



## 2023 Denver Mayoral Race Questionnaire

Thank you so much for taking our survey! We are excited to learn more about how you plan to address some of the issues that matter most to our immigrant community in Denver. This survey is meant to provide some background information on critical issues in Denver, please feel free to reach out to our team after you have completed the survey if you have additional questions on any of the topics discussed.

We also want to prioritize voter education and plan to publish answers publicly afterwards. We will be reaching out to all candidates in the Denver Mayoral race with the opportunity to respond. We do not plan to endorse any candidate in the Denver Mayoral race but hope this survey serves as a way for our constituents to differentiate between candidates.

This survey includes values based “yes or no” statement questions as well as qualitative open ended questions. We encourage you to add as much detail to your open ended answers as you can.

### Candidate Background Information

**Tell us more about your campaign.**

- 1. Candidate name:** [Ean Tafoya](#)
- 2. What is the candidate's party affiliation, regardless of whether the race is partisan or non-partisan?**

[Democrat, Working Families Party, DSA](#)

- 3. Who should we contact if we have questions? (i.e. name of campaign manager, if applicable)**

[Sharron Pettiford, sharron@tafoyaformayor.com](#)

- 4. What is the best email to contact the campaign/candidate?**



[tafoyafor denver@gmail.com](mailto:tafoyafor denver@gmail.com)

**5. What is the best phone number to contact the campaign/candidate?**

To contact the campaign, it's best to call Sharron Pettiford at 816-582-3557

To contact Ean, call 720-621-8985

**6. Campaign social media handles listed by platform**

Twitter [@EanThomasTafoya](https://twitter.com/EanThomasTafoya)

Insta [@eanthomastafoya](https://www.instagram.com/eanthomastafoya)

Facebook [@EanThomasTafoya](https://www.facebook.com/EanThomasTafoya)

Youtube

**7. Campaign website**

[tafoyaformayor.com](http://tafoyaformayor.com)

**8. Why is the candidate running for office (e.g. platform)?**

I was raised on the North and West side by a union steward and social worker, who instilled in me that I had to serve my community. Ever since then I'm constantly asking myself, how can I show up? How can I do the work? We've never had a Mayor's Office that actually works for *us*: immigrant communities, communities of color, indigenous communities, working families. I myself am Chicano and indigenous. I have decades of experience fighting for us from the neighborhood, to the city government, to the state legislature, all the way to the federal level. I've organized for environmental, economic and racial justice as a teacher, youth mentor, community organizer, nonprofit leader and in three branches of local government. It's time for me to bring that experience to the Mayor's Office and build policy with the urgency our neighborhoods deserve and with the next seven generations in mind.

My priorities are using regional cooperation to address environmental justice, housing and public safety.



**9. Do you support a small tax on landlords to fund legal representation for tenants who are being evicted?**

Yes, perhaps particularly on landlords with more than three tenants to avoid burdening those who rent out portions of their own home.

## **On the Issues**

**Tell us more about your values and how you would tackle major issues impacting the immigrant community in Denver.**

**10.** In 2017, Community leaders in Denver pushed council to pass an ordinance to limit police collaboration with ICE and create the Denver Immigrant Legal Services Fund (DILSF) to support community members through immigration legal proceedings.<sup>1</sup> Since the program launched in 2018, local nonprofit legal service providers have received a total of more than \$1.5M in funds to provide Denver residents with direct legal representation and affirmative relief services including support with DACA renewals and citizenship applications.<sup>2</sup> Denver residents served by this fund - who on average have called Denver home for 17 years - have been able to stay with their families and in their communities thanks to the support provided!

While the fund has been critical to expanding legal services for hundreds of Denver residents, many continue to go through immigration proceedings without representation due to gaps in available resources.

**a. Are you in support of Denver's Immigrant Legal Defense Fund?**

Yes absolutely.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://denverite.com/2017/08/31/heres-else-denver-will-help-immigrants-risk-deportation/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://denverfoundation.org/denver-immigrant-legal-services-fund/>



- b. What will you do to continue expanding the Denver Immigrant Legal Services Fund (DILSF) to ensure Denver residents have access to counsel in immigration proceedings?**

Yes absolutely. When immigrants are represented in court, their chances of receiving asylum or a positive outcome on their hearing goes up exponentially.

