax instruments; a weak economy drives family after family and graduate after graduate who want to stay here out, for lack of sufficient work. Corvallis ought to be a proper high-tech research and industrial and business hub on the West Coast, a smaller-scale peer of SF and Seattle. It is not, because various aspects of our economy and governance are inhospitable to rapid and scaled growth. Therefore, we look down the pipe at cut after cut, at a budget that falls short, and grimace at how we have to divvy up the shrinking of the pie. This is not necessary. But it takes leadership and action. And this is not in evidence currently.

Nothing else really matters right now, at a city policy level (except housing production, but that’s largely been solved and is just waiting to play out). We can talk until we’re blue in the face about how we’d *like* to spend money on {childcare, public housing, anti-homelessness programs, sustainability programs, ...}... but that doesn’t matter since we don’t have the money sustainably. We’ve got to fix (rapidly grow) our economy—ideally in a passive manner by removing active inhibition of it where possible, instead of just pouring more money [that we don’t have] in—and after that we can have fun debating how to spend the proceeds.

5. Describe how your prior experiences (such as public service, community organizing, professional expertise, volunteer work, schooling, family responsibilities, etc.) have contributed to the knowledge and skills you will use as a city councilor.

- I currently serve as the Vice Chair of the Corvallis Planning Commission. In preparation for that role, I read the entire 730-odd page Land Development Code, and continually re-read it as we amend it. I also reach out to every public commenter to learn more about their perspectives. This deep exposure to land use policy and process prepares me to pull levers on it more effectively.
- I, uniquely when compared to all present (and, I believe, candidate) councilors, work full-time in a decision-making role in the private sector. I know how budgets work, I have hired and fired people personally, I routinely confront tradeoffs and constraints without emotion and with accountability. I am comfortable with scarcity, compromise, and unflinching interface with how the “real world” works. It is well and good that most people in policy roles have backgrounds in

government and policy; however, it's important when making policy to have *someone* in the room who understands the larger picture and how other actors—almost all private!—in the community might respond. I would be that.

- For over a year, I went out to feed and talk to the homeless weekly with members of my church. (In the course of this, I spent over \$1000 of my own money on sandwich ingredients.) This gives me a deep and real perspective on their problems and the way they think, which will inform policy in that arena.
- I have two young daughters, one who's almost 2 and one who's due to be born next month. There are zero current councilors with children at home, and only one other candidate (Alexis, in Ward 9). Policymaking is about our future, and must consider families. My perspective as a father would help inform such policy.

SECTION 3: ACCESSIBILITY, TRANSPARENCY, & ACCOUNTABILITY

6. How can the City Council and Mayor ensure that the Corvallis city government is transparent, accessible, and accountable to all constituents, *especially historically underrepresented voices*?

“Participatory” democracy is *incredibly* undemocratic; the most underrepresented voices in city government belong to the classes of people who cannot, or do not, choose to show up to city council meetings or advisory work group sessions or fill out optional questionnaires or email their councilors complaining about things being imperfect.

We already have a solution to this: elections. At elections, and *only* at elections, the fullest slice of the community that is relevant speaks. They look at two or three candidates, and say, “this one is the one I trust more to govern on my behalf.” Then, 90% of them tune out entirely until the next election.

The best way to ensure that these silent voices—often silent because they are busy being productive, clocking the hours and raising the families and paying the taxes that actually make our government function!—are faithfully represented is for elected officials to take that delegation, and its concordant responsibility, seriously. An elected official ought to have confidence to act on their own model of the world and on their own judgement, and then be evicted if it's disliked, instead of constantly looking over their own shoulder in paralyzing uncertainty— which ends up with them being steered by the 20 people in the city who least have anything better to do than attending city meetings.

