



SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

**Transforming Downtown Denver:
A Vision for a Resilient Future**

2023 - 2024 Strategic Framework



Downtown
Denver
Partnership

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Executive Summary

Downtown Denver stands at a pivotal moment. As our center city continues its remarkable growth, the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) is launching a Sustainability Action Plan that aligns environmental stewardship with economic prosperity and social progress. This plan focuses on DDP internal operations, sphere of influence, and operational capacity through its management of the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District.

Our city center's vitality is evident - welcoming 36.3 million annual visitors, adding 25,000 new residents, and creating 30,000 jobs over the couple past decades. This success brings both opportunity and responsibility to shape a sustainable future.

Through collaboration with sustainability leaders across sectors, we've developed a comprehensive framework focused on five strategic priorities:

- Transforming waste management systems
- Centering multimodal transportation
- Promoting sustainable development
- Advancing energy policy education
- Enhancing public green spaces

Our implementation approach combines immediate action with long-term vision, while grounding in the reality of what is actionable under DDP's purview and what requires advocacy and partnership to achieve. This approach centers:

- Data-driven decision making
- Community engagement and education
- Operational capabilities
- Innovation and pilot programs
- Strategic policy advancement

Through this plan, DDP will weave sustainability into the fabric of our work. A vibrant city and a sustainable city coexist; we know that we must have both for future generations to thrive.

About the Downtown Denver Partnership

The Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) leads innovative, place-based economic development that shapes the future of our city center. Our vision drives the creation of an economically robust, culturally vibrant, and sustainably growing downtown. Through strategic public realm activation, we're crafting spaces where community thrives – fostering meaningful connections and unforgettable experiences. By bringing together public, private, and philanthropic partners, we accelerate progress that benefits everyone who lives, works, and plays in Downtown Denver.

The Downtown Denver Partnership is an umbrella organization for two entities:

- Denver Civic Ventures: A charitable, public purpose organization focused on community planning and development.
- Downtown Denver Inc: An advocacy and membership organization that advocates on behalf of the business community and takes positions on policies that impact downtown Denver.

In addition, DDP has contracts with the City and County of Denver for the management of specific geographic areas including the 14th Street General Improvement District and the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District (DDBID).

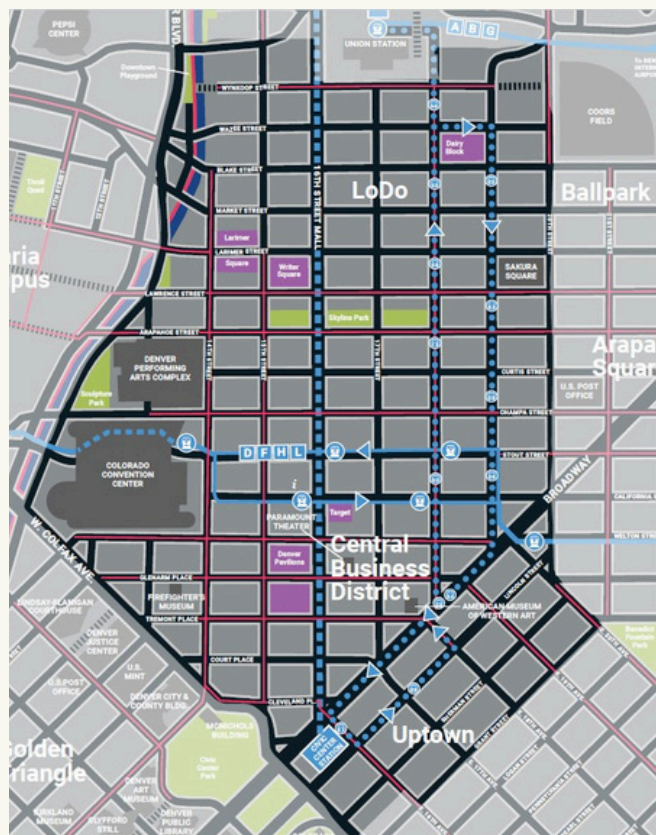


About Us (cont.)