11. The 2017 ordinance also sought to tackle long standing issues for the immigrant community regarding police collaborating with ICE and federal immigration officials. The passage of the ordinance made strides to protect Denver residents from federal overreach by prohibiting Denver city employees from asking about immigration status or sharing that information with federal agents and prohibiting Denver law enforcement from holding individuals beyond their release date for ICE.<sup>3</sup>

While this change marked a powerful shift in Denver standing up for the equal rights of all residents, there are still some key practices Denver's Sheriff Department engages in that contribute to the separation of our immigrant families. The Denver Sheriff's Department continues to inform ICE proactively when undocumented Denver residents are being released from custody. This practice of notifying ICE of individual release leads directly to the incarceration of undocumented Denverites and separation of Denver families through deportation.

- a. Do you support ending the practice of 'ICE notifications' in Denver?**

Yes absolutely.

- b. What additional measures would you propose to limit police collaboration with ICE in Denver?**

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<sup>3</sup> <https://denverite.com/2017/08/28/ice-cooperation-bill/>



Police should not be collaborating with ICE, period. We need to protect and silo data in our criminal justice system so that it cannot be shared with ICE or any third parties that may transfer it to ICE.

12. Our groundbreaking report titled, “**Sabotaging Sanctuary: How Data Brokers give ICE access to Colorado’s Data and Jails**,”<sup>4</sup> shows how ICE contracted with the data broker company Appriss Solutions, a subsidiary of LexisNexis, to receive jail-booking data from a Colorado jail alert system (VINE). The system alerts ICE agents immediately when anyone on the agency’s target lists is booked into county jails, allowing ICE to arrest them upon release. By contracting with 3rd party data brokers ICE can obtain information on hundreds of millions of people across the country.

Further, our report also shows that Denver’s ongoing contract with LexisNexis permits information sharing with other LexisNexis customers, including ICE.

- a. **Do you support efforts to limit expansive surveillance by third party entities and law enforcement/ICE?**

Yes.

- b. **What steps would you take to address this issue in Denver?**

We should not be contracting LexisNexis until they stop this cruel policy.

13. When Mayor Hancock signed the 2017 ordinance he stated the administration’s goal of “affirm[ing] Denver’s commitment to stand with immigrants and refugees” and “maintain Denver as a welcoming city where everyone can feel safe and thrive.”<sup>5</sup> Over the past months migrants have been coming to Denver and the city has mobilized staff, shelter, and support to help people find security and stability.

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[https://notechforice.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Sabotaging-Sanctuary\\_Final-Report\\_Design-4.pdf?link\\_id=2&can\\_id=c3f37b433cea47238c8ae84f743f8f72&source=email-new-report-shows-ice-uses-data-brokers-to-skirt-sanctuary-laws&email\\_referrer=&email\\_subject=new-report-shows-ice-uses-data-brokers-to-skirt-sanctuary-laws](https://notechforice.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Sabotaging-Sanctuary_Final-Report_Design-4.pdf?link_id=2&can_id=c3f37b433cea47238c8ae84f743f8f72&source=email-new-report-shows-ice-uses-data-brokers-to-skirt-sanctuary-laws&email_referrer=&email_subject=new-report-shows-ice-uses-data-brokers-to-skirt-sanctuary-laws)

<sup>5</sup> <https://denverite.com/2017/08/31/heres-else-denver-will-help-immigrants-risk-deportation/>



**a. Do you support Denver's efforts to support newly arrived people?**

Yes, absolutely.

**b. How do you think the city has done with the current plan to support newly arrived immigrants?**

I think many aspects of the city's current plan have been strong, but we need to continue to build on our strengths rather than stopping while we're ahead. For example, free buses to other cities for migrants using Denver as a stopping point was a great policy and we should resume it.

