



Historic Denver, Inc.

2019 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE NAME: Robin Kniech, Council At-Large

1. Do you have a personal connection with historic preservation?

I lived for almost 15 years in a home built in 1906. Although it was not what our ordinance would call an “outstanding” specimen, and therefore was not designated, I chose that home and the Berkeley neighborhood it was in because of an appreciation for the character of old homes and I believe they are a critical component of neighborhood character that brings and keeps people in Denver. My current home is in Northeast Park Hill from 1947, although “newer” it and the many others like it on our block still feel connected to an important historical era of modest, post-World War II brick homes that make up the feel of this part of my neighborhood. I am currently serving on the Landmark Task Force working to update the ordinance.

2. What is your favorite example in Denver (or in your district) where historic preservation, economic redevelopment and strategic reinvestment were successfully combined to create something new?

My favorite example is still Historic Union Station. I was on the board of the entity overseeing the redevelopment surrounding the station into a transit hub. I am proud of the way the building was both brought back to its original role as a transit hub while also being reinvented to serve new purposes as well, such as the hotels and bars and shops, ensuring it will continue serving as a community hub for many more generations. The restoration of the interior features like the chandelier and the stair railings are simply magnificent. It illustrates that sometimes the best way to preserve a building is to find a way to help bring its uses into the next generation.

3. **Neighborhoods across Denver are facing intense development pressure, and Denver's population is expected to increase in the decades to come. What specific ideas do you have to balance new infill with our historic built environment?**

First, I believe in advocating for the preservation of resources vulnerable to redevelopment. Sometimes, like my vote in support of Beth Eden church, this is through formal designation. In other cases, like Loretto Heights, it is about helping to encourage or support owners/institutions to make preservation of key buildings a condition of sale. Second, I believe in channeling as much new development to redevelopment areas like Elitch's, the former hospital sites etc. to reduce pressure on interior neighborhoods where some of our most historic resources lie. I think there are a number of developers have proven the profitability of repurposing "old" spaces because they have character and draw people, so educating them on the market benefits is another key strategy.

4. **Identify the most critical historic preservation challenge/opportunity in your district. At-Large and Mayoral candidates: you can pick anywhere in the city.** Churches. As membership continues to decline and buildings age/require more expensive maintenance and upkeep, I fear for the loss of historic churches. I believe we need to allow for redevelopment around them into new uses for a new generation, but in ways that incentivize the retention of the church buildings.

5. **Please finish this sentence: "*I believe historic preservation in Denver can be strengthened by....*"**

- 1) Adding cultural criteria for designation as discussed by Landmark Task Force, more diverse representation in designations.
- 2) Better educate community on details of designation, rumors and myths persist (i.e. you can't change windows or add solar) and on the tax credits.
- 3) Completing the Discover Denver survey (I served on this work group).

Extra & Optional: We think historic preservation is most authentic as a personal and visual experience. *Show us in 1 or 2 images (no more than 2, please) what historic preservation means to you.*

