



Abe Herman

Grand Junction City Councilor,
Colorado First elected 2021



WHAT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH AS AN ELECTED LEADER?

I would like for us to solve the issue of houselessness in our community. The first step is realizing that it is, in fact, a solvable problem. If we can redirect the resources that are spent on police, fire and hospital services responding reactively to issues facing our community members without housing, and instead use those resources proactively on providing housing and wraparound services to help transition them into better situations, we could get to a point where houselessness in our city is rare and short-lived. This would make an enormous difference for our most underserved community members and would also save taxpayers a lot of money on the resources we currently use responding to issues facing houseless individuals.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING YOUR COMMUNITY?

Housing affordability is a huge issue across the country, and our community is no exception. According to a study conducted earlier this year, there are over 2,100 households in our community in the sub-25% AMI range (< \$25,000/year in income) who don't have access to adequate housing. Fifty percent of renters in our community are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing, and half of those (25% of all renters) are severely costburdened, spending more than 50% of their income on housing. These are working, contributing members of our community, many of whom are just one medical emergency or one missed paycheck away from joining the houseless community. We as a council are working hard on finding solutions to bring more attainable housing to the market, in partnership with both the public and private sectors.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE CONSIDERING RUNNING FOR OFFICE FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Running for local office is not generally a lucrative proposition—it's essentially volunteer work in most communities, like my own. I think that's a great thing, because those of us who choose to do so are generally in it for the right reasons. When you decide to throw your hat in the ring and run for public office, write down the reasons that you wanted to serve your community in this way; literally make a list, and post it on your fridge or above your desk or wherever you will see it. There are days that are extremely challenging and extremely frustrating, and it's important to have that list so you can maintain perspective on what's important and why you're doing this work. Especially in today's political climate, running for public office can be trying. Don't lose sight of what it is you hope to accomplish or change in the world, and who or what you're doing it for.

IS THERE A CONSERVATION-RELATED RULE, POLICY OR IDEA YOU'D LIKE TO SEE IMPLEMENTED AT THE LOCAL, STATE OR NATIONAL LEVEL?

Here in Grand Junction, on the Western Slope of Colorado, we are in one of the areas in the U.S. that has been most severely affected by climate change and increasing temperatures. Water scarcity is a real issue that we'll be facing in our lifetimes. I'm pushing for adoption of greywater regulations that would not only allow our residents to install greywater systems that reuse water in their residences and businesses for landscape irrigation and toilets, but would also incentivize those systems. I would love to see a situation where it's actually more cost-effective to implement water-saving measures in new home constructions than not to, and also provide some assistance to install these systems in existing homes and businesses as well.

