



Candidate Name: James Mejia

Candidate Address: 2900 West 25th Avenue, Denver, CO 80211

Campaign Manager: Berrick Abramson

Phones: Candidate: 720-287-3312 **Campaign:** 720-287-3346

*Instructions: Please type your answers in the form below and email the form to Colorado@uli.org by close of business on Friday, March 4. **Please note: Your questionnaire must be submitted to participate in our public forum on Thursday, March 10.** Limit responses to 100 words or less and adjust the size of the answer space to fit your response if necessary.*

Housing + Neighborhoods

1. Denver's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance has not generated as much affordable housing as hoped. Do you support the IHO? If so, how can it be revised to work better with more incentives for the private sector? Can the IHO be used to support rental as well as for-sale housing?

The city needs to provide more access to affordable housing as our population ages and more families move into poverty.

IHO should be part of the development of new properties. However, the equity in the property should be shared between the homeowner and the city's housing department which will allow residents to use some equity to transition out of affordable housing and will create a pool of resources for the city to continue housing programs.

All affordable housing should be normed for the neighborhood based on average median income and should include rental as well as for sale property.

2. How would you guide investment into neighborhoods that need it? What tools (CDBC, special districts, tax incentives) might you use?

I believe the current toolbox is sufficient to jumpstart new projects and build or re-build new neighborhoods. One of the most important tools is the creation of special districts with TIF financing and city funded infrastructure improvements as incentives to invest.

3. Do you plan to continue Denver's Road Home? How would you fund the program and the achievement of its goals?

Yes. The most important role for the Mayor to play with regard to fulfilling the vision of DRH is to continue to stress its importance, to be the convening entity through which all efforts are processed and to assist with raising funds from the private sector and the foundation community.

Besides helping to secure outside and City funding, as Mayor, I will ensure that we create strong consistent partnerships with the faith-based community, and with non-profits serving the homeless and transitioning populations.

4. Denver adopted a new zoning code in June 2010. How will you measure and verify the success of New Code? What about areas within the city's domain like Cherry Creek and B5 that were left out of the Zoning Code?

The success of the new code will be measured on how it drives economic development and contributes to the character and cohesiveness of the neighborhood.

The City needs to be flexible in granting exceptions and making changes as the full ramifications of the plans become known. When changes to zoning attracts a large economic generator like a big box store, the city should remain flexible, use common sense and be willing to adapt the plan.

In areas where new zoning is not applicable any construction must still fit with the neighborhood and contribute to the overall economic health of the community and the character and cohesiveness of the neighborhood.

City Management + Services

1. Denver has made progress making the development review process more efficient through use of an ombudsman to help guide the private sector. How would you institutionalize and formalize these improvements within Development Services and Community Planning and Development?

One of the biggest barriers to development in Denver is the permitting and inspection section of City government. The first structural change I would make is to not allow the City to revoke or change a permit unless life/safety issues are involved. Secondly, I would make one of my first appointees a Development Services Director. I would institutionalize the position by providing the authority of the Mayor's Office and direct access to the directors of the offices of Community Planning and Development and Public Works. Projects large and small would have access to this Development Director.

2. What are the roles of the Office of Economic Development, Community Planning and Development and Public Works? How could the link among these three organizations be strengthened to support the types of positive growth envisioned in documents like Blueprint Denver and the New Code? How could they be better linked?

All three departments are cabinet level positions that should lead to creating a vibrant city. The Office of Economic Development markets Denver to new business and nurtures the growth of existing business in the name of economic growth and job creation.

The Office of Public Works creates the infrastructure around which the city can grow and upon which development depends. The Office of Planning and Development ensures compliance with zoning and development according to master plans intent.

The Mayor should better link these departments by convening his subset of the cabinet and adding the Development Services Director for a weekly meeting concentrating on how to grow the economy and how best to support specific projects.

3. Do you agree there is a link between economic development + real estate development? How would you strengthen this link? And do you agree there is a link between public works spending + seeding development?

There is a link between real estate development and economic development. Developing well-planned commercial and residential real estate will increase the tax base, create jobs and stimulate the overall economy.

Yes. A current example is at I-25 and Broadway. The city invested in and partnered with CDOT at that location. This investment will help jumpstart the Gates site for transit oriented and other development at that site. Additionally, Public Works has used existing funds to improve the infrastructure in Sun Valley that will make the neighborhood ready for improvements.

4. What is your assessment of the budget? How would you cut costs and raise more revenue?

I have a four-part plan to balance the budget. First, create efficiencies through attrition with departments whose duties have been re-assigned and where processes can be streamlined.