**c. What would you do as Mayor to support newly arrived people?**

We need to ensure we have trauma-informed crisis response staff with the language skills to welcome new migrants. During the pandemic I developed a plan to hire event workers to support the unhoused, and I believe that idea could also be adapted here, hiring people outside of immigrant rights work but with compatible skill sets who can support the effort. We also should reinstate policies like free busing to help migrants who want to leave Denver do so. For those that want to stay, it can't just be crisis response. We need to invest in keeping the cost of living down, creating extremely low-cost housing and creating good safe jobs, which will allow new migrants to join our communities and are also crucial needs for all Denverites.

A lot of non-immigrants might read this section and think, well if resources are going to migrants, where's my resources? Meanwhile people in power create these conditions of scarcity and competition to divide working people from one another. In reality policies that help immigrants help everyone and our city government should be ensuring every single person's needs are met. Why aren't all city functions available in ASL, Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic, Somali and Amharic? Why are so many Denverites, immigrant and otherwise, struggling to put food on the table? Working jobs with safety hazards for low pay? Why are our communities



breathing polluted air and unable to get healthcare or accountability from corporations? It's all the same fight. *El pueblo, unido, jamás será vencido.*

**14.** H.R. 8433, introduced by Congressman Lofgren and Senator Padilla, revises the Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929. The act allows the Secretary of Homeland Security to grant lawful permanent resident status to individuals who have been in the US since the registry date - which is currently January 1, 1972. Historically updates to the registry date have had bipartisan support with the last update happening under the Reagan Administration in 1986. This bill updates the date and changes it to a rolling cutoff so that an individual may qualify for lawful permanent resident status if they have been in the U.S. for at least seven years. This would benefit millions of undocumented Americans who currently have no path to citizenship, including DACA and TPS recipients and their family members, farm workers, and essential workers.

**a. Would you support a rolling update to the US Registry Act?**

Yes!

**b. Do you support a pathway to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented people?**

Yes! This issue is very important to me as my girlfriend, Hilda Nucete, was a formerly undocumented DACA recipient from Venezuela. While today she has citizenship we have continued to fight for all immigrant communities and for DACA and all undocumented neighbors.

**15.** Though the timeline is not clear yet, we expect the 5th circuit to rule negatively on DACA, possibly ending the program in its entirety. With a split Congress, we are doubtful that a federal solution will come in time to aid the 11 million undocumented people who have built lives here in the US.

**a. Do you believe leaders in Denver have a role to play to support DACA recipients in the wake of a negative supreme court decision?**



Absolutely.

- b. Within your elected role in Denver, what *specific* actions would you take to support the community in the wake of a negative DACA decision?**

I would explore what support we could offer at the state level. Locally, we can explore how we can use local funding streams to step up for DACA students who lose access to financial aid, for example. I also believe we need to pass local laws that actively protect undocumented people by actively refusing to comply with potential deportations of our brothers and sisters. Let's create safe spaces at city buildings, schools, and places of worship. Let's educate the community on their rights so we are all empowered to protect one another. I also support allowing noncitizens to vote in local elections. This doesn't solve the problem of a negative DACA decision, but it can bring immigrant communities more to the table so they have a voice in the other local policies that impact their lives regardless of the DACA decision.

**16.** As an immigrant rights coalition, our members have identified access to affordable and dignified housing as a top priority.

- a. If elected, what are you willing to do to expand access to affordable housing and to support Denver's immigrant community and workforce to meet their housing needs?**

As a fourth generation Denverite I have seen firsthand the impact skyrocketing housing costs has had on our communities. My neighbors, many of whom are immigrants, can't afford to stay in Denver. And that's because our politicians have put developers over the people.

First, we need to make sure people can stay in the homes they have by passing rent control and a vacancy tax, so corporations can't use empty buildings for write-offs. I recently co-led the coordinated campaign to pass ballot initiatives like Waste No More and No Eviction Without Representation, and we need to make sure that initiative is fully funded





and enact a moratorium on evicting tenants without legal representation in the meantime.

Then, we need to expand transitional housing programs and housing that seniors, the disabled, and working families can all afford. I served on the Inter-neighborhood Cooperation Zoning & Planning Committee, Blueprint Denver, and the taskforce implementing Colorado's first inclusionary zoning law. It's time to take that experience to the Mayor's Office and push things further. We need heavy requirements and incentives for building actually affordable units for working families, allow commercial zoning to become residential, increase public housing and ease permitting so people can build on single-family homes to fit more people.