So, paradoxically, the way to representation and accountability is to lean into elections, and to lean into confidently using the power that elected officials are granted. *Fewer* community engagement sessions. *Less* community comment. *Shorter* feedback windows. *More rapid* decisive action, and reaction/reversal when things are clearly wrong. (Garfield parking is a good example! The city should do things confidently, and backtrack quickly when people scream, because it means they guessed wrong. This is the process *working*. I pray it does not become a rallying point for more “engagement.”)

7. How will you approach working with people, both on the Council and in the community, with different political views, personal experiences, or approaches to decision-making than you? If possible, provide an example of a time (at a job or school, or within a community, political, non-profit, or other organization) when you disagreed with someone yet worked together towards a solution.

As Indivisible and ORCA are no doubt aware, for reasons that have approximately zero relevance to local office or policy, I am a registered Republican. To my knowledge, I am the *only* such person active in local Corvallis politics. So I am no stranger to working productively and in good harmony and bonhomie with people of far different views— I consider myself good friends and have a strong working relationship with people of all relevant political persuasions around here, from Communists to progressives to moderates to Greens.

Governance is a game of counting: it takes 5 council votes to pass legislation. You have an idea? Great, find 4 other councilors. Appeal to them in their own frames, with their own values, building on a positive working relationship and taking rejection in stride. If you can do it— great! Progress was made. If not? Move on in good humor to the next. This is how I have approached my work on the Planning Commission; in my personal life; in my professional life; and in my social life. Perhaps my strongest belief is that there are almost no such things as intractable differences: there is almost always a positive-sum creative solution/synthesis that everyone can agree to. When people disagree it's usually over understandings and facts, rarely values; but almost never is it impossible for intelligent people of good will and shared values to find a compromise.

SECTION 4: VALUES & PRIORITIES

8. What are the top three issues you would prioritize if elected? What actions/policies can the City implement to address these issues?

1. Economic development. We need a more vibrant economy, ideally with more anchor employers like HP used to be (not just small businesses downtown, though those are great and necessary too), and we need it yesterday. I would promote and personally undertake an audit of policy holding back the development and supply of our industrial land, as well as promote ACUs and “infill” economy in residential land (think cafés, home bakeries, etc) and remove all relevant barriers that aren't actively preventing bad things from happening. I would also personally market Corvallis, particularly to the tech/startup/robotics worlds in which I work, at conferences and as a lobbyist in SF/Austin on the city's behalf, with the goal of attracting tech offices, startups, and high-paying factories, particularly related to the more-and-more important “battery-industrial stack” (solar, batteries, motors, drones, robotics, electronics, semiconductors, etc).

2. Cities should be cities, and real capital-C Cities are those where you don't need to use a car and can walk/bike/bus everywhere. I strongly support increased densification of housing, by removal of barriers to development especially in the flat city core (think Mary's River -> Walnut, Willamette River -> 36th). Projects like the tower at 4th and Washington are exactly what we need more of. Denser housing supports denser amenities, which enable more healthy and sustainable city lifestyles; though of course it must come with a maintained high-safety bar. I am fortunate to live (at 1791 NW Grant Circle) in easy <5 minute walking distance to my park, coffee shop, grocery store, bank, and church; and in easy e-biking distance to campus, the public library, city hall, and downtown. This is great and should be accessible to more people; the only way there is building up.
3. I would like to see our bus system made more usable and reliable, by drastically increasing its frequency on key routes. Studies show the sweet spot here is 10 trips/hour, so that users can head to the stop without checking the schedule. I would be open to charging a fare if it would fund this; and expect significant emergent demand from reliable routes, particularly to/from campus/downtown.

9. How would you approach Corvallis' current budget gap while honoring the Corvallis Strategic Plan?¹²³

I would implement a flat 50/50 income/payroll tax to plug the gap, separately from the need for new capital-project facilities. A more progressive version risks Laffer curve effects; high earners can easily move just outside city bounds, or switch residences to other states/cities (a common situation among retirees here) to avoid them. It also risks deterring the economic growth our city desperately needs for more property tax revenue; why put a factory here when you could put it in Philomath or Albany if your well-paid engineers are going to have a pay cut?