Second, create a city-wide development office to bring in state and federal funding, and private resources. Third, reform the city's pension plan for new employees to more closely reflect that which is available in the private sector.

Fourth, have a comprehensive conversation regarding the level of service Denverites have come to expect, the lower level that is supported by our tax base and how we pay for the difference. I am open to cutting services and/or putting forth a bond initiative.

5. Do you support privatization of city services such as libraries, trash collection, and rec centers?

Denver is facing a projected budget deficit of \$100 million. Ideally all city services should be performed by city employees but because of the deficit, I will be looking at all options to close our budget gap and in limited circumstances, this could include private companies taking over city services. I will only advocate for privatization of city services if it is necessary and the private company will be able to provide the same or better level of service at a cost level below what it already costs the city. Personnel cuts in City departments will be made through attrition.

Public Realm

1. For Public Works Director, what skillset do you envision the ideal candidate possessing? Would you appoint an experienced advocate for multi-modal transportation?

I would like a Public Works Director who can manage employees, apply common sense, build an effective team to implement practical solutions and decrease bureaucracy with an orientation toward making deals. In this environment of transit-oriented development and transportation infrastructure improvement, I would appoint an experienced advocate for multi-modal transportation.

2. Denver has a goal of becoming a more walkable, bike-friendly and transit-friendly city. Yet most citizens still drive. How will you prioritize Public Works maintenance and new spending for roads, bike paths, sidewalks and other pedestrian enhancements like sidewalks, bulb outs, street trees, etc?

When I led the re-development of Skyline Park and the construction of the Denver Justice Center, we made the area around those projects more pedestrian and bike friendly. At Skyline Park we cut the traffic lanes from four to three and from three to two at the Justice Center. We put in bike lanes and bulb outs improving the experience and safety of bikers and pedestrians. When I am Mayor, I will ensure that any further new construction or re-development does the same.

3. How would you fund improvements to the public realm, including streets, parks and greenways?

I will look to creating partnerships with the business and non-profit communities and would be open to the idea of a voter approved bond initiative. We must involve the Business Improvement Districts and Neighborhood Associations in fundraising efforts to improve their communities.

Construction of new single family housing units and developments will not only provide opportunities to create new streets, parks and greenways but also increase our tax base for future improvement funding.

Regional transportation and cooperation

1. Do you support a tax increase to fully fund FasTracks? How much? Should this go to ballot in November 2011? Will you campaign for or against?

I do support the increase of sales tax to 0.4%. This increase should go to the voters on the November ballot and I will campaign for it. Not only will this increase fulfill our

commitment and need to create a world-class infrastructure with Light Rail, but it will also uphold our commitment to the Metro Mayors Caucus which will lead to further cooperation in economic development.

2. Mayor Hickenlooper was active and effective in Metro Mayors Caucus. As Denver Mayor how will you participate in organizations like the Caucus and DRCOG? Should Denver have a role as mediator and coalition-builder or being looking out for its own interests?

As Mayor, I will participate in organizations like the Caucus and DRCOG. The City of Denver should balance all three roles, mediator, coalition-builder, as well as look out for its own interests when participating with these organizations.

3. What will be your administration's role be in the I-70 (DIA to Vail) discussion?

My administration will be a leader in the discussion as it relates to I-70 through Denver. I-70 needs to be improved through and beyond Denver. However any changes will have a tremendous impact on the neighborhoods through which it passes. I will conduct an inclusive discussion with impacting neighborhoods to develop solutions of mutual benefit.

Economic development

1. What is your vision of making Denver more competitive? For example, jobs are an issue everywhere but particularly in Denver as it loses corporate jobs through the relocation of Molson Coors, ProLogis and Qwest. What is your strategy for job growth through small business incubation and support? Corporate retention and recruitment? Which of the seven employment sectors identified by the Denver Metro Chamber will you focus on?

1. I will revitalize the Denver Small Business Program
2. Keep the city's money at home by creating the Buy Denver Initiative
3. Strengthen the Concierge Program to navigate city bureaucracy
4. Increase the number of flights out of DIA
5. Focus on the redevelopment of infill projects

I will focus on the aerospace/aviation, healthcare/bioscience and energy/greentech industries. Outside of those named by the chamber, I will also have a focus on arts and culture as well as sporting events. Throughout the Metro Area, we have assets that, when supported by local governments, will allow these industries to grow to their full potential and make Denver the worldwide leader in these sectors.

