



Downtown  
Denver  
Partnership

## **Downtown Denver Partnership 2019 Denver Municipal Election Candidate Questionnaire**

**Distributed: Wednesday, February 13, 2019**

**Due Date: Friday, February 22, 2019 at 5 pm – please return to Kate Barton  
([kbarton@downtowndenver.com](mailto:kbarton@downtowndenver.com))**

**Candidate/Campaign Name: Michael B. Hancock/Hancock for Denver**

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**District #:**

*Instructions: Please type your answers in the form below and limit each response to 300 words or less. Adjust the size of the answer space to fit your response if necessary.*

*Thank you for taking the time to participate in this process. We look forward to hearing back from you!*

1. The [2007 Downtown Area Plan](#) aims to achieve a vibrant, economically healthy, growing, and vital downtown, positioning Denver as the economic hub of the Rocky Mountain Region. How do you view growth in the City of Denver? What is the role of City Council and the Mayor in addressing, supporting and managing growth?

We have a lot to be proud of in this city. We have taken Denver from the depths of recession to one of the strongest economies in the nation. Over the past 8 years, we have created 100,000 new jobs and 8,100 new businesses and reduced unemployment from double digits to record lows.

With 100,000+ new residents over the last decade, we've become a vibrant city, a leader in progressive values with a modern economy. With 200,000 more people expected over the next two decades, we must continue to strongly manage the growth so it reflects all that we love about our home.

Denver's success is built on meaningful partnerships between the public and private sectors. It is through partnerships between the Mayor, City Council and organizations like the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) that we have been able to thoughtfully manage growth and turn our challenges into opportunities. The DDP has been at the table to help the city solve major societal and economic challenges, from mobility, housing and economic inequity to homelessness, substance abuse and crime.

By continuing to have diverse voices at the table, we will be able to smartly manage Denver's future growth. We must stay true to our specific plans – created side-by-side with thousands of Denverites – to better preserve our unique neighborhoods and create a more inclusive, connected and healthy city for everyone. As Mayor, I will remain focused on ensuring that our economy continues to thrive and that it does not leave anyone behind.

2. Initiative 300 – “The Right to Survive” is an issue on May’s ballot that aims to repeal the unauthorized camping ban and other essential laws that protect the public health and safety of those experiencing homelessness and the broader community. Do plan to support Initiative 300?

YES or NO: No

Please explain your answer.

I grew up in Denver as one of ten kids, raised by a single mom in public housing. I know firsthand the pain of poverty and homelessness. There were many times when we didn't know where we were going to sleep or if we would have enough to eat. I am committed to fighting for Denver's most vulnerable people so that everyone has access to a home, a job and a future.

Currently, Denver invests nearly \$50 million annually toward direct and indirect services to those experiencing homelessness. These include affordable housing, supportive housing

services, street outreach workers, and transportation to and from our shelters. I recognize and value the DDP's committed work and strong advocacy for increased services and funding to support the most vulnerable in our city.

This is important and impactful work, but we know we can and most do better. This is particularly true when it comes to preventing homelessness, to serving those who utilize our shelters, and to aiding those who remain unsheltered on our streets. However, Initiative 300 is not the answer. We need to continue fighting the opioid crisis with fervor and compassion. We need to continue investing in shelters, meal programs, services that connect individuals to critical resources, and programs that allow people to thrive.

I'm opposed to Initiative 300 because I will never be convinced that it's dignified for people to sleep on the street. I will never accept the risks of needles in our parks or trash accumulating in our streets.

3. The Downtown Denver Partnership and the [Downtown Denver Business Improvement District](#) (BID) are committed to fostering a safe, welcoming and inclusive city, and place a focused approach on working with the homeless population in Downtown Denver. This includes:

- Over 15 years of directly funding the St. Francis Center outreach workers to connect homeless individuals in Downtown Denver with housing options and supportive services;
- Helping to create Denver's Road Home and fundraising over \$1 million to support its programs and initiatives;
- Supporting the building of facilities such as the Lawrence Street Community Center and Urban Peak's Drop-In Center;
- Advocating for additional affordable housing through the City's Affordable Housing Fund that support housing for 0 – 30% AMI; and
- Working with the Mayor and Denver City Council to support several ordinances that better connect the homeless population with housing and services.

What do you believe is the City's role in addressing homelessness? What tools do you believe will be effective to address homelessness in Denver?

