

**-THE-**  
**OUTDOOR**  
**DOWNTOWN**

**THE FUTURE OF  
DENVER'S  
PARKS AND  
PUBLIC SPACES**

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN:



**DENVER**  
PARKS & RECREATION

&



**DOWNTOWN DENVER  
PARTNERSHIP, INC.**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Photo: Flickr | Matt Santomarcio

The Outdoor Downtown is a **20-year master plan** to provide the City of Denver with a visionary and actionable list of policies, programs and projects that will **make Downtown’s parks and public spaces world-class destinations.**

The master plan is structured around five vision elements—Social, Recreational, Connected, Cultural, and Sustainable, which provide a holistic approach to activating the Downtown public realm over the next twenty years. The recommendations housed within each of the vision elements ultimately aim to support the following goals.

*Master Plan Goals:*

- **Celebrate and activate** Denver’s Outdoor Downtown
- Create a premier Downtown by providing accessible and inviting parks and public spaces that contribute to an **economically thriving** Downtown
- Foster a diverse and **livable** Downtown
- Cultivate Denver’s **culture and identity** in the outdoor spaces
- Provide environmentally and functionally **sustainable** outdoor spaces

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“Great cities  
don’t happen by  
accident.”

--Mayor Michael  
Hancock



# THE OUTDOOR DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## VISION STATEMENT

Denver is at a cultural crossroads. As our City grows in size, population and reputation, **investment in our public realm is vital** to sustaining a healthy, active and livable Downtown not only for ourselves but for future generations.

Denver will be renowned throughout the world for the creation and implementation of **our signature parks, special events, innovative use of public spaces, social gatherings and celebration of art, culture and heritage.** We must continue to imagine and build a new sustainable future for our Downtown parks and public spaces through social, cultural and economic investments.

## TOP TEN RECOMMENDATIONS



**#1** UPGRADE & INCREASE ACCESS TO **BASIC AMENITIES.** page 38



**#2** CREATE A DOWNTOWN **MAINTENANCE AREA.** page 37



**#3** IMPROVE SAFETY DOWNTOWN & BOLSTER **SECURITY.** page 36



**#4** INCREASE EVERYDAY **ACTIVATION.** page 40



**#5** BUILD **NEW PARKS** DOWNTOWN. page 48



**#6** IMPLEMENT FOUR **ICONIC PROJECTS.** page 83



**#7** GROW OUR **URBAN FOREST.** page 72



**#8** DIVERSIFY **FOOD & BEVERAGE** OPTIONS. page 39



**#9** ENGAGE THE **PUBLIC & INCREASE STEWARDSHIP.** page 78



**#10** CREATE **FUNDING & GOVERNANCE** TASK FORCE. page 78

## PROJECT GOALS



**Celebrate and activate** Denver's Outdoor Downtown.



Create a premier Outdoor Downtown by providing accessible and inviting spaces that contribute to an **economically thriving** Downtown.



Foster a diverse and **livable** Downtown.



Cultivate Denver's **culture and identity** in outdoor spaces.



Provide environmentally and functionally **sustainable** outdoor spaces.

## FOUR ICONIC PROJECTS

The plan proposes four iconic projects to make Downtown Denver a world-class city with a vibrant public realm for residents, visitors, employees, and students.

### #1 CENTRAL PLAZA



A **flexible gathering place** in central Downtown that is active everyday and a venue for large events

page 85

### #2 ART / CULTURE PARK



An **iconic arts and culture park** to activate the Denver Performing Arts Complex

page 87

### #3 SIGNATURE PLAYGROUND



A **destination playground** to support a family-friendly downtown and innovative outdoor play