About the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District

DDP is contracted by the City of Denver to manage the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District (DDBID). The DDBID is a public organization funded by private, commercial property owners that goes above and beyond the basic level of care and maintenance from the city to deliver a clean, safe, and beautiful environment. Guided by the 2007 Downtown Area Plan, the DDBID's mission is to continuously shape vibrant, engaging spaces where people want to be.

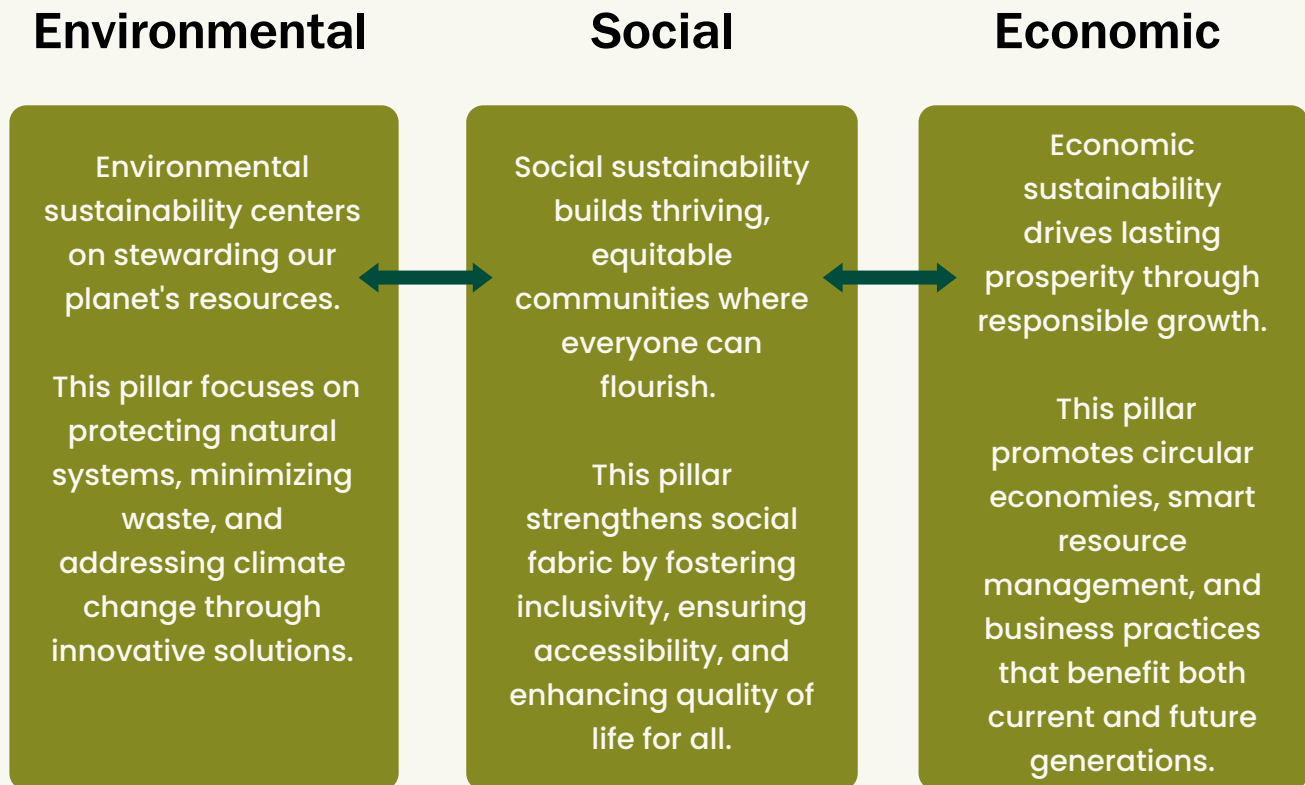
Ensuring safety and cleanliness, the DDBID cultivates memorable experiences that strengthen and support the economic vitality of the center city. Creating a unique and captivating urban destination not only connects communities, but also forms a place, a central core, where people want to be, and business thrives. The DDBID is bound by Grant Street to the east, Wynkoop Street to the west, Speer Boulevard to the south, and 20th Street to the north. It consists of over 800 properties and represents about 400 unique property owners.



Map of the DDBID

What is Sustainability?

Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.¹ It rests on three interconnected pillars that together form the foundation of lasting positive change:



Although combatting climate change and building resiliency - associated most closely with environmental sustainability - has been the impetus for many organizations to explore their operations more closely, it is important to note that these three principles are interconnected and interdependent. No one pillar can stand strong without the others. Creating a more sustainable world requires collective efforts, policy changes, and innovative solutions at every level – global, national, and local. With cities at the intersection of industry, markets, and population, they have the opportunity to reevaluate systems including waste streams, energy, development, mobility, policies, and the environment, to make an impact on a local scale.

Progress to Date

The City and County of Denver has focused its policy efforts on sustainability since at least 2007, releasing its first Climate Action Plan and outlining the need for a ‘green city’ in the Downtown Area Plan’s recommendations. Since, Denver has made strides towards building a more sustainable city. In 2015, the city released an updated Climate Action Plan which set goals in line with the scientific community's recommendations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050 from a 2005 baseline.²

In 2017, the Outdoor Downtown Plan, a 20-year master plan focused on the parks and public spaces of downtown, made recommendations for a “sustainable downtown.” On July 1, 2020, Denver established the Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resilience (CASR) to manage the city’s emission reduction goals and sustainability programs. On November 3, 2020, Denver voters overwhelmingly approved a 0.25% sales tax to create a dedicated “Climate Protection Fund” fund committing approximately \$40 million per year to support climate action.

Further, in 2018, the City released the 80x50 Climate Action Plan which laid out actions to hit targets, focusing on optimizing energy efficiency in buildings, decarbonizing the electricity grid, enabling next-generation mobility, and improving waste management. Since the creation of the Climate Protection Fund, the City and County of Denver has been able to accelerate climate action through incentives for individuals, businesses, and buildings and legislation like the Waste No More and Energize Denver Ordinances, which have broad implications for the downtown area.



The Imperative for Action

Making the Case

Cities are centers of economic activity, tourism, cultural experiences, and daily life. Although the COVID-19 pandemic slowed growth, at the time of this report, tourism and hospitality sectors are rebounding. In addition, it is forecasted that by 2050 68% of the world's population might be living in cities.³

Downtown Denver is at the center of Colorado's Metropolitan Front Range with a thriving tourism market, welcoming 36.3 million visitors annually, generating \$9.4 billion in tourism revenue in 2022. In the last 20 years, the residential population of downtown Denver has grown by more than 25,000 people and since 2011, the number of jobs in downtown has increased by approximately 30,000.⁴ With the growth trend predicted to continue, it is important that our city's infrastructure can support the needs of today while protecting resources for the needs of future generations.

Urban places, like downtowns and commercial districts, often characterized by higher density, transit access, and location efficiency are traditionally more sustainable than their suburban counterparts. At the same time, though, cities are key contributors to climate change. Estimates suggest that cities are responsible for 75% of CO2 emissions globally, with transportation and buildings being the largest contributors.⁵ In addition, due to the amount of impervious surfaces within cities, they are several degrees hotter than their suburban counterparts.

City sustainability goals that impact the downtown:



Goals as stated in the 80x50 Climate Action Plan

Our Impact

As a trusted leader in downtown Denver for over 60 years, DDP uniquely bridges public and private sectors to advance urban sustainability. We represent 600+ businesses and manage the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District's 400 commercial properties, enabling agile implementation of sustainability initiatives. Combining our deep local knowledge, proven operational capabilities, and role as the Transportation Management Association, DDP drives meaningful progress through strategic action. In 2023, guided by established city plans, we convened 16 sustainability professionals to create this action plan, defining DDP's role in building a more sustainable downtown Denver.

Through extensive analysis, our task force identified five impact areas where DDP can drive meaningful sustainability impact: waste diversion, transportation, energy efficiency, sustainable development, and public realm greening. These priorities align with our organizational strengths and downtown Denver's needs.

To advance these goals, we developed a framework built on five core strategies.