Today, the city invests more than \$50 million in homeless services every year, an amount that increases annually. While the city plays a critical role in stemming homelessness, we cannot solve this challenge alone. This is a complex issue that can only be addressed with a multi-faceted approach by numerous organizations and resources. This includes creating shelters, expanding access to mental health care services and drug addiction treatment, addressing wage stagnation, identifying creative housing solutions and better connecting people to resources.

There are myriad reasons for homelessness, foremost among them: escalating housing costs and a shortage of attainable housing, substance misuse, mental illness, and disconnection from family.

My administration placed more than 7,500 homeless families and individuals into stable housing, nearly tripled our annual investment in services, and helped open three new shelters. We will continue to implement creative policy solutions that help people transition to a healthy, safe and thriving life. We have launched innovative programs to better assist people experiencing homelessness, including peer navigator programs at the Denver Central Library, which connects people with resources to get off the street, and the Denver Day Works program, which employs people experiencing homelessness to work in city facilities and parks. We've also added "tiny homes" as an innovative approach to providing more shelter with fewer resources.

Our innovative Social Impact Bond housing program has allowed Denver to leverage \$8.7 million from lenders to provide housing and supportive case management services to 325 individuals experiencing homelessness who frequently use the city's emergency services, including police, jail, the courts and emergency rooms. By shifting the focus to preventative services, we can better serve this population.

4. Parks and open spaces in downtown are some of the City's most unique places. In 2017, the Partnership and Denver Parks & Recreation co-funded and launched [Denver's Outdoor Downtown Plan](#) - a 20-year master plan that provides visionary and actionable policies, programs and projects to enrich downtown parks and public spaces. Denver's Outdoor Downtown Plan addresses the unique opportunities and challenges related to managing and activating public spaces in the urban core and supports our parks and public spaces serving as positive social gathering places that are managed in a sustainable manner.

- (a) Do you believe downtown parks and public spaces should be maintained, programmed and managed differently than other city parks?

YES or NO: Yes

Please explain your answer:

Our downtown is more than just a series of buildings, streets and lights – it's where we come together to enjoy culture, have fun, gather as a community, express ourselves as a city and create memories. Because these downtown spaces are the most heavily used in the city – by residents, tourists and the workforce -- they deserve a corresponding level of service. That's why my administration has increased funding for park maintenance, upkeep and security in our downtown parks. It's also why we are placing a renewed focus on downtown's parks and public spaces through the Outdoor Downtown Plan, to elevate these experiences for the tens of thousands of residents, employees and tourists in our downtown every day.

- (b) What are your ideas to increase green space in the center city?

The Outdoor Downtown Plan identifies thoughtful proposals to increase not just green space but public spaces for residents, employees and tourists. We need to strengthen existing and develop new public-private partnerships as development continues downtown to leverage the opportunity for additional green space.

(c) How do you intend to help implement Denver's Outdoor Downtown plan that was adopted in 2017?

Denver voters took a major step in supporting our parks when they overwhelmingly passed the Parks, Trails and Open Space Tax this past November. This increased investment will positively impact the implementation of the Outdoor Downtown Plan along with the city's overall work to improve Denver's parks, trails and open space. To realize this ambitious plan, we will need strong collaboration, new partnerships, more staff and increased investment. We will need to explore other funding options identified in the Outdoor Downtown Plan including development partnerships, sponsorships, grants, and other financing tools. I believe the establishment of a team to lead this exploration is a solid next step.

5. Recent studies have shown that Denver's housing supply is nearly 40,000 housing units short of demand, which is a leading cause of the housing affordability challenge. Attainable housing is a key priority for the Downtown Denver Partnership. What do you propose to create housing supply and address the growing affordability challenges in Downtown Denver and surrounding center city neighborhoods?

Affordable and attainable housing is the number one challenge facing our city today as we work to keep Denver affordable and accessible. To date, my administration does more and spends more to address affordable housing than the entire state of Colorado. This includes LIVE Denver; mortgage, rental and utility assistance; extending preservation periods, creating and then doubling the city's Affordable Housing Fund; and partnering with Denver Housing Authority to deliver more housing faster (6,300 units over the next five years). In 2018, my administration invested more money in one year than ever before to deliver housing Denver families can afford – \$40 million. This year, we anticipate spending close to \$60 million.

