



**PAOLO DIAZ**

**Candidate for City Council Ward IV**

**Fast Facts:**

Age: 35

Occupation: Director of K-8 Programs, Junior Achievement

Years lived in Commerce City: 10

Years lived in Colorado: 29

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**Questions & Answers**

**1. Why are you running for council?**

Being a married, father of two to our elementary school-aged children, I enjoy getting involved and serving so that we can make sure this community is a great place to raise our family. In 2010, I was appointed to the Commerce City Cultural Council and served as its president. In my year leading the Cultural Council, we partnered with the Adams 14 School District and Kroenke Sports Enterprises to host art shows inside the Civic Center, we started the city's first Summer Concert Series, and began the development of the public arts master plan.

I left the Cultural Council after being appointed to serve on City Council to complete the remaining term of Councilman Johnson. During that time, we approved the incentive package that brought King Soopers into our community and broke ground at the Reunion Marketplace location.

In an effort to get our students engaged in local government, I worked with the city to start the Commerce City Youth Commission. During a November 2012 City Council meeting, 15 students were appointed as the founding members of the Commerce City Youth Commission. Since then, the Youth Commission has represented our communities at the Cherry Creek Diversity Conference and the National League of Cities in Washington D.C.

Other involvements have included the 27J District Accountability Committee and currently as the vice chair of the Adams 14 Education Foundation. In addition, I am involved in the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, the nonprofit council of the Brighton Chamber of Commerce, and served as the vice chair of the Metro North Chamber's



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Leadership Advisory Board because of my belief in the importance of developing leaders and growing our business community.

I am blessed to have experienced successes in the areas in which I have served, and hope to do the same if elected for this seat.

### **2. What do you see as the three biggest opportunities for Commerce City?**

I believe that our three biggest opportunities are the passing of 2K in 2013, our engaged community, and our location.

With regards to the passing of 2K, the voters have spoken on the importance of developing our quality community for a lifetime. This allows us to build a new recreation center, renovate the current recreation center, build the outdoor swimming pool that we now know as Paradise Island, develop three parks in the northern part of the city, and widen Tower Road. It created a sense of momentum with regards to developing our city and our community and hope to continue the progress that has been made.

Commerce City also has a very engaged community. It is evident when you attend events such as the Summer Concert Series or movies at the park in Reunion. You can also see the passion through various social media pages that our community is a passionate, captive audience who thirsts for progress and wants to see their area grow and develop.

Our location is another opportunity that we have in Commerce City. The core part of our city is located just minutes of three major highways: I-70, I-270, and I-76. In the northern part of Commerce City, our growth boundaries surpass many other cities. We are not landlocked like many other cities, where their opportunities to grow are limited. The potential development of an aerotropolis around DIA puts Commerce City in prime position.

### **3. What do you see as the three biggest challenges facing the city?**

The three biggest challenges facing the city are location, our national separation within the city, and transportation.

It's ironic that I mention location as a challenge after praising its opportunity, but residents don't need to be reminded of our high property taxes. In addition to that, Commerce City is located between Northfield and Brighton, which could result in us potentially being passed over with regards to economic development.

The geography of Commerce City also presents us with some challenges. Though there are some great businesses to visit in the core part of Commerce City, it is challenging to get to as Highway 2, a two-lane highway, is the only way to get there. We are also separated by the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. While it is truly a



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gem and an underappreciated treasure, it does make it harder to access and travel to other parts of the city.

With that, commuting to and from the city also presents challenges that residents have had to overcome. In addition to the challenges of driving through Highway 2 or waiting at the train tracks, commuting to the southeast part of Denver is just as challenging with residents' options being to drive the toll roads or sit on Tower Road since there is still not an on-ramp onto Pena.

#### **4. What does a “Quality Community for a Lifetime” mean to you?**

When I think about growing up in Aurora, I recall memories of playing at Del-Mar Park, hanging out with friends at the Taco Bell afterschool, and spending time with my family at the nearby Cherry Creek Reservoir. When I speak to residents who have lived in Commerce City for most of their lives, I hear about their time spent with families at the Mile High Greyhound Park or even some memories of working at the arsenal.

When I think about what a “Quality Community for a Lifetime” means to me, it’s about creating memories for the young and the old – a place where they can live, work, play, thrive, and share their stories. I think about building a community that is sustainable because the infrastructure is well-maintained, a place where you can take your grandkids to the restaurant where you and your wife had your first date because that business is well supported and thriving, and a city that you won’t leave because it meets your needs, your wants, and is a great place to raise your family.

#### **5. What is your favorite aspect of the city?**

My favorite aspect of the city is truly the people. I enjoy going for walks and seeing my neighbors, I enjoy hearing about my neighbors’ lives on social media, and I enjoy going to the grocery store and running into people I know.

Believe it or not, I actually enjoy seeing my dentist and catching up with him and my hygienist, I enjoy saying hello to our local orthodontists, and I actually get out of my car to go inside the bank because they are just so friendly.

I enjoy my church community, the youth sports community, and seeing Brittany from Reunion Recreation Center every Saturday for all of those games.

I also enjoy just how approachable our leaders are, whether it’s the members of city council, district superintendents, or school administrators. They listen. They serve.

I have found that Commerce City is full of great neighbors, businesses, and leaders who want to make sure that this will always be a great place to live.