

# 2023 Denver Municipal Candidate Questionnaire on Public Safety & Policing



## NICK CAMPION

*The candidate's responses to each question are in italics and are written word for word. No edits were made to spelling or sentence structure per 501(c)3 guidelines.*

**The seat you are running for:** *Denver City Council District 7*



### Public Safety:

**Denver Taskforce for Reimagining Police and Public Safety's Definition of Public Safety:** Public safety ensures that all community members decide how to organize a social environment that provides the freedom to live and thrive with the protection and support of social, physical, mental, and economic well-being. Safety is not a function of armed paramilitary forces with a proven track record of racism and violence. Public safety prevents, reduces, and heals harm.

**1) Do you agree with the above definition of public safety? If not, how would you define public safety?**

*Yes*

*COVID-19 highlighted the need for investments in the system of safety and health. People in Colorado prisons were seven times more likely to contract COVID-19. Black people in Denver are more likely to be incarcerated than white people in Denver. Black people across Colorado represented a disparate amount of COVID-19 deaths.*

**2) What is your vision for public health and safety in Denver? What, in your opinion, are the factors that are preventing Denver from achieving your vision of public safety?**

*Health and safety are basic human rights. My vision for Denver is an equitable community which values and prizes the diversity of its people and their cultures. My vision for Denver is the Denver I know the remarkable people of our city deserve, but, of course, to any dream, there are obstacles. For this dream, those obstacles are systemic prejudice, a lack of communication between Denver's leaders and their communities, and inequitable access to resources for health and safety.*

**3) In your words, what is the connection between public health initiatives and public safety initiatives?**

*The connection between public health initiatives and public safety initiatives is when residents are healthy with an effective healthcare system, then we will see a decrease in the need for public safety since residents health are being supported.*

**4) Are you familiar with the Denver Reimagining Police and Public Safety Taskforce's work over the last two years and the resulting 112 recommendations?**

Yes

**5) What behaviors or activities are currently criminalized in Denver that you view as outdated and harmful?**

*I am a firm believer that a person should not be arrested for being unhoused, especially in a city like Denver, where affordability is a major issue.*

## **Police Accountability and Reform**

Lawsuits regarding Denver Police officers' behavior have cost the City and County of Denver almost \$17 million in 2022 – a significant rise in the last five years and the third-highest figure since 2010. Denver taxpayers are currently responsible for settlements when a law enforcement officer's behavior is deemed inappropriate.

**6) Would you support the City in moving away from being self-insured to possibly pooling insurance with other municipalities, thereby decreasing the taxpayer's burden to pay for the settlements? Why or why not?**

*I am support a solution that decreases the taxpayers burden.*

**7) What role should body cams play in prosecution, absolvment, and accountability in officer-involved shootings?**

*Body cameras are a great tool to give to hold police officers accountable and to show residents the truth behind an interaction. I believe they should be wore all the time an officer is on duty, so when there is an issue there is video surveillance providing the truth.*

## Housing/ Homelessness

Covid-19 has disrupted Denverites' access to basic needs, including employment, housing, and access to substance use and mental health treatment. Throughout the pandemic, shelter use in Denver has increased by 54%, while unemployment rates rose from 2.8% to 7.1%. During the pandemic, sweeps of homeless encampments reached an all-time high. According to reporting by the Denver Post, hundreds of thousands of tax dollars were spent in 2020 on these repetitive, unhoused sweeps. Additionally, people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are 10% times more likely to have contact with police than people living in shelters. A recent Urban Institute analysis of Denver Police Department data found that arrests were disproportionately for offenses associated with unsheltered homelessness among this SIB target population of 2,181 in 2018.

### **8) How do you plan to address displacement and gentrification while balancing Denver's need for growth and more affordable housing?**

*My plan would to require subsidized housing for all large scale apartments and apply rent control measures if passed by the state.*

### **9) What is City Council's role in addressing homelessness? What tools do you believe will be effective in addressing homelessness in Denver?**

*City Council's role is to rethink the approach of its predecessors to current issues and apply that, either by creating better, more equitable ordinances and laws and/or by getting rid of antiquated ones, such as encampment sweeps. Encampment sweeps only make it more difficult for many unhoused individuals to find shelter and resources because they often lose their IDs during the sweeps.*

### **10) Many of the Taskforce Recommendations are aimed at stopping the criminalization of homelessness and poverty(i.e., addressing "crimes of existence") and reducing contact between the community and armed law enforcement officers. If elected/reelected, will you support and work to implement these recommendations? Why or why not?**

*Absolutely, supporting and working to stop the criminalization of homelessness and poverty is a key part of my platform. Criminalization of the unhoused is, quite frankly, uncompassionate and inefficient.*

## Behavioral Health and Substance Use

Colorado is 47th in the nation for access to mental health services. One out of every three men and four out of every five women imprisoned in Colorado have moderate to critical mental health needs. As of March 2022, 12.7% of Coloradans who died in police encounters this year suffered from mental illness. Denver drug overdose deaths surged for the second straight year. Deaths related to opioids surged by 308% between 2019 and 2021, according to city data. Recent evidence from cohort and modeling studies suggests that Safe-Use-Sites are associated with lower overdose mortality (88 fewer overdose deaths per 100 000 person-years [PYs]), 67% fewer ambulance calls for treating overdoses, and a decrease in HIV infections.

