



**Historic Denver, Inc.**

**2019 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire**

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**CANDIDATE NAME: Michael Somma, District 1**

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

Having lived in Northwest Denver for six decades, I have seen many buildings come and go. Though I do not have a personal connection with preservation work, I have watched my neighborhood change--sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. As our city grows, I want to make sure that we retain our character and history.

**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?**

I think the preservation of the old Denver Fire Station 7, at 3600 Tejon, is a great example of preservation. That station closed in 1975, but the building has been preserved beautifully. It houses shops today, but the red brick of the old station is still striking, and the building still bears the letters DFD in stone on its crest. It has been adapted to play a new role in the neighborhood, but has retained its character and its presence as an eye-catching building on the corner of that block.

**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?**

As we look towards the future and lay plans for the expected growth, it's important to stay rooted in the city's history. I am not a zoning expert, but I would like to find a way for historic structures to remain preserved, while also playing an active role in their neighborhoods, through either new or mixed use projects. And, while we don't want to stifle growth, I believe it's reasonable to ask that new structures adjoined to or abutting

historic structures make use of historic materials and forms. There are some interesting examples in downtown Denver of historic buildings with new additions built on top of the existing structure. If there is a reasonable way to achieve projects like that, without causing too much disruption to the underlying historic structure, I think it's worth investigating that approach to adding density without disrupting our footprint.

**4. Identify the most critical historic preservation challenge/opportunity in your district. At-Large and Mayoral candidates: you can pick anywhere in the city.**

District 1 faces a broad preservation challenge with regard to growing the neighborhood while maintaining its character. This is particularly acute given that part of my district, the Highlands, was the site of some of Denver's worst gentrification. Families were displaced, historic homes were demolished for condos, and it was all done with very little stakeholder influence. The Highlands is a great neighborhood, but it's not the same neighborhood it used to be. I want to avoid repeating those same mistakes in Sunnyside, Regis, and the rest of my district.

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

...an intentional and forward-looking approach to balancing the preservation of our past and the needs of our future. In any scenario when it is possible, we should build without destroying.

**6. 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.**

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1974



current