

Michael Iverson

Candidate for Salt Lake City Council

District 4

1. Introduce yourself to our members. Describe your relationship to the Central Wasatch Mountains. What's your favorite place to visit? What are your favorite activities? What do you find compelling about the Central Wasatch Mountains?

I'm a candidate for Salt Lake City Council District 4, running on my experience and a progressive platform. I served for six years as chair of Central City Neighborhood Council, and served for four years on the Salt Lake City Human Rights Commission, and I'm taking those experiences and running with them for council. I've lived in Salt Lake nearly my entire life, but I feel I really discovered the beauty of our mountains in high school when I started hiking. I never knew the names of the trails, I would just drive up and park and start walking. I still occasionally wander in the foothills, and a few times a year I make it into Big Cottonwood Canyon and hike up to the lakes. The natural beauty is incredibly compelling, and makes me think how important it is that it be preserved as natural and wild as possible. The economic benefit is important, too, but I also believe in preserving beauty for beauty's sake.



2. In your mind, what are the most important issues facing the Central Wasatch Mountains today?

Land use and the encroachment of development has always been an issue. Pristine lands should be preserved and not paved to make room for condos and restaurants. Transportation and traffic congestion will only become more and more of a problem as the years go on and the population in the valley increases, so we need to make sure there are more public transportation options to get people into the canyons. I think one of the biggest issues facing the Central Wasatch Mountains today is the state's recent interest in usurping Salt Lake City's rights to our watershed. I don't trust the state with our water any more than I trust them with our air.

3. Transportation. What are your thoughts about UDOT's plans for reducing traffic congestion in Little Cottonwood Canyon? How much do you think this plan should try to reduce congestion by increasing the number

of cars that the highway and parking areas can handle versus some form of public transit that reduces reliance on cars?

I don't support any expansion of parking in the canyons. We should be encouraging people, even if the transition is uncomfortable, to leave their cars at the entrance of the canyons. Of course, this only works if we expand public transportation and shuttle services. That should be our number one focus for transportation in Little Cottonwood and the rest of the Central Wasatch.

4. Public Lands. What are your thoughts with regard to the current Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area (CWNCRA) proposal and efforts to enact federal legislation to protect the Central Wasatch Mountains?

From what I have read of the proposed legislation, I absolutely support it.

5. Recreation. Are you concerned that very high recreational usage is harming the environment(s) or degrading the experience of being in the canyons? What zoning, ordinance or policy decisions would you support to maintain a balance of recreational use and habitat health and water quality in the Central Wasatch Canyons?

Yes, high recreation is harming the environment and degrading the experience. One of the solutions is public education, making sure the people recreating in our mountains understand the importance of preservation and the risk of poor decision making (littering, high-risk fires, contaminating water, etc.) I don't think we're to this point yet, but at some point we may need to

consider metering the number of people, and especially the number of vehicles, allowed to use canyon roads at any given time. It's unfortunate to me to think that we may need to limit the recreational use of our beautiful mountains, but preserving them should be our number one priority.

6. Water policy. Utah cities have been granted authority to protect sources of drinking water under a provision called "extraterritorial jurisdiction." In recent years this authority has come under attack by legislators, developers, and speculators seeking to diminish Salt Lake City's ability to protect water quality. If elected, how will you insure citizens continue to have access to high quality drinking water while balancing other uses in our watersheds?

As I mentioned above, and even brought up in my speech to the Salt Lake City Council when the District 4 position was vacated, the state's proposed seizure of our watershed is one of the biggest issues facing the city. It is an existential threat to our sovereignty on the scale of the Inland Port or Millcreek's attempted annexation of the Brickyard area. We have to fight the state on this issue at every level, and encourage city residents to join us. Last year the city council decided they weren't pleased with the representation they were getting from the mayor's lobbyist at the state legislature, and they funded the position to hire their own lobbyist to fight for the city's needs at the legislature. I absolutely support that decision and would look at expanding the city council's role in lobbying the state, particularly as it relates to these issues I've mentioned.

7. Local Ordinance(s). What types of ordinances should be put in place (or revisited) to protect the environment, water quality, access, and integrity of the Central Wasatch Mountains?

As I said above, metering access is one possibility to explore in the future. More immediately, we need to fund increased public transportation access. I would be willing to consider a toll for cars in some of our canyons, with the toll being waived for users of public transportation and shuttles. Although I care very much about the issues, I am not an environmental scientist and will always defer to the experts when it comes to local ordinance protecting our mountains. But I will tell you my guiding philosophy: preservation first, local recreation second, tourism third.

8. Land Use Planning. The canyons are already very heavily used and, as you probably know, the population of the Wasatch Front is expected to double within several decades. What would you like the canyons to be like in fifty or sixty years, and what, if anything, do you think our government needs to do to make sure it will be that way?

I think I've covered this in previous answers, but I appreciate the CWC looking so far into the future. So many issues we face today, particularly in terms of environmental issues, could have been mitigated or solved if those who came before us had the vision. In 50 years, I hope our canyons look exactly like they did 50

years ago. I believe that is the essence of preservation, ensuring that generation after generation of visitors get to experience the same beautiful mountains as those before it.

In terms of specifics, I'll reiterate that I very much support expanding public transportation and reducing the need for vehicular traffic in the canyons. I support public education campaigns to teach people the value of the Central Wasatch and what the average person can do to protect it. I support fighting the state's overreach into the city's watershed. I support preserving our mountains.

9. Is there anything else people should understand about your vision, plans, ideas, or policies for the Central Wasatch Mountains?

I'm always willing to learn more, and I hope people will reach out to me with ideas and concerns. This is not my area of expertise, but it is something I care very much about. My phone number is (801) 413-3167 and my e-mail address is michael@iversonforcouncil.com.

Save Our Canyons is a 501c3 non-profit organization. These questionnaires are provided for the benefit of our members and the community we seek to serve. We reached out to all candidates for the particular office and have provided responses un-edited as they were received, some candidates have opted to not respond. If you have questions about the responses, we encourage you to reach out to the candidate. If you have a comment about the questionnaire or a suggestion of others elected seats we should issue to, please reach out to Save Our Canyons. 801-363-7283, info@saveourcanyons.org