page 89

### #4 DOWNTOWN LOOP



An **iconic pedestrian and bike route** connecting major Downtown landmarks

page 91



# THE OUTDOOR DOWNTOWN RECOMMENDATION OVERVIEW



## 1. A SOCIAL DOWNTOWN

EVERYDAY | WELCOMING  
| FAMILY-FRIENDLY |  
STIMULATING | SAFE



### 1.1 Safe & Secure Spaces

- Security
- Resources

page 36

### 1.2 Clean & Comfortable Environments

- Maintenance
- Amenities

page 37

### 1.3 Everyday Activation

- Food & Beverage
- Programming

page 39

## 2. A RECREATIONAL DOWNTOWN

ACTIVE | HEALTHY | DIVERSE  
| MULTI-GENERATIONAL |  
INCLUSIVE



### 2.1 Equitable Recreation Space

- Public Space
- Parks

page 48

### 2.2 Health & Wellness

- Sports Facilities
- Diverse Programs

page 50

## 3. A CONNECTED DOWNTOWN

ACCESSIBLE | MULTIMODAL  
| COHESIVE | KINETIC |  
ENGAGING | INNOVATIVE



### Neighborhood Connections

- Cyclists
- Pedestrians

page 56

### 3.2 A Walkable, Bikeable City

- Wayfinding
- Facilities

page 57

### 3.3 Technological Downtown

- Technology
- Information

page 59

## 4. A CULTURAL DOWNTOWN

VIBRANT | ARTFUL |  
STORIED | INNOVATIVE |  
LAYERED | AUTHENTIC



### 4.1 A Culturally Vibrant Downtown

- Arts Integration
- Denver Identity

page 64

### 4.2 Explore History

- Partnerships
- Education

page 67

## 5. A SUSTAINABLE DOWNTOWN

BALANCED | THRIVING |  
RESILIENT | RESPONSIBLE |  
CIVIC | VISIONARY



### 5.1 A Greener Downtown

- Green Streets
- Ecology

page 72

### 5.2 Economic Vitality

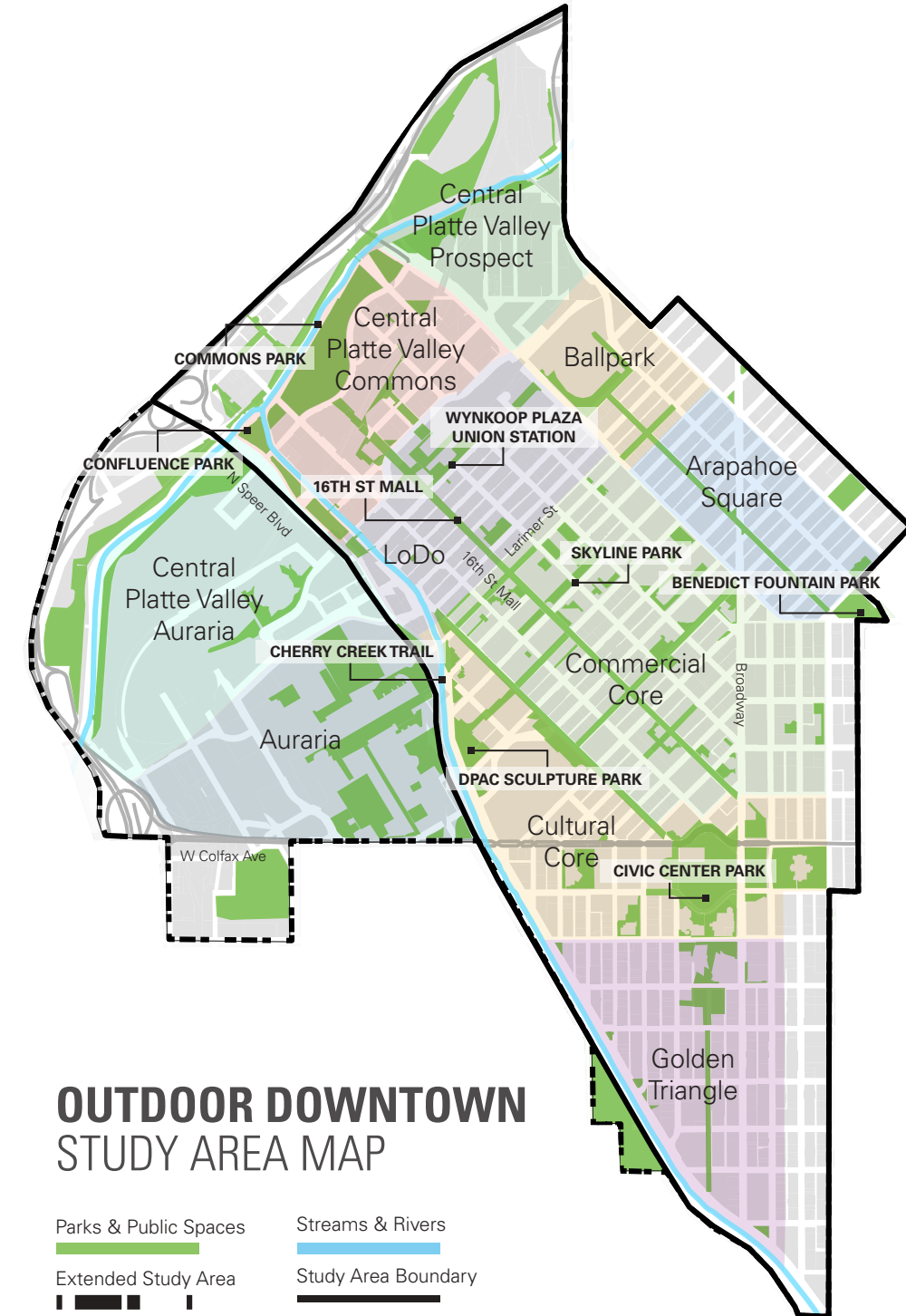
- Activation
- Funding

page 77

### 5.3 Stewardship

- Engagement
- Governance

page 78







# PROJECT **BACKGROUND**

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HISTORICAL | SOCIAL | ECONOMIC |  
DEMOGRAPHIC | CONTEXTUAL

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- STUDY AREA & AREA OF INFLUENCE
- STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
- DEVELOPMENT & GROWTH
- PUBLIC SPACE DISTRIBUTION



Photo: DPR

## Downtown Denver is the **economic** and **cultural center** for Colorado’s Front Range and the Rocky Mountain region.

Known as “the Mile High City,” Denver is the economic, cultural and entertainment hub of the Rocky Mountain region and capital city of Colorado. Founded in 1858 as a thriving gateway to gold, wilderness and the wild west, Downtown Denver is again booming with unprecedented development, tremendous growth of the residential population, and national recognition as a great place to live and work. With a burgeoning and diversifying population, the Downtown public realm must fulfill the needs of a broad range of users who are all sharing the same space.

As such, this master plan takes the opportunity to consider the future of Downtown’s parks and public spaces as places with their own unique identity and character, distinct from parks across the rest of the city. These urban parks and open spaces require significantly different considerations of size, density, access, use, maintenance and programming than their counterparts outside of Downtown. These parks and public

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**59.6%** of online survey respondents reported that they **avoid downtown outdoor spaces** because they feel uncomfortable.



spaces present their own unique urban characteristics and, by their very nature, must be dynamic and flexible to meet the demands of the varied uses and user groups in the urban core. At this moment of tremendous growth, a vision for the future of the Outdoor Downtown is essential to the continued economic and social health of the city.

