



“Vision a New Denver”
Non-Partisan Voter Education Guide for the April 4th, 2023
Election for District 5 Denver City Council Seat

Rodfei Tzedek, the Social Justice Team of Congregation Rodef Shalom and Augustana Lutheran Church, advocate for housing justice in the Denver as well as throughout Colorado. We are affiliate congregations of Together Colorado, a multiracial, multifaith statewide organization spanning 220 congregations, faith leaders and mobile home parks across Colorado that works to put human dignity at the center of public life. **We are non-partisan and are not aligned explicitly or implicitly with any candidate or party.** The April 4th Denver election and June 6th run-off election present a unique opportunity to vote based on our values of economic and racial justice for a city government committed to the dignity and well-being of all our citizens, and an economy that works for *everyone*.

We spoke with both candidates for the District 5 Denver City Council seat: Michael Hughes on February 6, 2023, and Amanda Sawyer on March 9, 2023. Below is our record of their responses to our questions (the candidates have verified their answers).

	Amanda Sawyer	Michael (Mike) Hughes
<p>HB-1115, local control of rent, has been introduced in the Colorado House of Representatives. If it passes, <i>what is your position about Denver enacting a rent control ordinance for the city?</i></p>	<p>I am a supporter of local control but would have to see the specific rent control proposal. I am solidly OK with having the conversation. In theory, rent control could be 10 different things. A blanket rent control law would continue to degrade properties by disincentivizing landlords to do facility upkeep and capital improvements. Rent control could work, depending on how it is done. The CPI-U, currently 8.1%, could be a good solution. I would add costs that would be fair in a rent control plan. We must ensure landlords can maintain properties. A rent control proposal would have to include the cost of capital maintenance to be workable.</p>	<p>We need more resources, including more funding for tax credits for affordable housing. I want to mobilize the private sector to build housing closer to transportation corridors – Leetsdale Drive and Colorado Boulevard. We need to encourage more mixed-use development and link housing with transportation.</p> <p>I don’t know enough about rent control. One of my questions is what might be the impact if other jurisdictions around Denver don’t enact rent control and Denver does?</p>
<p>Do you have concrete and specific ideas for preventing displacement and gentrification and will you commit to considering that whenever a development is being approved?</p>	<p>We need to develop thoughtfully. Development should provide a community benefit. I’ve voted no on many projects where a developer wanted three story zoning to become an eight-story building just to make more money. We should build the affordable housing into the overall City plan. The linkage fee (paid instead of including the required affordable housing) has been raised close to the gap. However, it doesn’t make sense to include affordable units in all projects. For example, if there is a proposal for a luxury project, it would pay the linkage fee into a fund to help with another project. For example, the FAX Partnership acquired two nuisance properties/hotels and will</p>	<p>I realize how housing can help as a wealth building strategy, not just for rich people, but for working, moderate and middle-income families as well.</p> <p>I don’t want to prevent people from using the equity in their homes to provide for their families, but at the same time, the consequences of displacement and gentrification are terrible. There are things we can do to protect people when a neighborhood is rising in value—to assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure and to assist renters to stay in their neighborhood. Also, assistance may be needed when</p>

	<p>eventually build five-story affordable rental buildings there. This was paid for in part by a loan from the City from the Affordable Housing Fund.</p> <p>There is no silver bullet to deal with gentrification and displacement, but some projects are addressing the harm caused for those displaced. The City Host Prioritization Policy gives displaced residents priority on new affordable units to address prior generational harm.</p> <p>We also need to maintain the affordable housing that we have already. The City is doing this by loaning affordable housing providers money from the Affordable Housing Fund to renovate existing properties in exchange for another 60 years of deed restrictions.</p> <p>I'm proud of the wage/staff ordinance that allows workers to file a complaint if not paid their wages. Wage theft is a huge problem that can lead to homelessness. We now have the best worker protections in the country.</p> <p>We have tens of thousands of empty luxury units. Society needs to build more affordable housing, but in a free-market economy it's hard to get that started.</p>	<p>property taxes increase as values go up and it becomes difficult for some homeowners to pay bills. Rental assistance may also be needed.</p>
<p>What is your position on the city purchasing property to reopen the community correction facilities that were closed, and would you support following a model such as Project Elevate?</p> <p>https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Agencies-Departments-Offices-Directory/Department-of-Public-Safety/Community-Corrections/Residential-</p>	<p>Yes, I already have supported this. I had been in office for three weeks when we voted to end our contract with the private correction facilities. They were awful. In the last four years, we have done extraordinary things to renovate some of the facilities. For example, we purchased Toolie Hall and reopened it as a facility for women. Unfortunately, in Covid, we lost other contractors which means we need more reentry facilities; there are too few beds available for someone qualified for community corrections.</p>	<p>Not having community correction is a real gap in choices for sentencing. I am in favor of the city reopening community correction facilities and helping to expand the range of sentencing options for judges in criminal cases.</p>

