

## Bend YIMBY Questionnaire from Ariel Méndez, City Council Candidate for Position 5

### 1. Do you think Bend is experiencing a housing crisis?

Yes! Bend is several thousand homes behind where it ought to be for homes to be more affordable. I am not a NIMBY by any stretch, but I would like to avoid adding just \*any\* kind of supply. We have an opportunity to build houses that create more sustainable neighborhoods, ones that are less car-dependent and preserve our natural spaces in and around Bend. This is good for affordability (once you include things like taxes necessary to pay for infrastructure and transportation costs) as well as for reducing our environmental and climate impact.

2. If elected, what are some *concrete* policies you will work on to help produce more housing? For example:

#### 1. Upzoning so that more homes can be built in existing parts of our city.

Where?

Bend has too many zones. What is it, nearly 30?? Too many! The best zones are the ones like the MR “mixed riverfront” zone near the river and the new OSU-Cascades “innovation” district (which I think is not technically a City of Bend zoning classification – it looks like it is “mixed urban” with a special overlay for OSU-Cascades). So many exciting things happen in these areas – denser housing (that also happens to be highly desirable), lots of amenities, walkable, bikeable neighborhoods. We should have more zones like this and not have a majority zoned for what used to be single family-only homes on large lots (now at least must permit 4-plexes with certain restrictions).

But also there are missed opportunities even in MU-mixed urban zones. Consider 14<sup>th</sup> Street – a wonderful area to drive to and park. In fact, I hope you like parking lots because about 50% of the land area along SW Century Dr is devoted to it. This is so sad because it means the sidewalks and bike lanes will always have driveways all across them and the neighborhood will never have the cozy feel of downtown Bend. So let’s eliminate parking mandates in this area, or at least support decoupling them for commercial as well as residential and see if there is anything we can do to encourage more housing above retail/commercial like the apartments that were built where the old Ray’s was (still surrounded by a sea of parking lots).

#### 2. Simplifying the permitting process. What would you change?

I am not familiar enough with the process to make specific recommendations, but my understanding is they are also understaffed. Staffing is hard right now, but perhaps some of the techniques the Parks District used to attract talent could be effective at the City as well.

3. Subsidizing housing for those whose needs are not met by market rate housing.

The percentage of subsidized housing varies widely by country, and I support building more subsidized housing here. I would like to learn more about extending the 30-year period for which the homes must be deed-restricted because in Portland they are experiencing a wave of publicly-subsidized units being converted to market rate. As a Parks board member, I helped negotiate, expand, and pass the parks district SDC waiver program for deed-restricted housing and I support extending it (a decision coming up in December 2022).

3. What projects, policies, or work have you done in the past to reduce the cost of or help build more housing?

Probably the most meaningful program was the Parks district SDC exemption program mentioned above, which I expanded to provide unlimited waivers (i.e. not subject to the cap) for mixed income developments where market rate homes are mixed with subsidized homes.

As the previous Parks board chair, I worked with Parks and City staff to help develop the MUPTTE (multi unit property tax exemption) program to incentivize particular types of higher density housing projects that also have additional clear public benefits. This has the potential to have an even bigger impact than the SDC waiver program.

4. What is your position on Oregon's HB2001? Do you think the Bill as passed will change Bend positively or negatively? If you could, how would you change it?

I love it. It will change Bend positively but at a very gradual pace. This is why we shouldn't look to it as a source of a tremendous number of new homes.

If I could change it, I would consider making it also apply to historical districts. It was maddening to see a fantastic triplex project in one of Bend's historical districts get denied for things like solar panels or aesthetic objections when a half block away there is a dirt lot with abandoned cars on it. I mean, c'mon now.

5. Extra Credit. We would like to hear what you think about these topics. There's a great deal to think about here - people have written entire books on some of these subjects - so don't feel obligated to respond to everything.

- ● Oregon's new LCDC rules — Very positive. An innovative approach that offers cities lots of choices in how to implement. I agree with Mr. Welton though, some areas may be a bit too prescriptive. This will be a positive part of Kate Brown's legacy.
- ● Equity in housing. For instance, geographic equity between east and west — too many thoughts here to respond quickly to.
- ● What sorts of incentives or rules would you advocate for to push housing in different directions? Examples include things like being able to build denser if the housing includes affordable units. — I'm open to incentives for sure, but wary of trying to get too prescriptive or undermining badly needed funding. It's a tough balance to strike. Affordable housing requirements have been used to stymie entire projects in other cities, for instance. Don't want to see that here.
- ● Changing the building code
- ● Street trees — We need more of them. "Tree" is my middle name (truth). I support the upcoming effort to implement a Bend tree code, too. We should try to preserve as many trees as we can without using trees as a reason to hold up otherwise good projects.
- ● Neighborhood character
- ● Water use and sewage — deceptively expensive!!! Works best when nobody notices them.

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- • Transportation - walkability and its relationship with land use — HUGELY IMPORTANT. There is a debate about whether it is distance or just how the right of way is allocated that is crucial to promoting more walking. It's both, but probably more distance. Bottom line is it helps to have stuff close by.
- • Collaborating with Bend Parks & Rec — my specialty. It is a benefit but also a weakness that we have such a disjointed patchwork quilt of jurisdictions. I have implemented an ongoing monthly meeting with city councilors and BPRD board members that has been very helpful in addressing areas of mutual concern. Very helpful to build those relationships and learn about how each agency sees issues like homelessness, bathrooms downtown, tourism, drunken bike parties in parks, etc.
- • HOAs and CC&Rs vs HB2001 - this is a state level issue. Currently, CC&R's and HOA's prevent neighborhoods from adapting and including this type of housing, meaning more of that housing will happen in areas without them. — CC&Rs are not inviolable. Courts have nullified them when they broke Federal statutes. On the other hand, private contracts are a bedrock of our society. But are CC&Rs really what people think of when they think of private contracts? I think they are in a different category and some of the restrictions are absolutely ridiculous and harmful.
  - • SDC's (System Development Charges) - how to make these more equitable and in line with the state's land use goals — a very prickly topic but I support SDC reform, primarily to build in the principle of ability-to-pay. If you can afford a multi-million dollar home, you should pay a greater share of the cost to provide public services that benefit the entire community. They should not be assessed on per capita impact fees alone.
  - • Mortgage Interest Deduction - on primary residence, vacation/2nd homes and investment properties — Not really morally defensible without commensurate benefits for renters, especially on vacation/2<sup>nd</sup> homes and investment properties.
  - • Bend Central District - how can the city incentivize investment here? — I think we are on the right track and need to follow through with the existing plan. I do support making it less car-dependent than currently envisioned though.