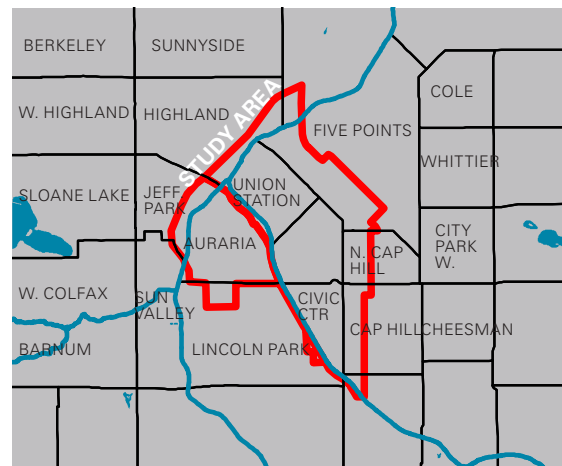
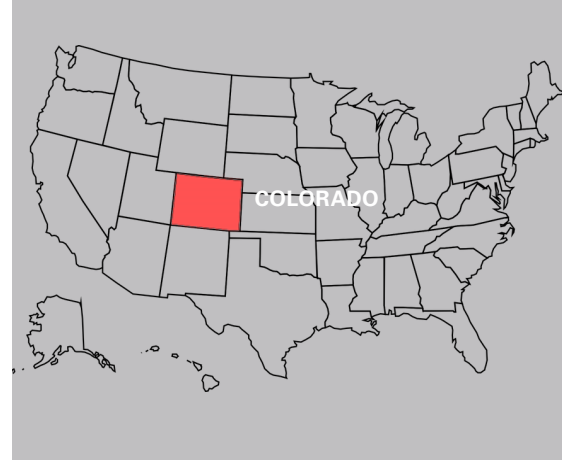
The Outdoor Downtown consists of eight inner-city neighborhoods and considers the impact of three adjacent areas of influence. These neighborhoods constitute what this study defines as Downtown Denver and reflect the unique character of the urban environment. Deliberate efforts were made throughout the planning process to engage community members in each of the Downtown neighborhoods. The project team engaged over 70 registered neighborhood organizations (RNOs) and took efforts to align and support neighborhood plans in the study area.

### *Neighborhoods in Urban Center*

- Commercial Core
- Cultural Core
- Golden Triangle
- Lower Downtown
- Arapahoe Square
- Ballpark
- Central Platte Valley (Commons)
- Central Platte Valley (Prospect)

### *Areas of Influence*

- Central Platte Valley (Auraria)
- Auraria Campus
- Sunken Gardens Park



↑ From Top to Bottom:  
 The State of Colorado | National Map  
 Major Cities in Colorado | State Map  
 Study Area | Denver Map