(Other revenue options might be: higher base property taxes— illegal under Measures 5/50. A land value tax / split-rate property tax— love it, not currently interpreted as constitutional by the AG's office yet. Sole income or property taxes— doesn't capture external employment, or external living, properly, respectively. Fees— inequitable. Debt to fund operations— unsustainable, immoral, kicks can down the road; see Chicago. Extra property tax bond solely to fund operations— LOL that's not getting approved.)

1

<https://www.klcc.org/politics-government/2026-06-17/corvallis-city-council-still-considering-new-taxes-weighs-other-options>

2

https://gazettetimes.com/news/local/government-politics/article_21949038-0be4-5f95-856b-f76dc7b80de1.html

³ <https://www.corvallisoregon.gov/mc/page/strategic-plan>

10. How could/should city government address the trickle-down effects of decreased federal spending?

In the short term, there's nothing we can really do about it except bracing for impact.

In the long term, the only way we can be resilient to austerity (and it's coming one way or another, look at long-term federal deficits!) is to depend less as a region on governmental cash inflows. Right now, with our hospital, university, grant-subsidized research center, and federal offices, we are among the most densely exposed areas in the country to significant state/federal cuts. To fix this we need to diversify our private economy aggressively, growing profitable manufacturing and research and technology sectors. This ties back into my thesis that this diversification and economic growth ought to be the sole overridingly relevant priority for local government and its policymakers.

SECTION 5: SPECIFIC POLICIES

11. What role do you believe our local government should play in protecting the rights of marginalized or vulnerable community members (e.g., immigrants, LGBTQ+ residents, people of color, people with disabilities)?

It should not actively single them out for harassment. It should be sure to comply with relevant state/federal laws, especially antidiscrimination and accessibility rules.

12. What is your position on data center development in the Willamette Valley, including considerations like energy and water use, tax incentives, and community input in the permitting process?

Contingent on such developments meeting all appropriate noise/air/water/etc pollution rules, with bonus points if they provide their own power in a nonpolluting way, I am quite pro-data center development. The name can be confusing; these are essentially just buildings full of expensive computers that the owners *pay property taxes on!* You can't even identify them without looking addresses up; they're just nondescript windowless buildings that make our modern way of life possible, provide good local jobs, and lower everyone's taxes. Total no-brainer, Chinese disinformation campaigns notwithstanding. "The community" should not get many opportunities to block them; it is wrong on this.

13. Albany recently canceled its contract with Flock for Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs). Proponents of ALPRs, and other forms of mass surveillance technology, focus on public safety benefits such as solving crimes and finding kidnapping victims. Opponents emphasize the potential for, and history of, harms due to errors and misuse of data. What is your position regarding use of ALPR's and/or other forms of mass surveillance by the City? Should the City regulate use of this technology by private residents and companies within city limits?

I am quite strongly anti-ALPRs. Mass surveillance technology is useful, but that's the problem; it can be pivoted at a flash to suppress speech or target people for harassment. Some higher-level government ought to look into constitutionalizing rights to levels of privacy that were generally assumed in the past, but are obviated by tech.

14. What role, if any, do you believe local government should play in addressing climate change (e.g., emissions reduction, sustainability planning, enhancing resilience to extreme weather)?

Emissions reduction is a global collective action problem that is gradually being auto-solved by the superiority of the battery-electric industrial stack to the fossil-fuel one; we should bias towards eliminating emissions where possible and cheap but otherwise not really worry about or spend meaningful money on it.

Resilience is another story entirely; it is an obvious duty of local government to look ahead and be prepared for extreme weather, whether that's heat waves or forest fire smoke (or fires themselves!) or winter storms. I am glad that our new bridge is resilient to earthquakes, as our new proposed police station and city hall would be.

