

For a better quality of life.



HOME BUILDERS
ASSOCIATION
of
METRO DENVER®

METRO HOUSING COALITION



Candidate Questionnaire | Superior | November 2022 Election

Name: Neal S. Shah	Email: nealsshah@gmail.com
Seat: Superior Trustee	Address: 1321 S Idalia Ct
Phone: 720-940-7826	City: Superior
Website: voteforneal.com	Zip Code: 80027

1. Please tell us about yourself and why you are interested in running (or running for another term) for elected office in the Town of Superior?

I was first elected in 2018 on a platform that focused on the community, diversifying our revenue base, and smart growth. As the past four years have required that the Board respond to fracking under Rocky Flats, the pandemic, and now the Marshall Fire, many of those priorities shifted. I'm running again to ensure that we do not relent in helping our homeowners rebuild while also making this an attractive place to have a business. Superior residents value the quality of life they have here, and we must not only preserve it, but ensure our displaced homeowners can rebuild and come back.

2. What do you identify as the top three issues facing Superior and how do you think they should they be addressed?

I believe the top three areas for Superior can be summarized as rebuilding, economic vitality and community resiliency.

Without a doubt, helping our community rebuild from the Marshall Fire must remain the primary focus. The board has worked quickly to remove obstacles and expenses for homeowners that never wanted to be rebuilding. I want to ensure the Town continues to realize that these homeowners never wanted to be their own general contractors and continue to streamline, accelerate, and simplify the entire process.

But as the rebuilding continues, the Superior Board can continue their ongoing focus on ensuring the economic vitality of the Town. The primary engine for the town finances is anchored to the Superior Marketplace and its big box retailers. While those retailers have proven instrumental in the Town building a strong balance sheet from which to react to the Marshall Fire, additional focus must be on diversifying the Town revenue base such that sales & use tax isn't the primary driver. I strongly believe that we need to be aggressive with our economic

incentives to attract new businesses. As another big box retailer is ending their lease next month, this focus remains critical.

Finally, Superior is an amazing place to live and we must continue to build upon that. The Superior Community Center opened in 2021 and has already become an first-rate asset for bringing the community together. As Downtown Superior comes together, the Town must stay focused on activating the area to bring a diverse set of residents together that want to spend time in downtown. I want to continue my work on the Traffic and Safety commission such that we ensure we have pedestrian and bike friendly routes to Downtown and across the whole Town and make this town one of the best to live in and raise a family.

I go into more detail on these answers on my website: voteforneal.com/issues

3. There are a number of ways local policies, codes, regulations and fees add to the overall cost of housing which impacts the serious attainable housing challenges our state is facing. Also, when new residential development occurs, there are a number of economic benefits that result, including increased tax revenues, spending at local businesses, and most importantly, housing stock for families and workers within the Town. What role does residential development play in your vision for the future of the Superior and what do you believe is the appropriate way for the town to guide and/or direct growth?

I fully agree that the availability of residential housing helps attract the business needed by those residents. Those revenues are directly attributable the homeowners living here and nearby that shop in Superior. The tax revenue from those business help drive the economic engine of the community. But with a relatively small commercial footprint, the Town's finances are driven primarily by sales and use taxes among a highly concentrated group of businesses. Superior has always been considered a "bedroom" community given our small commercial areas.

Residential development also underpins the Downtown Superior project. Our community bought into the promise of a Downtown core as the vision for bringing a vibrancy to the Town that did not exist. As all the housing has now been approved, we need the commercial aspect to move forward such that the community can realize the vision of the mixed-use space.

But the challenge we all have is that residential development is far easier to secure financing for than commercial development. That then risks community buy-in for future projects if our residents can't see the aggregate benefits with additional restaurants and store fronts. Not surprisingly, where possible, developers and community leaders need to work together to realize the aspirations of the community.