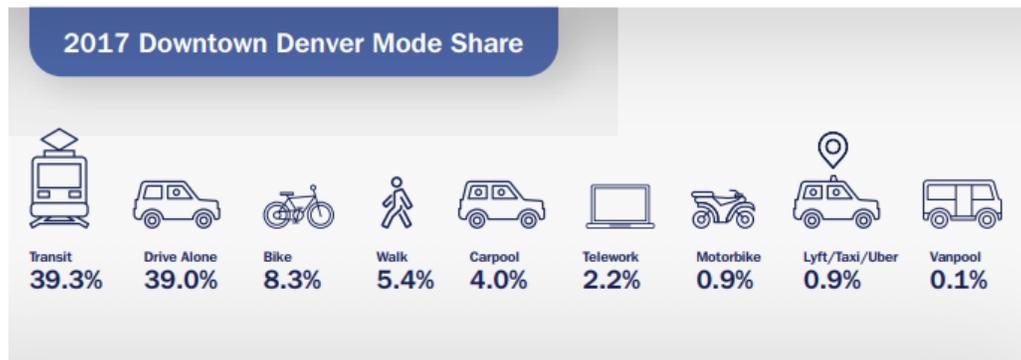
Every one of these ongoing efforts has helped individuals and families in downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, and it is through strong partnerships with the DDP and its members that we have gained this momentum.

If I have the honor of being re-elected, I will maintain the city's laser focus on delivering more and better solutions for Denver's families. We will continue to provide funding to develop and redevelop affordable housing units. Working with numerous partners, we are examining how Denver can utilize even more affordable housing tools, such as: land trusts, property acquisition, city-owned real estate, accessory dwelling units, and resident-preference and income non-discrimination policies.

To address Denver’s affordability, we must keep a keen focus on opening access to the most basic needs of all people: access to a good job, a home and a community with access to quality healthy foods, transportation and education.

- Using the 2007 Downtown Area Plan as our guide, the Downtown Denver Partnership is committed to building out a visionary mobility network for all users, connecting center city neighborhoods, and ensuring seamless regional connections. The Partnership’s [2017 Mobility Report](#) showed that 61% of people commuted to work in Downtown Denver using a mode of transportation other than a single occupancy vehicle.

The Downtown Denver Partnership aims to reduce the share of commuters driving alone to work to under 35% by 2021, adding to the efficiency of our mobility network and delivering the quality of life that our downtown employees, residents, and visitors desire.



What are your ideas to address mobility challenges in the city and encourage increased use of alternative mobility options in the center city?

To keep Denver accessible, affordable and equitable, residents must be able to get around the city easier with more transportation options. I launched a Mobility Action Plan that will invest \$2 billion to address Denver’s congestion and accelerate projects, policies and programs to move more people, more efficiently and more safely.

This includes ensuring our streets learn to share giving more people safe, reliable options such as mass transit, bikes, scooters and pedestrian paths. My Mobility Action Plan addresses the ways in which we can embrace these types of transit and make them easier to access from all parts of the city.

To help encourage this behavior, we are working with RTD to increase priority routes on main corridors – including a new Colfax Rapid Transit express route. We have added miles of protected bike lanes and paths. Improved signs, signals, striping and paving throughout the city to make it easier for pedestrians and wheelchairs to get around. We have joined the Vision Zero program with the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities by 2030.

In addition to changing the way people move about the city, we also need to consider the environmental impact that vehicles are having. That's why I am investing in technology and infrastructure to make electric vehicles a more appealing form of transportation. We are deploying a fully electric fleet of street sweepers this year, as well as adding 200 electric vehicles for other city services by the end of 2020.

7. The Downtown Denver Partnership manages the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District (BID) and several other special districts that contribute to the vitality of Downtown Denver and create a vibrant, inviting and thriving commercial core. Through maintenance and operations, safety initiatives, economic development, pedestrian environment enhancements, targeted visitor marketing and communications, as well as holiday events, lighting and decor that attract thousands of visitors each year, the BID continues to ensure that Downtown Denver is a world-class city, to the benefit of residents, employees, and visitors.

Do you support the continued formation of these types of special districts utilizing special funding streams to manage public space?

YES or NO: Yes

Please explain your answer:

Special districts are a tool for localities like Denver to maintain their residents' priorities and ensure we are filling gaps in service. Special districts in Denver have helped to create vibrant neighborhood business corridors like Five Points, Cherry Creek North, Santa Fe, South Gaylord and RiNo, which in turn produce additional revenues to better serve residents and businesses.

We are especially appreciative of the business owners being willing to tax themselves to enhance public infrastructure and maintain and promote their unique geographic areas as part of these districts. Those owners have stepped up in a real way to make improvements that has real value and benefit for their communities.

8. Development related costs and related requirements, including impact fees, development fees, property taxes and other requirements imposed on development are a significant factor in the rising costs of housing and rents in Downtown Denver. Some cite these factors as the leading cause of affordability issues. Do you support imposing additional requirements, such as increased impact fees and permit fees, on development?

