



## 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:** [Lisa Calderón](#)
2. **What is the candidate's party affiliation, regardless of whether the race is partisan or non-partisan?** [Democrat](#)
3. **Who should we contact if we have questions? (i.e. name of campaign manager, if applicable)** [Sarah Lake, Campaign Manager](#)



**4. What is the best email to contact the campaign/candidate?**  
[sarah@lisafor-denver.com](mailto:sarah@lisafor-denver.com)

**5. What is the best phone number to contact the campaign/candidate?**  
720-601-8763

**6. Campaign social media handles listed by platform**  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LisaforDenver>  
Twitter: [@LisaforDenver](https://twitter.com/LisaforDenver)  
Instagram: [@LisaforDenver](https://www.instagram.com/LisaforDenver)  
TikTok: [@LisaforDenver](https://www.tiktok.com/@LisaforDenver)

**7. Campaign website:** [www.LisaforDenver.com](http://www.LisaforDenver.com)

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

I am running for Mayor because it will be the first time in Denver's history that we will lead with truly progressive power.

It's time for fresh ideas and a new era of leadership in Denver — and not false binary choices that limit our options. We have the opportunity to create a truly great and equitable city, not because of the things that we build, but because of the people who build them. It's time to Reimagine Denver.

As an experienced leader in the nonprofit, city government, and education sectors, I have been fighting for working families, affordable housing, safer communities, civil rights and reproductive freedom long before the pandemic or current threats to our democracy.

As a former single parent who overcame adversity to earn a masters degree, law degree and doctorate in education, I will center the voices of struggling families



and workers to transform how city government fundamentally operates, so that every Denver resident can thrive.

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

Denver has a housing and affordability crisis that has led to unprecedented eviction rates, and exploitative practices of landlord that lead to unjust evictions. I support the creation of a legal fund to ensure all tenants have representation when being evicted. Studies show that landlords are represented in nearly all eviction cases, while renters rarely have representation, and that representation greatly increases the chance of renters to remain in their homes. Evictions are not simply the loss of a home, but a leading factor in driving homelessness, poverty, and unemployment, all compounded existing inequalities. With legal representation - together with just eviction law and strengthened tenants rights - we can prevent many residents from losing their home and facing these other hardships.

## **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

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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/>



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?**

The United States is one of the only countries where legal representation for immigration hearings is not guaranteed. For immigrants who often have been through traumatic situations, be unfamiliar with the US legal system, and not have English language skills, the immigration proceedings are stacked against them. I strongly support the Immigrant Legal Defense Fund in order to give immigrants the necessary support to navigate immigration proceedings and to avoid deportation to dangerous, or even deadly situations in their home countries, and to ensure immigrant families in Denver remain together.

**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?**

The United States is one of the only countries where legal representation for immigration hearings is not guaranteed. For immigrants who often have been through traumatic situations, be unfamiliar with the US legal system, and not have English language skills, the immigration proceedings are stacked against them. I strongly support the Immigrant Legal Defense Fund in order to give immigrants the necessary support to navigate immigration proceedings and to avoid deportation to dangerous, or even deadly situations in their home countries, and to ensure immigrant families in Denver remain together.

As mayor, I would expand city funding for the DILSF to ensure sufficient resourcing for immigrants in immigration proceedings. Moreover, I would work to ensure immigrants facing immigration proceedings have better information and awareness that the fund exists, and that additional



resources exist to provide legal counsel specifically trained in navigating the immigration proceedings.

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?**

Immigrants in Denver deserve the right to remain in Denver, and for their families to remain in Denver. ICE notifications continue to lead to incarceration and unjust deportation, and as Mayor I will support ending these notifications. Instead of criminalizing immigrants and breaking apart their families, we need to provide sufficient support and services. The impacts of family separation are broad reaching and long lasting, creating economic insecurity, increasing risk of homelessness, and removing important social supports for children. We must support immigrant families to remain together, rather than creating a pipeline from interaction with law enforcement to deportation.

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



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

As mayor, I will work to ensure that local law enforcement and government agencies -- including local police departments, school systems, and social service agencies -- limit cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security and ICE in any enforcement of federal immigration policy. In particular, use the position of mayor to pressure and legislate where possible local corrections department to stop honoring “detainer requests” from DHS or ICE for nonviolent, low-level offenders.

If cases where federal immigration officials attempt to deport undocumented immigrant, I will directly intervene and advocate with federal officials to stop those deportations.

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.

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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)



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

Yes - surveillance efforts and misuse of data targeting undocumented immigrants must be stopped.