<p>Programs/Project-Elevate?</p>		
<p>What is your position on the recommendations of Denver’s 2020 Climate Action Task Force and how will you fund the hundreds of millions of dollars it calls to raise?</p>	<p>I sat in on those task force meetings, and think they were very valuable. In fact, I am the reason Denver now has weekly recycling. I was excited about getting 2A passed creating \$30,000,000 per year in funding. It will never be enough money, but we are working on long term plans to get to the goal.</p>	<p>I went back to look at these recommendations. The City will use funds from the Federal Infrastructure Bill. We need to leverage those funds and recommendations, e.g., helping people to electrify their homes, convert gas stoves to induction, install heat pumps, and to help provide funds for people who are less able to afford such improvements.</p> <p>What’s happening in Tennessee is a counter-example. The state has turned down federal money available to help people with HIV and has refused to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.</p>
<p>How would you bring an historical, structural, and current racial context to issues in your role as City Council Person? What personal and professional experience do you have that would inform your approach?</p>	<p>This is a great question. We do this every day. Equity is at the center of every decision we make, as it should be. For example, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure spends very little money addressing issues in our District. So, I have hired a traffic engineering firm to do a design for S Dayton Street, 6th and 8th Avenues to calm traffic. By doing this we are helping support the agency so that they can focus time and resources on the needs of historically marginalized communities.</p> <p>Regarding historical injustices, we send out all East Colfax material in five languages to close the language gap and connect communities to government. East Colfax is most at risk for gentrification. I worked with Brothers Redevelopment and the Brain Injury Alliance to build 72 units of affordable housing for 0-30% AMI residents with traumatic brain injuries in East Colfax. It is opening this month. A large percentage of homeless people have a traumatic brain injury and are sensitive to noise. This project is built with specific features that reduce noise and has supportive services included.</p> <p>We also passed ADU unit zoning in East Colfax, and are considering Montclair now. Most of my time and money has centered on East Colfax, which is the area of District 5 most at risk for gentrification and displacement.</p>	<p>It is gratifying to talk with people who come to these questions from a deep moral perspective. The Soul of Politics by Jim Wallis describes the need to connect policy questions to our fundamental moral perspectives.</p> <p>My own approach is to be of service. In order to do so, one needs to be present. I’m not interested in only serving District 5 but to work for the good of the whole city. I’m interested in helping the world to be more just, and to recognize the trauma and harm that’s been done to people of color.</p> <p>I’ve done a lot of policy work on HIV prevention, care and treatment. There is a great deal of work to do to address the HIV epidemic among injection drug users, among those who have the fewest resources and don’t have insurance and regular medical care, and in communities of color.</p>

	Unfortunately, it will no longer be in my district going forward.	
If the voters vote to rescind the golf course easement, what do you hope to see happen to the Park Hill Golf Course?	Although I voted no on the rezoning and small area plan, it passed, and we have to abide by it if the voters remove the conservation easement. It's a good plan, but not great. We will get affordable housing out of it and some green space.	I've heard many voters say it should remain open space. I'm supportive of building smaller units at greater density near the A-Line/Colorado station. The area needs parks of all kinds – pocket parks and playgrounds in the neighborhood in addition to large open space and a regional park. Ultimately, I decided to vote No on 20.

You are invited to attend Together Colorado's **Mayoral Forum** between the two finalists for Denver Mayor on **April 27th at 7:00 pm** at **Congregation Rodef Shalom**, 450 S. Kearney Street, Denver, CO.

Pledge to be a voter in these upcoming elections and to vote your values as you "Vision a New Denver".

Rodfei Tzedek is part of Together Colorado, a non-partisan, multiracial, multifaith organization that provides an opportunity for people and congregations to translate their faith into action. We are non-partisan and are not aligned explicitly or implicitly with any candidate or party. While Rodfei Tzedek and Together Colorado are working to promote civic participation including voter registration and education, we do not endorse or support candidates for office. Together Colorado urges people of faith to consult their faith traditions for guidance *on specific policies and legislation*.