2. Our region has strong growth in healthcare + research--yet Denver has lost its share of these jobs as hospitals and medical facilities move to suburbs. How will your administration protect and enhance medical-related jobs, especially at landlocked campuses?

Denver has the opportunity to create light manufacturing and research facilities within the city limits especially around DIA. The largest foundation, the Colorado Health Foundation is focused on making Colorado the healthiest state in the country. Denver should collaborate with the foundation to support health programs at hospitals in Denver. The city should remain highly flexible when considering the growth needs of landlocked hospitals and facilitate conversations with impacted neighborhoods to allow hospitals to reach economies of scale and to thrive.

3. The city currently has numerous major sites for redevelopment: Health Science Center at 9th and Colorado, Gates, the Stock Show site, Stapleton, DIA, Central Platte Valley, and numerous FasTracks station areas. How do you prioritize investment to make development happen in these areas?

All of these sites are important to redevelop. I will prioritize according to these criteria:

1. Highest return on investment.
 2. The ability to attract outside resources without having to ask for additional tax payer dollars.
 3. The projects that can be most quickly implemented in order to add jobs.
4. Denver needs a central retail strategy. How would you protect and enhance the retail sales tax base? Incentivize more retail in neighborhoods that lack basic retail services?

I will streamline the City approval process and introducing a retail specific concierge service for all existing and new retail business. This service will ease the process of navigating the City's bureaucracy by providing a single contact point for all required city services and agencies.

Denver will send a delegation to the International Conference of Shopping Centers Expo every year. The City will provide tax incentives and will partner in seeking foundation dollars to incentivize retailers locating in Denver's poorest neighborhoods. The most important retailers to attract to some of these neighborhoods are grocers.

5. A well-educated workforce is a vital component to any healthy city. How will your administration address and support the continued reform of DPS? How will you support and leverage our higher education system, both for workforce training and spinoffs to create homegrown companies?

I will re-invigorate the City Schools Coordinating Committee, which I will chair and convene once a month. The Committee will hold DPS leadership accountable by supporting a system where we graduate a higher number of students ready for college.

We can also support DPS in the following ways:

1. Continue to support the Denver preschool program. Help kids enter the K-12 system at a level playing field.
2. Support teacher recruitment and retention through free access to our cultural institutions and recreation centers.
3. Assist in the maintenance of DPS facilities thereby saving money that can go back into the classroom.

I will bring together CEOs of the top companies in Denver and higher education to create mentoring and internship programs to foster the entrepreneurial spirit. I will also work with our state elected officials to vie for equitable funding for the Auraria campus which currently receives only one quarter to one half per student what other Colorado institutions receive.

6. What is your view of sustainable land use and how does Greenprint Denver fit in?

Greenprint Denver is a guide for making Denver the most sustainable city in the new west. Parks and open space need to be expanded to meet the needs of our growing population. Open space requirements need to be included for new development in Denver. Transit oriented development should encourage density and neighborhood character and cohesiveness should be preserved. Alternative energy sources should be incentivized and conservation should always be encouraged.

7. Within the last 20 years, DIA and downtown have been the top priority for previous administrations, do you this changing? Within Downtown, how would you stimulate more jobs, residences, and infill development?

The redevelopment of the South Platte River is at the center of my economic development plan. These areas of redevelopment include Overland Park on our southern border to the Gates redevelopment to Sun Valley, the poorest neighborhood in Denver, the Ely's site and River North. While many of these opportunities are downtown, I will stress the revitalization through several neighborhoods throughout Denver. There are a few missing links to be added for downtown residents:

1. High quality P-8 school
 2. Grocery stores
 3. DIA corridor redevelopment should include the return of the manufacturing base to Denver.
8. How would you support an industrial development strategy that creates “green jobs” and research and development as a result?

Denver needs to provide tax incentives for manufacturing firms that can produce products for the new energy economy. As an example, solar panels should be manufactured in Denver to create a source of green jobs along with a necessary alternative energy source. By bringing back the manufacturing tax base not only can city services be sustained but jobs can be created through the installation of those solar panels and their increased use will make them more affordable for all. Finally, research and development jobs will be created to support the industry.

Final general question:

What is your vision for a sustainable urban Denver? What would you like your legacy to be?

As a child growing up in Denver, walking to and attending public schools I never had to worry about the safety of my neighborhood, the quality of my schools or not being ready for life after high school. As I am raising my three girls in Denver, what seemed very basic to me is out of reach of most children. I want to ensure that the kinds of opportunities I had in Denver growing up are still available. I want to ensure that we develop the city that we can continue to be proud to call home. Together with a clear vision, leadership and community involvement we can move Denver forward.