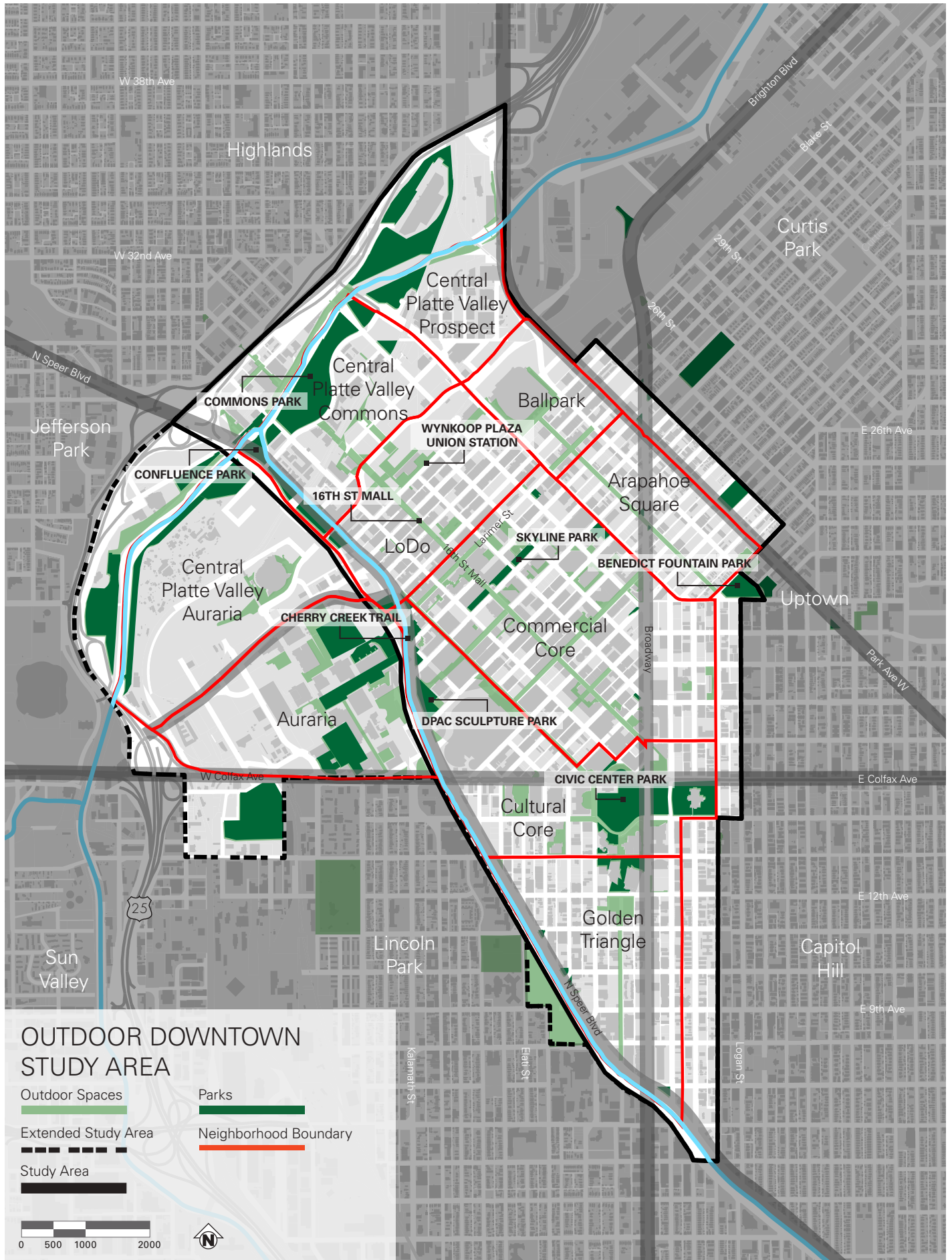


FIGURE 0.1

The Outdoor Downtown master plan is a **collective effort** between Denver Parks and the Downtown Denver Partnership. The project **engaged a wide range of stakeholders**, from neighborhood organizations to over 4,000 interested citizens.

The Outdoor Downtown is, at its core, a collaboration. The master plan is a joint planning project between the City and County of Denver's Parks and Recreation Department and the Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP). The plan takes a holistic look at short-term and long-term goals for Downtown's parks and public spaces and how the strategic use, reuse and expansion of these spaces can contribute to Denver's identity as a world-class city.

The project team was guided by an Advisory Committee, made up of local stakeholders and community residents, and a Technical Committee, representing various City departments and governmental organizations. An Executive Committee comprised of City and DDP leaders guided the overall direction and content of the master plan. The project began as part of Mayor Hancock's pioneering initiative, Activate Denver's Urban Core, which championed the revitalization of three major downtown destinations: the 16th Street Mall, Denver's Performing Arts Center, and the city's urban parks and public spaces.

To better understand the public's vision for Downtown Denver's parks and public spaces and the specific and unique challenges facing the Outdoor Downtown, the project team coordinated a massive public survey, both online and in the parks and public spaces of Denver. Over 1,000 intercept surveys were completed in person at events held at 20 different downtown locations. Additionally, over 2,500 online survey responses were collected, including 1,500 statistically valid surveys from across the Denver metropolitan area.

In addition to survey input, the project team held three public meetings to both share content and test the Downtown community's response to recommendations and alternatives. Throughout each section of this master plan, public feedback is integrated into the project approach and recommendations.



**Public Outreach**

Photo: DPR

**“Interactivity** in open space is key: attracts, engages, holds attention, encourages people to return”

--Comment Card from Public Meeting #2



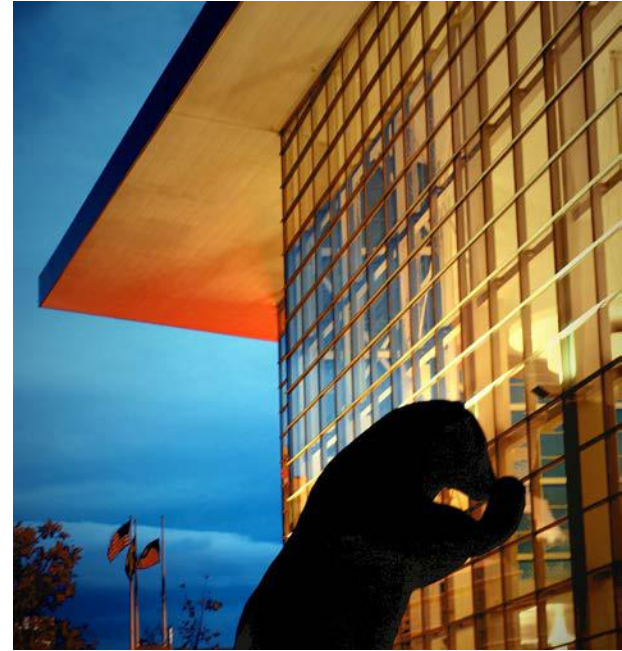
Also during the course of the planning process, Skyline Park hosted a pop-up dog park and children’s play area and Commons Park held CrossFit classes to build more enthusiasm about Downtown’s parks and public spaces and to test how to use existing park spaces in new ways. Four chalkboards installed throughout Downtown captured the community’s ideas for how Denver’s Outdoor Downtown could be “awesome.”

The results of the public feedback in these venues was illuminating. The takeaway from the public outreach is that Downtown Denver residents, employees, students and visitors want safe, distinctive, accessible, vibrant, flexible and comfortable public spaces that serve as a daily draw for social, recreational and cultural uses that extend the life and vibrancy of our city.