YES or NO: N/A

Please explain your answer:

The city and the DDP have a shared interest in ensuring affordability in the market. My administration understands the challenges that are posed by fees, taxes and other requirements – as they are passed on to consumers and drive up prices. There is a delicate balance we are all working to strike.

Over the past eight years, my administration has worked hard to ensure all voices are at the table as we make decisions on various proposals to solve the affordability issues we are facing as a community. I commit to the collaborative approach that has led Denver to be the vibrant, progressive city with a modern economy that we are today.

9. The Central Business District (CBD) is a core economic driver not only for the city, but also for the region. The CBD contributes by far the highest amount of property taxes per/sf of land at \$18.67 paid/sf of land vs. a city-wide average of \$0.62/sf of land. From 2011 to 2018, property tax collection in downtown has more than doubled, and property taxes levied on downtown properties have increased dramatically.

- A) Do you believe that we should consider finding ways for residential properties to bear a greater property tax responsibility as the city continues to grow?

YES or NO: No

Please explain your answer:

At this time, it is not legally permissible for Denver to pursue this effort. I am pleased and appreciative that the state legislators are willing to take up this important issue and the various challenges it creates.

- B) What do you see as solutions and tools for addressing this issue?

The state is vetting options, and I encourage commercial property owners to work with the state and propose options to address the imbalances that the Gallagher Amendment has created. I would urge all participants in the review of options to be mindful of the impact that any increase in property taxes has on low-income residents and communities of color.

10. Studies of American cities have shown that a city's urban core is a bellwether, and the status and condition of the downtown reflects the health and vitality of the city. Given the limited resources available, how do you plan to balance investment between Downtown Denver and other areas of the city?

The key word is "balance." There is a symbiotic relationship between the city's downtown and neighborhoods that makes Denver the vibrant, progressive city that we all love. As Mayor, I have worked hard to ensure our downtown core remains vibrant. This is all while working to create complete communities throughout Denver and ensuring everyone has an opportunity to thrive.

The city's investment has gone well beyond the financial to include collaborative problem-solving and opportunity-planning. Through this work, we have had many successes and lessons learned, and ultimately, we have set our downtown on a path to not just be the bellwether but to serve as a national model. Together, we have retained and grown downtown's employment and residential bases, created safety net solutions unique to the population, and piloted some of the most progressive ideas in the country. And we have established thoughtful downtown-specific plans for mobility, parks and public space, land use, retail, and safety.

11. What is your vision for the future of Denver?

I'm proud of the progress we have made as a city, and I'm eager to keep the momentum going. We aren't finished. We have a lot more work to do so that our city is working for everyone, so that no one is left behind:

We are making Denver the most equitable and inclusive city in the U.S. by increasing wages, expanding access to affordable housing and connecting our most vulnerable residents to the resources they need to find stability – housing, meals, substance abuse treatment and mental health care. We are creating new opportunities for local businesses, minority-owned businesses and women-owned businesses. And we are committed to preserving the history, culture and diversity of our neighborhoods.

We are making Denver the most welcoming city in America by fighting for civil rights, for criminal justice reform and to protect immigrants and refugees in the face of a hostile Trump administration.

And we are making Denver the most modern and progressive city by implementing new technologies, new transportation options, protecting our climate, moving toward 100% renewable electricity, building new parks and open space and creating better opportunities for our kids.

My vision is a home, a job and a future for everyone.

12. Is there anything else you want us to know about you or your candidacy?

Being the Mayor of Denver has been one of the greatest honors of my life and I have been grateful for the partnership with the DDP. Over the course of my time as Mayor, my team and I – alongside the community we serve – have been working on plans and building teams of experts to achieve some bold goals. No other candidate has my experience, track record, budget plan or understanding of the ways in which the city departments work in tandem to keep this city moving. I am proud of everything we have accomplished in these last eight years, and I am truly excited about the opportunities we have to deliver a more welcoming, modern and progressive city.

We have ambitious goals that will benefit our environment, our children, our neighborhoods and our quality of life. I am the best candidate to lead this city to achieve those goals. No single idea can solve a city's most pressing issues, but my team and I have been able to look at the research, talk to the people, identify challenges neighborhood-by-neighborhood and address them in a multi-faceted way that preserves the best of Denver.

We still have a lot of work to do. The framework is already built through our Mobility Action Plan, the Denveright proposal, the 80x50 Climate Action Plan and a variety of other initiatives we have undertaken to move this city forward. I am eager to continue implementing these plans without delay or distraction.