All this housing construction is a huge opportunity for that construction to be sustainable. This will reduce emissions—which are worst in Latino and other immigrant communities—while helping us save on energy bills. It's also an opportunity to invest in local workforce development and contracting local businesses with the highest labor standards.

Finally, what good is housing that's affordable if it's not near infrastructure to support it? Latino and other immigrant communities experience some of the worst environmental impacts in Denver, from air pollution to lead pipe contamination. The same communities are farthest from grocery stores and healthcare. I have spent my life organizing against environmental racism and for walkable, bikeable development. As Mayor I would continue to hold polluters accountable, electrify and expand public transit so it's a viable alternative to cars, and ensure that our communities are close to the resources we need to thrive.

I was named Who's Next in Housing by the Denverite in 2019 for my years of work advocating for housing rights. I worked on the Denver City Council Land Use and Transportation Committee, organized for tenants' rights at the state level, and Co-Chaired the Inter-neighborhood Cooperation Zoning and Planning Committee. In this role, I have engaged in every zoning reform conversation over the past 6 years. I also served on the 20 year Zoning and Transportation Planning effort known as Blueprint Denver and most recently served on the Taskforce implementing the first



inclusionary housing ordinance in the state of Colorado (though I believe this effort came up short due to developers on the task force). I am currently a Community Scholar at the University of Denver and am researching how we can regional rapidly house those experiencing homelessness and will be releasing the report in the spring.

- b. Immigrants have also identified cost of housing as a key issue impacting mental health, financial stability, and the overall wellbeing of our communities. With housing costs and costs of living far surpassing raises in wages, **do you support local control on rent stabilization if the state repealed the ban on rent stabilization?**

Yes absolutely.

17. Denver recently announced plans to wind down the federally funded Emergency Rental Assistance Program due to limited federal funding<sup>6</sup>. With a budget of over \$130 million, this program helped around 14,000 Denver families stay housed and displacement by offering to cover rent and utility debts. Cost of living in Denver remains inaccessibly high for too many working class Denverites and evictions are steadily climbing.

- a. **Would you support Denver reinvesting in the program to provide rental assistance at similar levels to Denver residents?**

Yes. But we also have to get to the root of the problem and not just provide assistance as a band-aid solution. The root of the problem is that developers and corporations are exploiting our communities and skyrocketing the cost of living. We need to bring the cost of living down and ensure that housing is never a strain for our communities.

## Connection to Community

Tell us more about the communities you work most closely with.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://denverite.com/2022/12/02/denver-emergency-rental-assistance-application-deadline/>



**18. What grassroots leaders and organizations are supporting your campaign?  
Who are you accountable to?**

I am accountable to my community and my ancestors. My list of current endorsements includes:

- Colorado NORML
- Veronica Barela is my Treasurer
- Lucy Molina - Adams 14 School Board Member
- Renee Millard-Chacon - Commerce City Councilmember
- Krisiti Douglas - Commerce City Councilmember
- Steve Douglas - Former Commerce City Councilmember and Union Leader
- Juan Madrid - President CO Public Health Association\* as Individual
- Patricia Garcia-Nelson - Environmental Justice Advocate
- Liz Rosenbaum - Environmental Justice Advocate
- Hilda Nucete - Co-Chair Colorado Health Equity Commission\* as individual

**19. What does co-governance mean to you? How do you hope to serve in partnership with the community as an elected official?**

The only reason to run for Mayor is to support my community and not only bring them to the table, but re-make the table together. I will continue my life's work of bringing people together to find solutions. One key way the Mayor's Office can do that is by creating public banking, increasing participatory budgeting, increasing the accessibility of meetings both in person and online, and investing in language accessibility. Even on our grassroots campaign budget we've been able to produce materials in Spanish and Vietnamese, and the city has much more resources to ensure every aspect of city governance is available in those languages as well as Arabic, Somali and Amharic. Opportunities for public input and feedback should be frequent and implemented with best-practices for ADA accessibility as well as accessibility for those who work different hours and schedules.