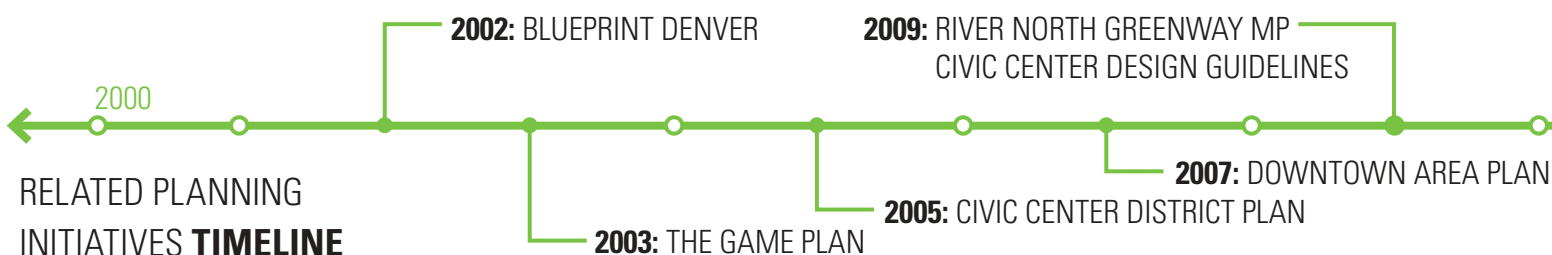
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## Our Call to Action:

To make Downtown Denver’s parks and public spaces **exceptional places** that are a daily part of our **urban lifestyle** and that elevate the city’s standing on the world stage.



From Top to Bottom:  
National Western Stock Show, Event & Parade | Denver, CO  
“I See What You Mean” Sculpture,  
Colorado Convention Center | Denver, CO  
Photos: DDP | Larry Laszlo



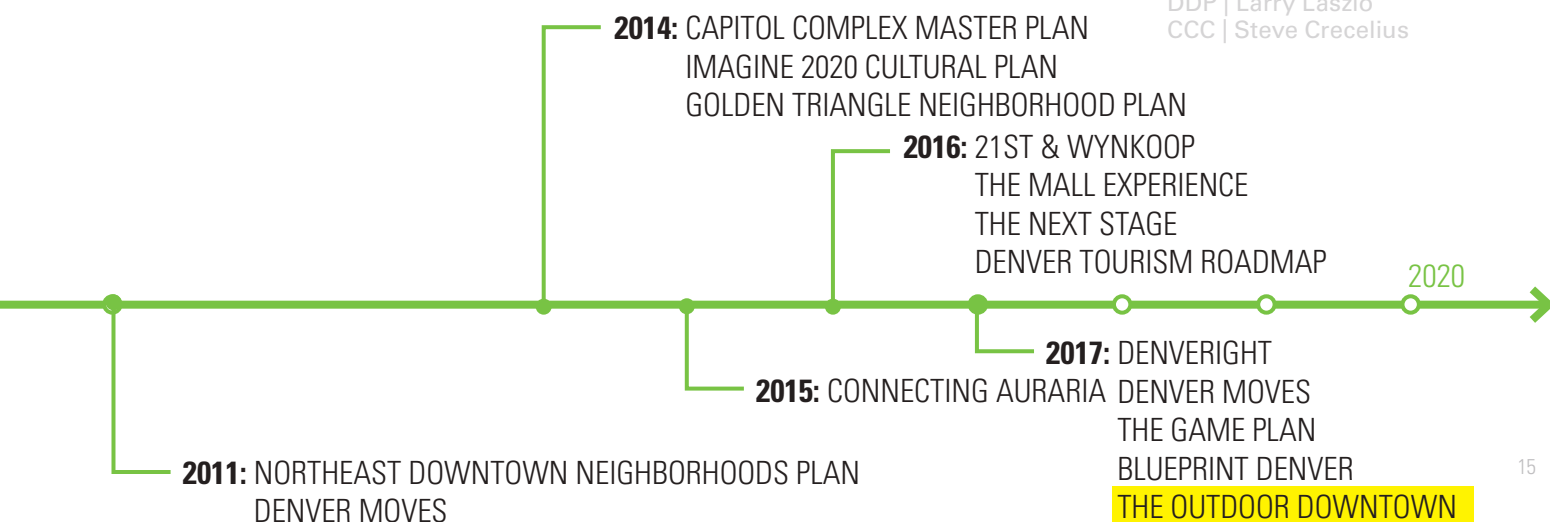
The plan seeks to **actively support Downtown neighborhoods** through alignment with existing planning initiatives, and through the **integration of community feedback** into plan recommendations.

Key to the development of the Outdoor Downtown master plan is its alignment with a number of planning initiatives and neighborhood plans that established a vision for a world-class Downtown. The 2007 Downtown Denver Area Plan had a seminal influence on this project, providing an aspiration to make Denver “one of the most livable places in the world.” The plan is also closely aligned with the Denver Parks and Recreation master plan, The Game Plan, which is currently being updated as part of the Denveright initiative to align and codevelop the city’s transit, parks and connectivity plans. The updated Game Plan introduces seven core values: equity, quality and service, sustainability, health and wellbeing, community, youth and employees.

The Outdoor Downtown master plan expands upon these plans by identifying opportunities and key implementation strategies to realize the potential of the city through enhanced parks and public spaces. The master plan also ties in with a number of ongoing planning initiatives, including Blueprint Denver and Denver Moves for multimodal connectivity and transportation, Imagine 2020 for cultural programming, and a variety of neighborhood masterplans, as represented in the timeline below.



