

## **Position 5**

### **Rob Imhoff**

**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?**

Imhoff: Deschutes County's housing shortage developed over many years, and it will take practical, consistent work to improve it. We need to increase supply at every level, workforce housing, entry-level homes, and rental units, while protecting the character and livability of our communities.

The county should streamline land use and appeal processes that slow projects down and drive-up costs. Delays translate into higher prices, and higher prices make it harder for working families to stay here. We also need strong coordination with our cities so that when Urban Growth Boundaries are expanded, housing is built where infrastructure and services already exist.

Growth is coming whether we like it or not. Our responsibility is to manage it responsibly and make sure local families are not priced out of the community. One of my big ideas is to make sure 75% of all County Contracts go to local businesses. As we grow, our local companies grow with us.

On homelessness, we cannot continue repeating the same approaches and expect different results. Shelters and sanctioned camps must be structured, time-limited, and connected to services such as addiction treatment, mental health care, job placement, and pathways to permanent housing. Compassion and accountability should go hand in hand. The county should focus on measurable outcomes and regional coordination, so resources are used effectively.

**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.**

Imhoff: Deschutes County faces real risks from winter storms, wildfire, and extreme heat. Preparation matters. In sports, you do not wait until game day to figure out your plan. You practice, you train, and you make sure everyone knows their role. Emergency management should work the same way.

For winter storms, that means clear communication systems, backup power planning, and regular coordination exercises with cities, utilities, and emergency responders. We should be training and running through response scenarios before severe weather hits, not during it.

Wildfire preparation requires ongoing fuel reduction work, strong partnerships with state and federal agencies, and regular evacuation planning drills so residents understand routes and procedures. Communication systems should be tested and updated so there is no confusion when minutes matter. I support the continued investment in our CORE 3 emergency management facility to ensure we are ready for any emergency that happens.

Emergency preparedness is not just about equipment. It is about training, coordination, and leadership before a crisis ever begins.

**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?**

Imhoff: Growth is not a question in Deschutes County. People want to live here, raise families here, and build businesses here. The real question is how we choose to accommodate that growth. We can't fit everyone in an apartment and people want to live in homes. I want to make Deschutes County the best place to raise a family in America, that starts with the home.

When rezoning applications come forward for denser development, decisions should be guided by infrastructure capacity, water availability, transportation access, and overall community impact. Density can make sense in certain areas, especially where services already exist. However, concentrating too much growth in limited areas can strain roads, schools, public safety, and quality of life.

Thoughtful UGB expansion allows us to plan ahead, create housing opportunities, and build infrastructure in a coordinated way rather than forcing it into already stressed neighborhoods. Poor planning shifts costs to taxpayers and creates frustration for residents. Deschutes County will continue to grow. Our responsibility is to manage that growth in a way that protects natural resources, preserves livability, and keeps housing attainable for working families.

**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%?**

Imhoff: After completing County College and visiting the current solid waste facility, I made it a priority to understand how the process works. We have an experienced team using modern techniques to prevent leakage and protect groundwater. That gave me confidence in the professionalism of the operation.

Selecting the next landfill site in a timely manner is important so infrastructure and long-term plans can move forward responsibly. Two locations are currently being studied in the far

eastern portion of the county, away from the vast majority of residents. This has been a multi-year process involving environmental review and public input, and there will be additional opportunities for community feedback before commissioners make a final decision. I believe we have the right experts guiding that process, and I am confident the recommendation will reflect careful study and sound science.

At the same time, site selection alone is not the full answer. We need to continue reducing the amount of material going into the landfill. The recent addition of rural recycling receptacles is a positive step in expanding access and diverting more waste. State and federal efforts to reduce excessive packaging will also help at the local level.

Reaching DEQ's goal of reducing landfill disposal to 45 percent will require continued collaboration. That means expanding recycling and composting options, improving education, and encouraging waste reduction at the source. Stewardship is something we all share. The goal should be simple: leave it better than we found it.

**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?**

Imhoff: Yes, I support the district map going before voters.

The petitioner who brought this forward, along with those who supported the expansion, stated that the purpose was to improve representation across the county. Deschutes County includes urban, suburban, and rural communities, and each has distinct priorities and concerns. The proposed map is designed so that each commissioner would be elected by the community they represent, someone who understands the specific issues in that district and can advocate effectively for them.

Under the current at-large system, commissioners are elected countywide. Because the majority of the county's population lives in Bend, that structure naturally gives the largest population center the greatest influence in every race. A district-based system creates clearer geographic accountability and ensures that different parts of the county have direct representation.

This is not about dividing communities. It is about making sure each area has a voice and that commissioners are closely connected to the residents they serve.

Ultimately, this decision belongs to voters. I support placing the map before them and trust them to determine how they want their county represented.