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

As mayor, I would be outspoken against the use of surveillance and data to target undocumented immigrants, and where possible legislate to limit the use of such practices. As described above, I would intervene for any attempts to use this data, and advocate to stop for the unjust arrest, targeting, and deportation of people based on this information. I would audit our systems to see where backdoor data access is happening and work to end these contracts that are causing so much harm.

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.

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

In a time of worrying polarization and violence, I bring empathy and compassion for marginalized communities and will elevate these voices directly to inform policies to create a safer city particularly for migrant community members. Additionally, the same services and support should be extended to longstanding migrant communities, and other vulnerable populations including the unhoused. Fundamentally, the so-called migrant crisis was really a crisis of leadership, and the failure to not have a comprehensive response to unhoused people across the spectrum. Instead, we need to rapidly scale up my 100 day homelessness plan that will provide a comprehensive, and consistent strategy that leverages

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



public and private resources to provide multiple pathways to proper shelter, temporary housing, permanent supportive housing, treatment services, and long-term affordable housing in mixed-income communities for those experiencing homelessness. We also need to budget for and scale up resources to nonprofit providers rather than pushing the cities responsibilities onto them, and straining their limited resources beyond their capacities.

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

I was extremely disappointed to see Hancock implement a timeframe of allowed services for the current influx of migrant workers that resulted in busing them out of town and shifting the responsibility to service providers without any additional resources. As a Sanctuary City, we should have led with more compassion, working with other cities and our federal government to find a less chaotic solution causing more harm to a vulnerable community.

The City and County of Denver's response to migrants and asylum seekers has been to rely on the nonprofit community's support to shelter, coordinate volunteers, donations, medical services and transportation, while also helping new arrivals "assimilate into the country with the best possible outcomes."

This approach pushes the role of government to nonprofits without any additional resources. The city's homeless shelters are already overwhelmed, and not set up to deal with the specific needs of migrant families.

If President Joe Biden is successful in overturning public health order Title 42 – an inhumane Trump-era policy to prevent border entry to migrants and asylum seekers due to pandemic concerns – Denver should be ready for another wave of new arrivals from the Mexican border.

Further, global push and pull factors such as climate change, economic instability, and persecution will continue to destabilize communities across our borders. Therefore, we need to build a long-term humane and cohesive migrant management system.





Immigration activists have been long-pushing for statewide infrastructure using state and federal funding. Congress allocated \$150 million that FEMA could grant to governments, nonprofits and faith organizations to provide for the basic needs of migrants.

However, government actors have been slow to request FEMA money. Instead of relying on under-resourced immigrant rights groups to navigate the federal funding process and shelter coordination, we need a state coordinated plan that could activate an emergency shelter infrastructure when needed through the Colorado Office of Emergency Management (OEM) working in coordination with the Office of New Americans and the Denver OEM. Additionally, coordination with the federal government to provide work permits for migrants to support themselves and their families will positively benefit Denver's economy.

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

Although Denver has declared itself to be a welcoming sanctuary, our city has not consistently lived up to its rhetoric. By implementing new policies that support economic opportunity for immigrants, we set a foundation for newcomers to truly feel welcomed, safe, and economically stable to provide for their families as they navigate multiple systems. We need a fully-funded immigrant constituent office to better coordinate services, research best practice government policies, and connect new residents with community resources. This office would also work with community partners to remove barriers for DACA student college grant funding, a fully-funded vaccine program with Denver Health (instead of expecting non-profits to bear the responsibility), and illuminate bureaucratic hurdles that impede economic opportunity for business licensing.

As mayor, I would also support removing barriers for immigrants to vote in municipal elections. Immigrants and refugees are an integral part of our community and should have a voice regarding issues that impact them and their families. Removing barriers to democratic participation in municipal elections is a fundamental way to be a truly welcoming and economically sound city that includes newcomers.



**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 - see below for further explanation

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

All undocumented people should have a pathway to citizenship, and the support to thrive including access to fair and living wages, health care, and the rights of all citizens.

No one is illegal on stolen land and I have dedicated myself to being a strong advocate and ally. My advocacy on immigration issues goes back to 2006 opposing Senate Bill 90 which required local law enforcement to report arrestees to federal authorities if officers suspected them of being in the U.S. unlawfully. I was a legal director of an abused women's program where I founded an immigration clinic, and served immigrant women for twelve years, including supporting their U Visa and T Visa petitions. Another progressive victory was the repeal of SB 90 2013. I was part of a massive coalition effort of immigrant rights and anti-violence groups, among others.