Baselining | Education | Operational Improvements | Innovation | Policy and Advocacy

We will establish comprehensive baseline metrics across all impact areas, providing the data foundation needed to measure progress and guide decision-making. We will leverage our extensive communication channels and programs to educate stakeholders and drive awareness of sustainability initiatives. Through our role managing the DDBID and major events, we'll implement operational improvements that demonstrate sustainable practices. We'll catalyze innovation by supporting entrepreneurial initiatives and pilot programs that advance sustainable solutions. We will utilize our strong advocacy platform to shape policies and planning decisions that create lasting positive impact for downtown Denver.

This integrated approach harnesses DDP's unique position - combining operational authority, stakeholder relationships, and civic influence - to accelerate downtown Denver's sustainability transformation.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a broad topic that holistically integrates the three pillars of sustainability when considering the growth of downtown. Tactics in this category overlap with the others identified including energy reduction and increased resource efficiency.

This topic leans more deeply into the vision of an inclusive, resilient, and empowered society centered on diverse populations. It encourages the complete utilization of downtown building and storefronts, advocating for a diverse mix of housing types and socially-sustaining uses like daycare providers, local businesses, and grocers, the refinement of development processes, while recognizing that growth must occur without negatively impacting environmental, social, or cultural aspects of communities.

Energy

Energy is used to heat, cool, light, and operate buildings in Denver and includes electricity, natural gas, steam, and other fossil fuels.

Energy usage in commercial buildings is the largest greenhouse gas emitting sector according to Denver's 2013 greenhouse gas inventory. The type and amount of energy used is extremely important to having a more sustainable downtown. Building owners should be looking at multiple energy efficiency opportunities for their building as well as exploring entire energy system upgrades such as moving away from the use of inefficient steam.

Public Realm & Greening

Public realm and greening activities focus on the growth and maintenance of sustainable practices in public and quasi-public spaces. This includes vegetation, water efficiency, and expanded access, comfort, and safety. Greening and other displays of sustainable, environmentally forward actions in the public realm are a core strategy in inspiring public demand, investment, and adoption of broad scale sustainable practices.



Impact Areas (cont.)

Waste

Waste diversion is one of the most visible, accessible, and actionable sustainability behaviors. By making waste diversion and education a priority, DDP is putting its commitment to sustainability on display and inviting Denverites and downtown visitors to join in being part of the solution. A public-facing waste diversion program is a constant reminder and reinforcement of Denver's sustainability values.

This topic focused on waste reduction across DDP's operations and sphere of influence. The task force examined DDP events, operations, and relationships to understand where materials are coming from and where they end up to then recommend opportunities to refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, and redesign.

Transportation

Transportation is inclusive of all modes of personal and publicly assisted transport in and around the city, including but not limited to, walking, running, cycling, rolling, scooter, bus, car, and rail. Mobility relates to the ability to move freely, conveniently, and safely. Reliable, safe, connected transportation enables residents, employees, and visitors access to the city's businesses and offerings, creating social and economic sustainability by linking the metro area with external surrounding communities.

Offering opportunities for rail, bus, bike share, scooter share, and other personal modes of mobility will support non-driving commute trips, help manage vehicle miles traveled, and provide air quality benefits. Additionally, transportation is a critical topic because it enables a wider variety of ages and abilities to access a more inclusive system of mobility.



Recommended Strategies

The actions presented herein find efficiencies in DDP and DDBID operations, align with city policies, lean into innovation, and elevate messaging and advocacy around sustainability topics, while advancing the goal of building a sustainable downtown for the benefit of all.

This plan will mobilize DDP, the DDBID, and downtown stakeholders to advance economic development through environmentally and socially responsible action. It aims to reduce resource usage while increasing educational awareness across a spectrum of sustainability topics and enhance the vibrancy and comfort in the Downtown Denver environment.

Strategy 1. Establish baselines

Measure existing conditions to identify starting points

1.a Determine the amount of waste generated at DDP's signature events.

1.b Determine the amount of waste generated by DDBID managed receptacle fleet.

1.c Survey member companies, BID properties, and specific sector groups to understand how DDP can provide greater value.

1.d Baseline GHG inventory for all transportation within downtown boundary.

1.e Baseline temperature in downtown to measure progress towards reduction of the urban heat island.

1.f Develop inventory of privately owned public spaces.

1.g Develop inventory of parking availability within BID boundary.