↑ From Top to Bottom:  
 16th Street Mall Aerial | Denver, CO  
 New Years in Downtown | Denver, CO  
 DDP | Larry Laszlo  
 CCC | Steve Crecelius







## POPULATION GROWTH

## NEW INVESTMENT

\$6.2  
BILLION



IN PROJECTS COMPLETED OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION SINCE 2010

Source: Downtown Denver Partnership, 2016  
Photo: CC | Ron Reiring

This is a defining decade in Denver's history. The city is experiencing **unprecedented economic and population growth**.

Downtown Denver's high employment rate, attractiveness to a young creative class, business-friendly environment, and idyllic location are catalysts for economic development. As a national leader in economic and urban development, Downtown Denver's future must also be coupled with outstanding parks and public spaces that meet this vibrant community's desires.

*U.S. News and World Report* ranked Denver as the top city in the 2016 Best Places to Live in the United States, based on affordability, job prospects and quality of life. By the end of 2017, nearly 20,000 people will call Downtown Denver home — a 279% increase since 2000. The May 2016 *State of Downtown* report predicts that number will grow to over 22,000 residents by 2021. This growth has occurred across Downtown, with particularly high amounts of development in the Central Platte Valley, Arapahoe Square and Golden Triangle neighborhoods.

Downtown employment levels are growing more quickly than state and national trends, with a workforce increase of 13.2%

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In 2015, *Forbes Magazine* ranked Denver **#1** of the best places in the country for **careers and business**.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Denver as the **best place to live in America**.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Badenhausen, Kurt. "Denver Leads Forbes' 2015 List of Best Places for Business and Careers." July 29, 2015: *Forbes Magazine*.

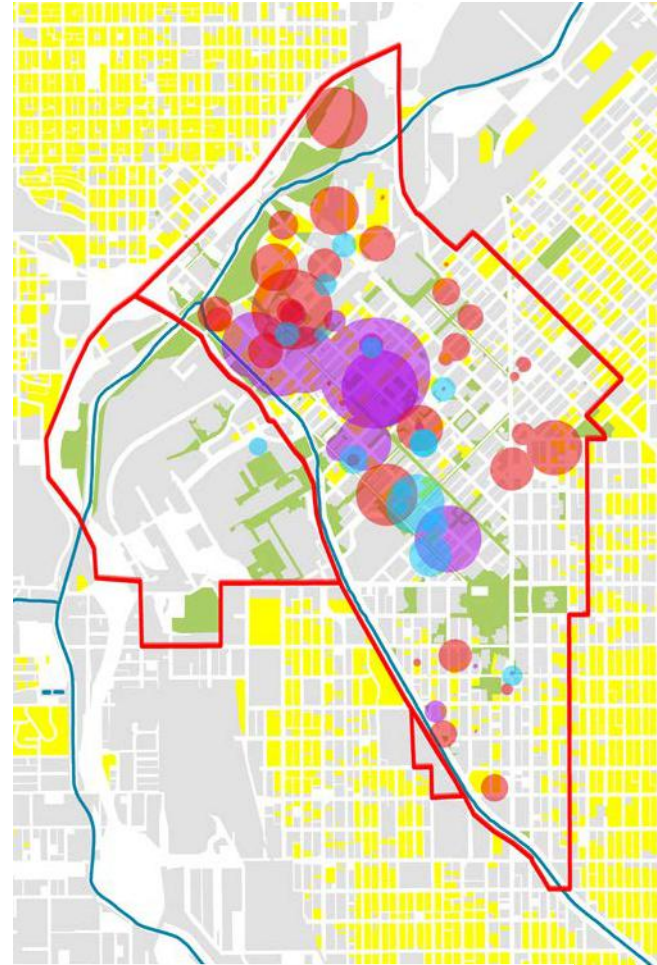
<sup>2</sup> Hearsom, Katie. "Best Places to Live Rankings: #1, Denver, Colorado." March 2, 2016: *US News and World Report*.



between 2010 and 2015. 123,000 Downtown workers use Denver's network of parks, trails and public spaces on a daily basis as a means for getting to or from work and as a break from the rigor of the office. 2016 saw the construction of 1.6 million square feet of new office space in Downtown Denver, with an additional 1.1 million square feet planned for development. Over 54,000 students from public, not-for-profit, higher education, trade schools and private institutions attend classes in Downtown Denver. Downtown's parks and public spaces provide a needed respite for these students.

Denver's prestige is growing as well. The city's reputation as a **global travel destination** places an increasing need for a vibrant public realm.

Over 15 million people travel through Denver on an annual basis bringing in billions of dollars of revenue. To house these guests, Downtown Denver is home to 32 hotels with over 9,000 rooms. Denver has transformed from a stop-over location for tourists to the mountains to a destination in and of itself. Denver appeared in the 2016 worldwide rankings of Top 50 Best Places to Travel by Travel + Leisure magazine. The city's reputation as an up-and-coming destination and the thriving business climate led to a number of new hotels under construction.



AREAS OF CHANGE MAP

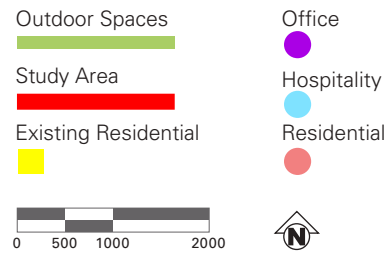


FIGURE 0.2

19,000+  
**RESIDENTS**

123,000+  
**EMPLOYEES**

54,000+  
**STUDENTS**

1,600,000+  
**VISITORS**





Downtown’s network of parks and public spaces is **under-resourced** today. With the Downtown population rapidly increasing, this master plan **thinks creatively** about strategies to meet the City’s short- and long-term needs.