I haven't thought deeply about what this may look like. Brush clearance in the higher areas against fire seems wise, if we're not doing that already. It might be good for us or the county to get a snowplow sometime, since that one storm (in '23?) was rough. Continued earthquake-proofing of infrastructure is important, though only semi-related.

15. Based on January 2025 "Point in Time" data, Benton County had a total homeless count of 550, with 244 unsheltered in Corvallis. What is the City doing right to reduce homelessness and/or its impacts on the City? What could the city be doing differently? ⁴

I am not aware of any polity which has made progress on homelessness numbers by spending money on subsidies for homelessness. The most obvious basket cases here are large Californian municipalities like SF and LA— in which *hundreds of thousands* of dollars per year per homeless person are spent, and which still struggle to *stabilize*. This makes basic economic sense to me; you get more of the behavior you reward.

The root causes of homelessness are unstable lifestyles and unaffordable housing.

The way to solve the first is with anti-addiction and -abuse intervention programs, particularly targeted at those in these situations, as well as aggressive and resolute enforcement of laws, particularly those around public disturbance, vandalism, and theft— ideally combined with mandatory reform/rehab. (Building a new and larger jail, as has been repeatedly proposed, or finding more beds elsewhere, may help with this.)

The way to solve the latter is by drastically increasing housing supply. Housing, like all commodities, follows the laws of supply and demand; its price goes down when there is more, because there are fewer people competing for each unit. The best way to do this is to *let* private investors spend their own money doing it. The city and state have made great strides towards permitting and zoning reform in the last decade; this progress ought to continue. The city of Austin, TX has pulled approximately every lever they can conceive of on supply, and seen 30% rent declines over the last decade even as they increase population; we should steal their homework to the extent possible. (I have already been making contact with policymakers there, in an effort to do just that.)

One last note— unrestrained homelessness has massive negative externalities on the community, particularly in parks. Where unsheltered homeless congregate, children, young women, and other disadvantaged people to whom erratic behavior and routine violence is particularly intolerable are excluded. We must unapologetically set and enforce a high bar of expectations in public behavior, particularly in parks, because tolerance of extreme disorder *is* the exclusion of families and the vulnerable. The homeless must not be allowed to colonize and privately appropriate our public spaces.

16. Corvallis voters will be deciding on reforms to the City Council in November. Do you support or oppose these reforms, and why? ⁵

I support these reforms, and am actively working to help pass them.

After this election, either 6 or 7 of 9 councilors will be brand-new. This is unacceptable; at minimum, half the body should be turning over after each election, for pure organizational continuity. This, mathematically, means you have to have 4-year terms.

Also, I've been attending meetings regularly for almost 3 years now; 9 councilors is a *lot* of reports and comments to sit through, because everyone wants to say something. 6 would be a lot more manageable (though I'd prefer 7 because it's a beautiful number).

SECTION 6: YOUR CAMPAIGN

17. What volunteer support would be most helpful to your campaign between now and November?

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<https://www.klcc.org/politics-government/2026-07-22/corvallis-ballot-measure-city-council-terms-seats>,
<https://corvallisadvocate.com/corvallis-voters-to-decide-city-council-reforms-this-november-heres-a-deeper-look/>

Any kind of canvassing or tabling that people would be willing to do would be helpful; as would yard sign placement within Ward 6 (particularly along major thoroughfares like Walnut, Grant, Kings, and 9th). Happy to provide materials as desired.

SECTION 7: CLOSING

18. Is there anything else you'd like our chapter to know about your candidacy that wasn't covered above?

I and my wife have committed to living in Corvallis until our deaths—God willing, another 6 or 7 decades—and our extended families are increasingly moving here. I am here and invested for the long haul. That's why I care so much about getting involved now to fix our systems and make sure that the trajectory is sustainable; currently, it isn't.

As a candidate in the race for city council in the city of Corvallis, 2026, I pledge to run a positive campaign, without resorting to negative attacks against fellow candidates. Yes

Candidate signature: Brennan Colberg Date: 2026-08-13