1.h Identify incentives available for downtown buildings to make efficiency upgrade

Recommended Strategies (P.2)

Strategy 2. Education

Provide educational and knowledge sharing opportunities for members, BID constituents, and the community to increase awareness about sustainability topics.

2.a Incorporate sustainability topics into member assemblies

2.b Incorporate messaging into communication channels

2.c Develop and leverage DDP's website as a permanent resource hub

2.d Align communications and outreach with relevant City regulations

2.e Incorporate sustainability as a learning lens in annual urban exploration trip programming

2.f Consider sustainability in Downtown Denver Awards selection criteria

2.g Utilize platform as downtown's Transportation Management Agency (TMA) to gather information about travel habits and user experiences to inform decision-making & promote alternative modes of transportation

2.h Develop a learning series for stakeholders on sustainability topics and regulations.

2.i Develop industry-specific list serves for targeted communications

2.j Host annual downtown parks cleanup day

2.k Conduct post event surveys to gather knowledge on behavioral patterns of attendees.

2.l Create a resource guide to aid property owners & the community in urban tree care

Recommended Strategies (P.3)

Strategy 3 Operational Improvements

Incorporate practices into organizational operations to reduce resource usage and increase efficiencies

3.a Investigate funding opportunities & staffing increase to drive work forward

3.b After baselining, establish reasonable diversion rates for DDP events & DDBID operations.

3.c Implement waste diversion procedures for DDP events including ensuring: A 3-bin system is in place with proper haulers contracted Use of reusable products & decorations, when applicable Waste diversion reminders throughout the event Utilization of volunteers or paid staff to educate on proper use of 3-bin system.

3.d Develop waste diversion policy for office

3.e Decrease the number of trash bins within the DDP office

3.f Explore incorporation of waste diversion and/or compostable requirements for 16th St vendor contracts and Pop Up Denver businesses

3.g Consider products' materials, comfort, physical durability, production, and carbon impacts when purchasing.

3.h Utilize bulk and cooperative purchasing power when possible

3.i Prioritize pedestrian & transit infrastructure for snow removal

3.j Work with partners to provide fair chance and equal employment opportunities

Recommended Strategies (P.4)

Strategy 4. Innovation

Be seen as a leader in the field of sustainability by implementing unique programs and technologies.

4.a Utilize DDP managed spaces such as Skyline Park, the Outer Space, and/or 16th Street as a test ground for pilot projects

4.b Conduct feasibility study on consolidation of hauling services on shared alleyways

4.c Conduct inventory of DDP purchases and seek to eliminate single-use plastics where feasible.

4.d Seek to establish a donation partnership for materials and items leftover after events

4.e Investigate production of drone show for New Years Eve as substitute for fireworks show.

4.f Continue the implementation of the Urban Forest Initiative with the goal of enlarging 400 tree planters by 2026

4.g Develop and publish an RFP for a public art plan

4.h Work in partnership with DOTI Green Infrastructure to increase the amount of bioswales within the downtown area

4.i Identify at least three locations to improve perceived safety through the lens of lighting, art, and comfort.

4.k Work with stakeholders to develop a bike parking facility in lower downtown

4.l Investigate micro-transit services connecting outer neighborhoods to downtown core

4.m Continue entrepreneurial programs and serving as a resource and liaison for small businesses entering the market

4.n Continue ground floor retail strategy to define downtown and promote complete neighborhoods.

4.o Identify and organize incentives available to commercial property owners to upgrade their building's exterior facade

Recommended Strategies (P.5)

Strategy 5. Policy & Advocacy

Use platforms to progress policies that advance downtown as a sustainable place for all and support constituents through regulation requirements and implementations

5.a Train staff on relevant city policies to be able to assist constituents with requirements

5.b Work with building owners/managers to complete Energize Denver Benchmarking report by deadline

5.c Advocate for the implementation of Denver's Comprehensive Plan, adaptive reuse, and the transformation of downtown into a Central Neighborhood District

5.d Advance Denver as a socially sustainable city

5.e Partner with the City and County of Denver to develop a neighborhood stabilization program around the footprint of the future 5280

5.f Advocate for and develop 'third places' in downtown

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