

Position 3

Lauren Connally

OPB: How can the county address housing shortages and rents that are out of reach for many residents? What is your proposal for a long-term solution to the management of shelters and sanctioned camps?

Connally: Housing affordability is tied to supply, infrastructure, and economic conditions. The county's role is to ensure growth is planned in a comprehensive and responsible way, including working with intragovernmental partners to open up non-prime resource lands and ensuring the road, utilities, and services are in place to support sustained opportunities. When we increase supply and support the infrastructure that businesses and families rely on, we stabilize prices and strengthen the local economy.

Homelessness is not a single issue, and it does not have a single solution. Some people need short-term housing support. Others need treatment for addiction or severe mental illness. The priority of care should be for the elderly, people with disabilities, and families. The county can strengthen upstream prevention, expand behavioral health capacity, and build real pathways for people to thrive economically. Sanctioned camps can be a temporary management tool, but they are not the long-term solution to this problem.

OPB: What measures would you champion to address resident concerns about natural hazards like winter storms, wildfire and extreme heat? Please address each type of disaster in your response.

Connally: Our focus needs to be resilience and preparedness. For wildfire, that means fuels reduction, defensible space, and coordination across public and private lands. For winter storms, we must maintain safe, well-engineered roads, reliable utility infrastructure, and strong emergency response capacity. For extreme heat, reliable power and emergency cooling options are critical. These systems must be planned together so communities remain functional during disruptions. I plan on working with federal partners to access FEMA-funded grant dollars that support infrastructure that hardens infrastructure in anticipation of disaster.

OPB: How would you approach applications to rezone parts of the county for denser development? How do you propose the county grows to accommodate a growing population?

Connally: Growth should follow infrastructure. Housing depends on roads, water, wastewater and power, and rezoning decisions must be based on whether those systems can support additional development. Higher density can make sense in the right places, but it must coordinate with infrastructure capacity and not overwhelm existing neighborhoods. Non-prime resource lands allow for strategic planning and expansion, giving us options for growth, stable housing, and the addition of mixed-use, live-work areas and commercial zones to foster

economic opportunity. Responsible planning allows for growth while protecting the character of Central Oregon.

OPB: Where would you propose the county build a new solid waste facility and how do you propose helping the county reach the state's Department of Environmental Quality goal of reducing waste disposals in landfills to 45%?

Connally: Horse Ridge is the most practical location for our future solid waste facility because it aligns with existing transportation corridors, reduces truck traffic through residential areas, and provides the long-term capacity the county will need. Any final decision must still meet strict groundwater and environmental protection standards. To help reach the Department of Environmental Quality goal of reducing landfill disposal by 45%, the county should expand recycling, composting, and materials recovery while investing in infrastructure that separates recoverable materials before waste reaches the landfill. Waste management is fundamentally a logistics system. If we build the right infrastructure, we can reduce landfill use while managing waste both responsibly, and as an enterprise revenue-generating activity, for a growing county.

OPB: Do you support the district map going before voters in November? Why or why not? If not, how do you think commission seats should be apportioned? Why?

Connally: For this election, four commissioners are being elected at-large to serve this entire county for their tenure. I support the electorate deciding in November, and I will support what the voters pass. Either way, the next four years of service for Position 3 will cover the entire county. As we consider this measure, we must ask ourselves what option, districts or at-large, will allow each unique region of our county to have a seat at the table. We must ensure a balance between urban and rural communities so that everyone feels represented.