The overall problem is exacerbated by the challenge is that the housing being added in Superior is priced at a level that few who work in town can afford to live here too. We have an obligation to work together across all the decision makers to find a way to make this work. We have rarely, if ever, focused on the cost of

building a home relative to the fees charged at the Town level, and that may be a step we need to take to help create solutions.

4. Affordable housing has become a major policy discussion in many jurisdictions as builders try to keep up with the significant deficit in housing supply. Please share your thoughts on affordable housing and any policy ideas you have on this subject.

As Superior is only 4.25 square miles, we are nearly built out. Future development is limited to a few modest parcels and eventually, redevelopment where possible. Within those limits, we have an opportunity, with the right partners, to be part of the solution for the area.

As with any development, we must ensure that it meets with the spirit of what works within the community. The absence of affordable housing across the metro area is even more acute within Boulder County. While the Town can, and has, implemented measures to increase the amount of affordable housing as part of future development projects, more work remains.

We need to look at what the Town can do instead of relying upon the next development project to add units. We need partnerships to strike the right balance to bring more affordable units into the community rather than rely only upon large development projects.

Further, true solutions need better relationships across counties and municipalities. Our focus has been to work within Boulder County, but Superior also shares borders with Broomfield and Jefferson Counties. Our solutions must comprehend our neighbors and elected officials and industry leaders need to reach further to help solve this together. Given the relative scarcity of developable land within Superior, we need strong partnerships to make headway on this community need.

5. Water rates and water connection fees, often referred to as tap fees, are a subject of ongoing analysis and review. Tap fees factor into the overall cost to develop a home and the affordability of the home to the end purchaser. What are your thoughts on water connection fees and how do you factor in the end result of increasing the cost of housing? Feel free to include any additional thoughts you have on water, water supply and conservation as well.

All fees (permit, plan reviews, tap fees, etc.) and use taxes, have a significant role to play when it comes to housing in Colorado. We often treat new development as a cash cow to fund services for existing residents as the new home buyers are expected to absorb it. The challenge is that our competitive analysis is generally focused on ensuring our fees are consistent with our neighbors. No one is taking the position that it can be advantageous to be driving lower cost housing by taking a knife to these expenses.

But for Superior, as we approach full buildout, we know our tap fee revenue will start declining and we need to take a hard look at our water fees. Water fees in Superior are very low as we've had a significant amount of development in recent

years that has bolstered our water enterprise fund. In hindsight, we could have potentially been more aggressive with our fees if we knew that a reduction in fees would save a homebuyer money. As we go forward and need to push for greater water conservation, it will be critically important that our fee structure reflects the behavior we need to see.

6. Construction defect laws continue to play a big role in leaving a hole in our State's housing options. Condo construction is severely limited in the State of Colorado and the effects of how this happened over the last decade is now part of the reason affordable housing is such an issue. Please tell us your thoughts about how you think this policy issue should be addressed at the local and state levels, so that Colorado can have condos built here, as they are across the rest of our nation.

Like many legislative items, the unintended consequences of welling meaning actions left us all with the need to find an updated and equitable solution. Managing construction defects remains an area that we must ensure homeowners are protected and municipal inspections must be doing their part. I personally believe that more work needs to be done at the state level, so developers are not scared away from the projects our communities desperately need. I also believe that we absolutely need reform as evidenced by the difficulty in attracting builders to rebuilding multifamily housing after the Marshall Fire due to the litigation risks.

7. Metropolitan Districts play a big role toward developing communities including, but not limited to: roads, water, sewer systems, parks and open spaces, landscaping, common area amenities, safety and traffic lights, intersections, pest control and more. They also help to keep the cost of housing more attainable than if they are not used to pay for these infrastructure costs. Given that Metro Districts can be the determining factor of whether a project can actually work or not, what are your thoughts or position on this subject?

Superior has leveraged metro districts to help accelerate development projects. Creating the right incentives for the metro districts to invest and bring a project forward is an excellent opportunity for communities to leverage the private sector. It is also critically important that metro district oversight is transparent and inclusive of the residents residing within those developments.