Nationally, metropolitan areas strive to achieve a baseline standard of park space based on the residential population—with a goal to provide 10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Currently, the Downtown Denver study area has 5.7 acres of park space per 1,000 residents, which is well below typical national standards and continually dropping as new development occurs.



Given both current development activity and the finite boundary of the planning area, there is a limited amount of land available Downtown to acquire for publicly-accessible open space. In order to provide adequate space for both current and future users, we must think differently about the park spaces we already have, and strive to extend the use and availability of publicly-owned spaces, such as streets, sidewalks, and alleys, on a daily basis. In addition, we need to pursue innovative partnerships with property owners and city agencies to encourage the public use of private open space. The distinct urban character of Downtown Denver requires us to think differently about the way we allocated parks. Rather than rely on metrics that are more suitable to lower density areas of the city, the plan recommends the allocation of parks and quality open spaces within specific walking distance from all Downtown users to ensure that everyone has convenient access to vibrant open space on a daily basis. Only through the consideration of the entire Outdoor Downtown will we be able to support the demands of the wide array of activities and users and reaffirm Downtown Denver’s reputation as an outdoor city.



From Top to Bottom:  
Meet in the Street | Denver, CO  
Pop-up Children’s Event | Denver, CO  
Photos: DDP | Larry Laszlo

# PUBLIC SPACE DISTRIBUTION

Traditionally, metropolitan areas sought to meet a baseline standard of park space based on the residential population with a goal to provide **10 acres of parks land for every 1,000 residents.**

However, urban areas often struggle to meet this standard due to space constraints, steep costs for land acquisition and rising population growth. Planners are now focusing on access to quality space over quantity, with a goal of **three minutes to quality outdoor space** and **five minutes to neighborhood parks.**



## WALKABILITY ANALYSIS

### PARK SPACE PER POPULATION ANALYSIS

**2016**

DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS

19,000+



ACRES OF OPEN SPACE / 1,000 PEOPLE

5.7

10

**2021**

DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS

22,000+



ACRES OF OPEN SPACE / 1,000 PEOPLE

5.0

10







# DENVER'S **FRONTYARD**

---

VIBRANT | EVOCATIVE | INVITING |  
EQUITABLE | CIVIC | ENGAGED

---

- OVERVIEW
- FRONTYARD CONCEPT
- VISION ELEMENTS





# FRONTYARD



# BACKYARD

Top: COMMONS PARK | Denver, CO  
Bottom: ROCKY MOUNTAINS | CO  
Photos: DW | Dale Horchner  
CC | Ron Reiring



Denver deserves a **frontyard** as **vibrant and evocative** as our collective backyard, the Rocky Mountains.

Denverites have long referred to the mountains as our collective backyard. Many of us spend our weekends in the backcountry or head there on holidays to relax, recreate and engage with the natural beauty of the Rockies. The mountains offer a reprieve from the daily life of the city. We recognize and value the beauty and quality of the resources that the Rocky Mountains provide, and spend substantial time and effort to ensure that those qualities endure. Many of us volunteer on trail builds, donate to wildlife funds, and support the national forests through camping permits and day passes. An integral part of being a Coloradoan is stewardship of the wilderness.

Just as important to our quality of life, however, are the outdoor spaces that we use on a daily basis. If the mountains are regarded as our backyard, Downtown Denver's parks and public spaces represent the City's frontyard. As Denver continues to grow both in size and reputation, our frontyard is not only our place to unwind but the City's welcome mat. That we care for our frontyard and demonstrate our commitment to its quality, health and character has never been more important.

The frontyard bridges the gap between our **private lives** and the **public realm**.

It is a place to convene with neighbors, to pose for photos on first day of school, and to take in the sun as the workday turns to twilight. The frontyard offers opportunities both for socialization and for retreat. Frontyards are spaces in which we engage every day. We pass through our frontyards every morning and every evening on the way to work or school. We relax in our frontyards with neighbors and watch our children ride bikes. We toss a football as the leaves turn in the fall and tend to our gardens as new growth appears in the spring. We shovel the snow from our sidewalks and hang lights in celebration of the holidays and changes of season. Each of us is emotionally connected to and invested in our own personal frontyard. The same value should be applied to our collective civic interest in the frontyard of our Downtown.

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In the Outdoor  
Downtown public  
survey, **34.4%** of  
online respondents  
cited the reason  
they do not  
spend more time  
in **Downtown  
public spaces** is  
because they are  
**not inviting or  
interesting.**



