



## An Open Letter to 2019 Denver Candidates

December 2018

For every candidate for Denver City Council seats and Mayor, we're glad you have stepped forward to lead. It takes courage and bravery, and the acts of candidacy and campaigning illustrate your commitment and love for Denver, and we thank you.

All In Denver believes our city is at an inflection point. By most measures, our local economy is strong, and Denver is benefitting from decisions and investments that have been made over the past thirty-plus years.

At the same time, there is no doubt that Denver is losing so much. It's an extraordinarily high-cost city, and as a result, many people—including long-time residents—are being pushed out in search of housing they can afford. Our city's landscape includes dozens of neighborhoods that are vulnerable to gentrification; our homeless population is on the rise; the ability for middle-income households to crack our housing market is stretched to the breaking point; our public infrastructure and transit service is insufficient; and Denver's rich tapestry of people of color, ethnic neighborhoods, local arts and small, local businesses is fading.

The stakes are high in this 2019 election cycle. When the spotlight shines on your campaign, there are many things we'd like to see:

First, **tell us your vision** of the city, and do so in a way that acknowledges that growth is a central theme of Denver's past, present and future, and that we all must play a role in addressing its impacts. Show us your ideas and priorities to help Denver grow in considerate and pragmatic ways that promote accessible, inclusive, diverse and aesthetically desirable communities. And resist the urge to feed voters with gauzy statements and easy applause lines. Be specific and talk about concrete solutions you intend to explore.

Second, **show us how you want to solve problems** in a granular, highly targeted approach. We think Denver's next decade will be better served if we **think smaller**. Over the last three decades, Denver's economic and civic investment strategies have revolved around legacy projects and shiny facilities. The next decade should focus more on the tactical ways to improve the daily quality of life and well-being for our people, and much less on major projects in pursuit of "world-class" status.



Third, **get informed and authentically engage** with the information that shapes Denver’s civic conversation. There are stacks of plans and concepts that have been shaped through Herculean efforts by current elected officials, City staff, and volunteer task forces, advisory committees and neighborhood groups to address affordable housing, mobility and transportation, parks, homelessness, healthy communities, gentrification, arts and culture, urban design, and sustainability. Immerse yourself in those plans, and understand what the barriers are to implementation.

Fourth, **seek out new voices and new voters**. Unfortunately, municipal elections are low turnout, and the electorate skews to voters who are older, higher-income homeowners. How you reach out to voters who don’t have access to the levers of power is, in many ways, indicative of how you will govern, if elected. So run an inclusive campaign, and work to expand the electorate.

Fifth, **talk about equity**. This means bringing forward policies and practices that will make Denver a more inclusive and welcoming city for all. Many Denver communities are marginalized, lack influence on how city resources are used and changes are implemented, but are passionate about the city and its livability. The barriers to living in Denver are rising, which means putting equity at the center of the policies and ideas this campaign season, and not just a buzzword talking point.

The function of cities is to create opportunity and open doors, but Denver is becoming—and in many ways, already is—a city of economic exclusivity. This is unsustainable. We need to make room, not out of obligation or edict, but because it makes the city stronger.

*Learn more about All In Denver’s mission, core values, priorities and the work we’ve done at*

[www.AllInDenver.org](http://www.AllInDenver.org).