With a 12-1 vote, the council approved a framework for creating a government-sanctioned supervised drug use site in the city. The only condition was that the state legislature had to pass a law clearing the way for a supervised-use facility. Nearly four years later, the Colorado General Assembly has not cleared that path.

**11) If elected or reelected to the City Council, will you support policies that increase access to long-term treatment, limit drug arrests, and implement evidence-based harm reduction services, such as safe consumption spaces? What methods would you employ?**

*Yes. I would start off with a public education campaign to educate the public about the benefits of harm reduction services. Then I would work with local organizations to for funding for a space and find a location for the space.*

A study conducted in 2020 on the STAR pilot 911 response program in Denver found that mental health specialists responded to calls involving trespassing and other nonviolent events and found a 34% drop in reported crimes during the six-month trial. The study by Stanford scholars also showed that the direct costs of the alternative 911 approach were four times lower than police-only responses.

**12) What do you think is the role of STAR and other community-based programs, including LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) programs? How do you envision funding them?**

*The role of STAR and other community-based programs is to limit and reduce violent encounters with law enforcement while providing resources for the emotional, mental, physical and financial well-being of those the program comes into contact with.*

## Community Oversight

Since the release of the Task Force Recommendations, The Citizen Oversight Board (COB) was granted the ability to appoint, by and with the consent of the City Council, the Independent Monitor, who serves at the pleasure of the Board. The Independent Monitor was a position that the Denver Mayor previously appointed. The COB was additionally granted regular access to public safety department leaders and confidential records. Although this change is a big step forward, there is still a call for increased citizen oversight over Denver Police and ensuring that DPD operates with accountability and transparency. The COB oversees the independent monitor who receives and processes complaints about DPD, the Denver Sheriffs Department (DSD), and sworn personnel. The COB also monitors investigations into officer-involved shootings and in-custody deaths and publicly reports on findings.

### **13) Will you support giving the COB and the Office of the Independent Monitor subpoena power to pursue these investigations? Why or why not?**

*I support this. Giving subpoena powers to COD and the Office of Independent Monitor provides a checks and balance system to DPD, DSD, and sworn personnel.*

### **14) In your view, what is the role of citizen oversight of DPD and DSD? How will you improve this process or be vocal and supportive regarding improvements that could and need to be made to our accountability structures?**

*The roles of the citizen oversight is make sure DPD and DSD are doing their job correctly and following guidelines. I would work with the citizen oversight committee to understand current issues and create solutions that would bring improvements to our accountability structures.*

## Gender-Based Violence

Denver has experienced an increase in the reporting of sex crimes over the last three years. The prosecution rate for these cases in DA McCann's office is roughly 44%, meaning the DA chooses to prosecute 44% of sex crimes cases referred to her by the DPD. The other 56% are not prosecuted for various reasons, such as the victim's wishes, a perceived lack of evidence, and a belief that a jury will not convict. The following policy questions are related to sexual and domestic violence. At least one of your answers should include a specific policy change or initiative that would specifically reduce violence-related trauma experienced in the LGBTQ, disabled, and Black and Brown communities. In Colorado, "restorative justice" is only offered for victims of sexual violence when the perpetrator has already been incarcerated.

**15) Would you support a statewide policy or local pilot that created an optional restorative justice model for victims of sexual assault or domestic violence through diversion (i.e., without using incarceration)? Please explain why or why not.**

*Yes, I would consider supporting an optional choice for victims to seek justice through the restorative justice model. I am interested in looking into ways we can responsibly move away from incarceration as the end-all-be-all of justice in Denver, while still maintaining public safety.*

**16) Generally speaking, do you believe DPD has sufficient enforcement resources to reduce sexual and domestic violence in our communities? Briefly explain why or why not and what type of funding changes you would propose if any.**

*I don't have answer for this question.*

**17) Please briefly outline any initiatives, if any, you believe the city should take to reduce sexual violence and domestic assault without the use of incarceration.**

*To reduce sexual violence and domestic assault, I would focus on supporting local organization that deal with sexual violence and domestic assault with funding and promotion of their services to residents in Denver.*