8. What are your thoughts on limited growth policies that restrict residential growth to a certain limit of growth each year?

As mentioned in my answer to item 3, there is limited space within Superior for significant additional growth. It is unlikely that Superior would see any sort of community push for a limit on growth. But limits on growth in surrounding communities have the effect of pushing up pricing within our own community and making it more difficult for the people who work in Superior to live here too.

Those restrictions have had the unfortunate challenge of pushing housing needs further from where people need to work. The communities that surround Boulder continue trying to find ways to add affordable housing due to growth limits that Boulder implemented decades ago. So in short, I am not a fan of these limits as it

dramatically decreases the availability of housing stock while also putting upward pricing pressure on neighboring communities.

9. The MHC and HBA would like to applaud the way the Town of Superior has banded together and begun the process of rebuilding after the Marshall Fire. How has the Marshall Fire impacted or changed the way you look at residential home construction, building, fire and energy codes, and any other factors related to the home building industry?

I'm proud that Superior is recognized by the MHC and HBA as we worked hard to go fast while being focused on homeowners rebuilding. For me, it has forced a much deeper conversation about all codes that are often rubber stamped for adoption. Very little input is sought from the builders on how code changes affect housing pricing. As I learned first-hand through revisiting these codes, adoption is not universal within the state or even across the US.

On a go forward basis, we need the building community to help push back on the automatic adoption of codes if they are likely to add significantly to the cost of a new home. We need to understand the tradeoff between the goals (efficiency, safety, etc) relative to the costs and the relationship they have with pricing future residents out of the community.

10. If elected, how would you involve and work with the home building industry?

If re-elected, I hope to continue the ongoing conversations from that began this year. The HBA was very open in working with the Marshall Fire communities to find creative solutions. These collaborative conversations were new for me, and I welcomed the opportunities to work together. Understanding the constraints that the HBA members are under (labor, supply chain, building codes) and how that affects pricing ensures that electeds are fully apprised of the macro issues. Often, we make assumptions that are not based on any factual analysis.

But elected officials are often forced into a hands-off approach due to the quasi-judicial nature of land use applications. In order to have a truly collaborative relationship, it must begin before the Board has an application in front of it. Ensuring that the Town staff is providing impartial information in the hands of electeds by having collaborative conversations can help us all attain the key goals for all of us.

11. What is your campaign strategy and how much have you raised/spent to date?

I am funding my own campaign as I did in 2018. So far, I have spent approximately \$1k and don't anticipate spending a materially greater amount.

12. Would you consider an endorsement, contribution or debt relief from the Metro Housing Coalition toward your campaign? If so, who should we make the check out to? (i.e. The Committee to Elect XXX, etc.)

I would appreciate an endorsement but am self-funding my campaign. As such, no financial contributions are necessary.

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. Here are the next steps:

- If you are interested in interviewing and finding out more about the Metro Housing Coalition, please kindly **return this questionnaire** to Morgan Cullen at mcullen@hbadenver.com by **Friday, September 16th** or before.
- **30-minute interviews** will take place at the Metro Housing Coalition office located at 9033 E. Easter Place, Centennial, CO 80112. We can also make a virtual/Zoom interview work as well, but prefer in-person if you are comfortable.
- Once your questionnaire is returned, Sean Maley from CRL Associates (who is helping the MHC with scheduling) will contact you to schedule an interview.
- We have sent you this questionnaire in Word Format to easily fill out and send back electronically.

Thank you so much for your time and engagement with the MHC. We enjoy engaging with current and future local officials and appreciate you running for office and giving back to the community.

Morgan Cullen

Director of Government Affairs

Home Builders Association of Metro Denver

mcullen@hbadenver.com

cell: 303-217-6858

9033 E Easter Place | Suite 200 | Centennial CO | 80112