Additionally, as Chief of Staff for Councilwoman Candi CeDeBaca, I



strategized with her to achieve an unprecedented victory against the renewal of more than \$10 million in halfway house contracts with two of the nation's largest private multinational corrections companies, CoreCivic and GEO Group, because of their treatment of detained immigrant, including children, at the Aurora GEO ICE detention facility. We methodically made the case for both city councilmembers and the public that due to Geo's notorious track record running immigration detention facilities resulting in forced labor of detainees and the caging of children, the city should divest from the private prison industry, leading to a surprising victory for the city of Denver.

**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?**

Denver has an opportunity to stand as a national leader in supporting DACA recipients despite federal action that would remove their pathway to citizenship. In particular, as noted above, I would create a fully-funded immigrant constituent office, part of which would be focused on working with community partners to remove barriers for DACA student college grant funding. To fully support DACA recipients, we must also end destructive immigration policies that separate immigrant families, and work to keep protect the families of DACA recipients as well as the DACA individuals themselves.

As a nation, we should continue to provide educational and economic opportunities to immigrants – who contribute a great deal to our economy – while also reducing the drivers of forced migration.



Migration is not new, and is a necessary phenomenon for sustainable development. When properly managed, the benefits are significant for the growth of our economy by strengthening our labor force while also contributing to our cultural, artistic and intellectual diversity.

Most migration occurs regularly and legally. However, forced migration occurs when economic, social, political and environmental factors push people out of their countries of origin and across our borders. Forced migration is also dangerous resulting in thousands of migrants dying or going missing along dangerous migration routes; or becoming victims of smuggling and human trafficking.

We need a holistic strategy that incorporates humane and efficient border management policies, disruption of organized criminal networks, and protection of the rights of migrants.

Through effective migration governance, including regional and federal coordination, we can create better policies that minimize the negative consequences of migration while ensuring longer-term economic growth, and global development and humanitarian goals.

I am committed to language and cultural access and engagement which is why I have a dedicated team of Latino community advisors to inform all of my policy platforms. Because I support language justice and the rights of immigrants to be informed, I have had my website, materials and social media content translated. I want a community where everyone feels seen and heard.

- 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?**

See above.



**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?**

We are in a housing crisis and need publicly-funded social housing and more accessibility, particularly for immigrant communities. As Mayor, I will:

- Support renters, particularly immigrant renters, by developing a tenants' bill of rights. This can help with unjust evictions and housing stability.
- Develop social housing using publicly owned infrastructure and land to create greater availability of affordable housing particularly for marginalized communities excluded from the current housing market due to documentation status
- Create community land trusts which prioritize the needs of residents before corporations
- Include community members - regardless of documentation status - in new development planning by implementing participant-public-private partnerships
- Legalize Accessory Dwelling Units, or ADUs, which let homeowners build rental units on unused space and avoid displacement
- Require new developments to offer housing for low- and moderate-income families at or below 50% average monthly income
- Repurpose brown and grey space to introduce dense, affordable, and social housing in Denver

**b.** Immigrants have also identified cost of housing as a key issue impacting mental health, financial stability, and the overall well-being 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 - I strongly support rent control in Denver as a key strategy to create and maintain affordable housing. But rent control must also be coupled with additional protections for renters, including a renters bill of rights, an eviction legal representation fund, and emergency funds to help prevent homelessness due to eviction or financial insecurity.

**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?**

Rental assistance should not only be continued, but also expanded, as a key strategy to support low-income residents and prevent homelessness. Assistance should include support for utilities, particularly as the costs of utilities sky-rocket with inflation, increased energy costs, and the un-monitored ability of utility companies to extract higher profits from customers.

## **Connection to Community**

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

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

I am accountable to the community. I am currently supported by Representative Elisabeth Epps, DPS School Board President Xochitl Gaytan, Pueblo School

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



Board Member Sol Sandoval, Immigration Healthcare Advocate Julissa Soto, Education Justice Advocate Vanessa Quintana, and many others listed here, <https://lisafordenver.com/supported-by>.

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

Denver became a city in which special interests took priority over workers, residents, and small business owners. This widened racial and wealth inequality and hastened the displacement of marginalized communities. I'm running for mayor to build a transparent city government that shares power by decentralizing city hall and moving representation into neighborhoods.

This looks like including community input at all levels of decision-making, including for mayoral-appointed positions. Moreover, I will ensure cabinet positions are filled by individuals from marginalized groups in order to build a cabinet that represents the people of Denver, and those the city should most serve.