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Page 1: Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation Parks and Rec Committee Survey

**Q1** What is your name please?

Michael B. Hancock

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**Q2** What Office are you running for?

**Mayor**

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Page 2: Further questions

**Q3** Which council district are you running for?

**Respondent skipped this question**

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**Q4** Regardless of the office you are running for, if you were appointing the Executive Director of Parks and Recreation Department, what education and previous experience would you expect the person to have?

Every appointment I make as Mayor requires understanding the needs of the community and the department in order to meet the goals we have set out for our city. After serving two terms on Council, when I became Mayor in 2011 I understood the vast needs of the Department of Parks and Recreation, and I created the structure of Executive Director and two Deputy Directors, one to oversee parks and the other to oversee recreation.

The Executive Director is someone who must have a strong understanding and relationship with the Denver community along with the capacity to manage and lead a large city department. In the Deputy Directors, we require specified experience in the areas of parks and mountain parks and recreation for each respective position.

With this leadership approach we have been able to add 647 acres of parks and open space and protect more park land (1,175 designated acres) than any administration since the 1950s. In addition, we have increased the use of our recreation centers by our seniors and youth while improving the quality of programming.

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**Q5** Will you support an ordinance moving OS-A zoning from the Ex. Director of Parks back to City Council? If not, why?

The Charter has always conferred decisions on management of parks to the Executive Director of Parks. Despite misconceptions otherwise, this was not changed when a specific zone district for parks was created in the 2010 zoning code. While explicitly referenced in the 2010 zoning code, the power the Executive Director has for use decisions in parks has always existed and City Council ceded no authority in adopting that code; Council's core role remains the same now as it ever was. Prior to 2010, parks were simply one possible permitted use in various Residential zone districts. Creating a specific zoning category for parks better reflects the importance and special characteristics of parks rather than having parks be but one permitted use in a broader list of uses.

As a former City Councilman for far northeast Denver, I valued the responsibility I carried to ensure the parks and open space in my district best served the needs and wants of the families I served. I respect and value City Council's role to have the final say on land acquisitions and transfers, change in uses of parkland (easements), park namings and designations, Intergovernmental Agreements and fee changes, among other responsibilities. In fact, in 2010 I supported a change to give City Council an additional power – to approve certain building plans in parks. Denver Parks and Recreation works to balance all the needs of our parks and open space, which is accomplished in part through a comprehensive zoning approach and I do not believe transitioning one singular zoning responsibility to Council would be beneficial or useful to best maintaining the quality and health of our parks and open space.

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**Q6** What would you consider is adequate green space for high density development, for example Elitch's. What steps would you take to ensure the zoning requirement for green space is adequate?

I believe that the amount of green space in a high-density development should be based on the population in the neighborhood that it will serve. Each situation is unique. Examples include developing place making and environmental solutions to improve water quality of the South Platte River and creating a regional destination at Elitch's, offering urban active plazas and a community garden at the redeveloped St Anthony's Hospital site, or natural feature preservation at the 61st and Peña station area. I have made sure that the Department of Community Planning and Development is working on updating the zoning requirements for high-density developments to ensure adequate open space is required within these projects. In addition, The Department of Parks and Recreation as well as other regulatory and funding tools can help play a part in ensuring park space is preserved and created to align with the needs of our communities.

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**Q7** The use of recycled water in Denver parks appears to be causing the premature loss of many mature evergreens. Is that an acceptable trade-off for accommodating more population growth or should the city spend money to untie remediation measures to save those legacy trees? Please explain your answer.

As Denver is located in a semi-arid desert climate, it is imperative that we continue to explore all avenues to save water in all of our city operations. Recycled water use throughout our parks is one of those areas where we can make a significant impact on the amount of potable water we use to water our parks. There is a limited amount of potable water that we have available and the priority use of that water needs to be for residents to use in their homes. Each year more than 314 million gallons of recycled water are delivered to 34 parks plus City Park Golf course (979 acres), thus saving potable water for appropriate uses. The Denver Parks Department has been working extremely close with Denver Water on this issue and in 2016 the Reuse Monitoring and Maintenance Strategies Group was formed. This group consist of members of the INC Parks and Recreation Sub-Committee, Denver Parks and Recreation Advisory Board members, community members, industry and academic professionals, Denver Parks staff and Denver Water staff.

The group has been conducting foliage and soil testing for over the past three years and have been implementing numerous mitigation efforts to help offset the impacts on the higher nutrient levels of recycled water. For more information about those efforts go to:

<https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-parks-and-recreation/trees-natural-resources/water-conservation/recycled-water.html>

**Q8** What would you do to protect and enhance waterways going through Denver?

The City and County of Denver works incredibly closely with the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, the Greenway Foundation, and a wide variety of public and private organizations to improve the South Platte River and other waterways throughout the city. Just along the South Platte River over \$40 million dollars has been invested in the last 8 years. We have improved the river corridor and parks along the river which would include: Grant Frontier Park, Pasquinel's Landing, Johnson Habitat Park, and Confluence Park. We are currently working on the redesign and construction of Globeville Landing, Carpio Sanguinette Park/Heron Pond Natural Area, and the new RINO Park located on Arkins (Groundbreaking on April 15th). The vision for the National Western Complex is to make sure that we connect the entire complex to an active and vibrant South Platte River.

When I came into office, Denver was using almost exclusively conventional “gray” infrastructure (sewers and pipes) to handle storm water runoff. We needed to transition to much greater use of green infrastructure in order to protect and improve the water quality in our waterways. My administration published the City’s first guidebook to help developers learn how to use green infrastructure suited to the hydrology and soils of our region instead of conventional gray infrastructure. We then systematically identified every city-controlled site and project where green infrastructure might be used. We have prioritized those sites and will begin substituting green infrastructure for gray infrastructure according to those priorities. An example is the National Western Center project, where we will be partially daylighting a stream that is currently buried underground. In my next term we will be studying incentive programs that we can implement to motivate developers to use green infrastructure of the type described in our manual more often. After exhausting the potential of incentives we will study whether mandates are needed to continue the uptake of green infrastructure systems.

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## INC PARC 2019 Candidate Survey

### Q9 What aspect(s) of INC Parks and Rec Urban Platform do you support?

I support the platform's four main tenets to expand open space, parkland and our people's ability to access it, have community processes to develop parks policies, and dedicated revenue for parks. Further, I appreciate the INC's recommended way forward and believe we have moved the needle on these next steps during my time in office, and we will continue to do so.

Expanding open space, parkland and our people's ability to access it: The city has been able to increase affordable housing units, parks and open space, mobility and other amenities. In the past eight years, Denver has added 647 acres of parks and open space and protected more park land (1,175 designated acres) than any administration since 1956.

As Mayor I have strongly supported the National 10-Minute Walk Campaign. Just earlier this year, Denver was selected to receive \$40,000 in grant funding from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The grant funding will be used to support Denver planning efforts that help increase access to high-quality parks within a 10-minute walk of all residents. This national campaign is being led by the Urban Land Institute, NRPA, and The Trust for Public Land.

We have also assumed management of more than 400 acres of park land at Stapleton and in the next five years we expect to begin acquisition of an additional 600 acres. Developers have been required to add more accessible open space acreage at sites like 9th and Colorado and 61st and Peña Boulevard. We have been working with the Greenway Foundation for years now to preserve and enhance acreage along the South Platte River — an effort that will ultimately restore and protect 450 acres of green space.

In addition, we have increased access and restored many miles of our city's vital waterways through the River Vision project, restored acres of natural areas, rehabilitated many miles of an aging irrigation system that saves precious water resources annually, treated hundreds of the city's Ash trees threatened by the Emerald Ash Borer and planted new trees to grow and maintain the urban tree canopy, acquired and built 3 new neighborhood parks and added the city's largest open space in collaboration with Denver International Airport and the list goes on.

Community Planning: I support the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board which has played a critical role in crafting policies for the Department. Further, the Department of Parks and Recreation has crafted, adjusted and implemented plans and policies with the community it serves. I believe these processes have improved under the leadership of Executive Director Happy Haynes. The Denverright plan is a phenomenal example of our dedication the community engagement - with more than 25,000 residents joining us to design a vision for the future of parks and open space. I am proud of the clear roadmap in Denverright that takes a holistic approach to address housing, transportation, the environment and the need for more parks and green space for the health of both our residents and the environment. The plan will ensure that the city is working collaboratively to achieve collective goals. Denverright is not just a plan that will sit on a shelf but will be actively implemented, assessed and updated to deliver on the expectations of our residents who helped to create it side-by-side with our city teams.

Dedicated Revenue: In 2017, Denver entered into a partnership with the Trust for Public Lands to advance strategies for more green space and park land. This effort, in part, led me to championing the sales tax initiative with City Council President Jolon Clark to generate \$37 million annually for park land acquisition. In addition, we have dedicated more than \$150 million through the most recent Elevate Denver Bond Program, made year-over-year increases to the Department of Parks and Recreation budget and made numerous capital improvements through previous bond funding and time general fund unspent appropriations.