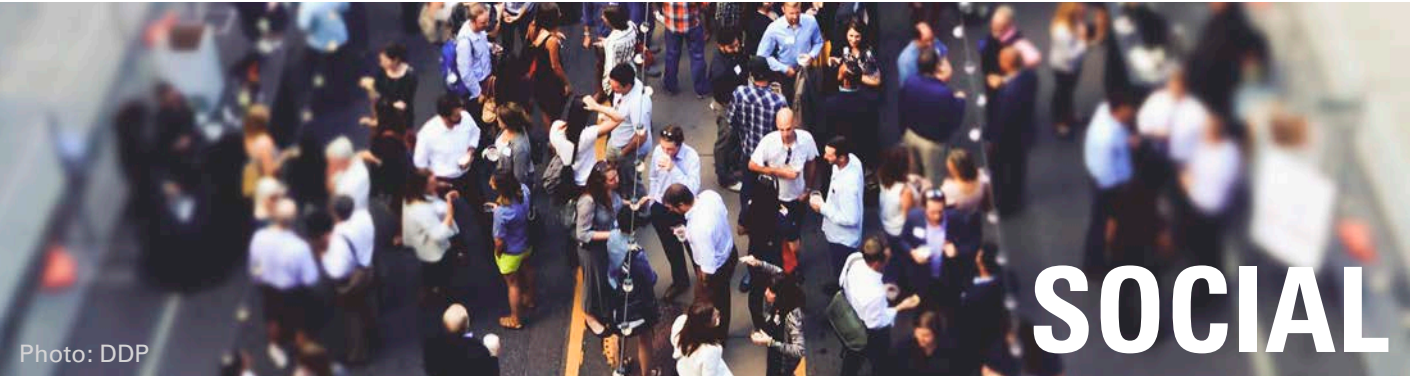


Photo: DDP

**SOCIAL**



Photo: DDP

**RECREATIONAL**



Photo: DDP

**CONNECTED**



Photo: DDP | Larry Lazslo

**CULTURAL**



Photo: DW | Cali Pfaff

**SUSTAINABLE**

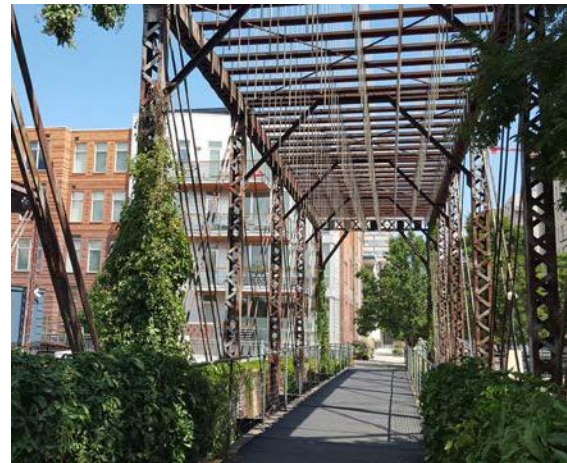


In order to make the most of our frontyard, this plan seeks to create implementable recommendations that can be tested and refined to meet demands. The frontyard is dynamic, a place for experimentation that grows as the city grows, accommodating new forms of recreation and leisure. While many of this plan's goals are aimed at further activating downtown, others are modest but are directed at increasing the sense of comfort and safety for users. Ultimately, we want to foster a frontyard that commands the same respect and awe as our backyard, to create spaces that are true to the culture and ethos of Denver.

- Our front yard is a **social** place, where we sit on sunny restaurant patios overlooking the bustling Wynkoop Plaza and eat breakfast with our family.
- Our front yard is a **recreational** place, where we attend yoga classes at Civic Center Park, play pick-up games of volleyball in Commons Park or miniature golf in Skyline Park.
- Our front yard is **connected** through miles of trails supporting cyclists and runners along the South Platte River and Cherry Creek and a walkable network of sidewalks and walking paths.
- Our front yard plays host to our thriving **cultural** scene, serving as the backdrop for the celebration of arts, history, tradition and civic pride.
- Our front yard is a **sustainable** asset, providing natural habitat to urban wildlife, economic vitality to our entrepreneurs, and community stewardship for our outdoor resources.

In order to achieve and maintain the levels of quality, activity and flexibility expected from our frontyard, this plan recommends a more purposeful approach to the maintenance, operations and programming of Downtown Denver's parks and public spaces. The intensity of use and associated wear-and-tear on the Downtown public realm require a higher level of service and funding compared to other parks and public spaces in Denver's parks network. The regional, national and international draw of the cultural and civic resources in Downtown Denver also call for a different approach to programs and activities that bolster the appeal for everyday use of our outdoor spaces.

The following pages describe the vision elements of the plan, provide inventory and analysis of the current parks and public spaces systems, and outline recommendations to achieve the community's hopes and expectations for a clean, safe and vibrant Outdoor Downtown.



↑ From Top:  
Larimer Square  
Confluence Park  
Wynkoop Bridge  
Photos:  
DW | Cali Pfaff  
DDP  
DW | Cali Pfaff



← From Top:  
CityBuild event on 16th Street Mall  
Meet in the Street Event  
Cyclist in Cultural Core  
City & County Building lit up for the Holidays  
Wetlands along South Platte River







# RECOMMENDATION **OVERVIEW**

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SOCIAL | RECREATIONAL | CONNECTED |  
CULTURAL | SUSTAINABLE

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- OVERVIEW
- TERMS & DEFINITIONS
- TOP TEN RECOMMENDATIONS



Five vision elements structure the recommendations around **specific topics**.

Within each vision element, recommendations address priorities specific to that topic.

The plan is organized to provide hierarchy throughout the text as well as topical alignment between recommendations. Each section takes on the lens of a specific vision element and begins with a discussion of the current challenges facing downtown as well as potential opportunities to activate Denver. The vision element identifies the broad topic for the recommendations that follow. Because the vision elements are abstract in nature (Social, Sustainable, etc), the plan includes a short list of priorities to better define that element, i.e. for the Social vision element, the priorities are ‘safe and secure spaces,’ ‘clean and comfortable environments,’ and ‘everyday activation.’

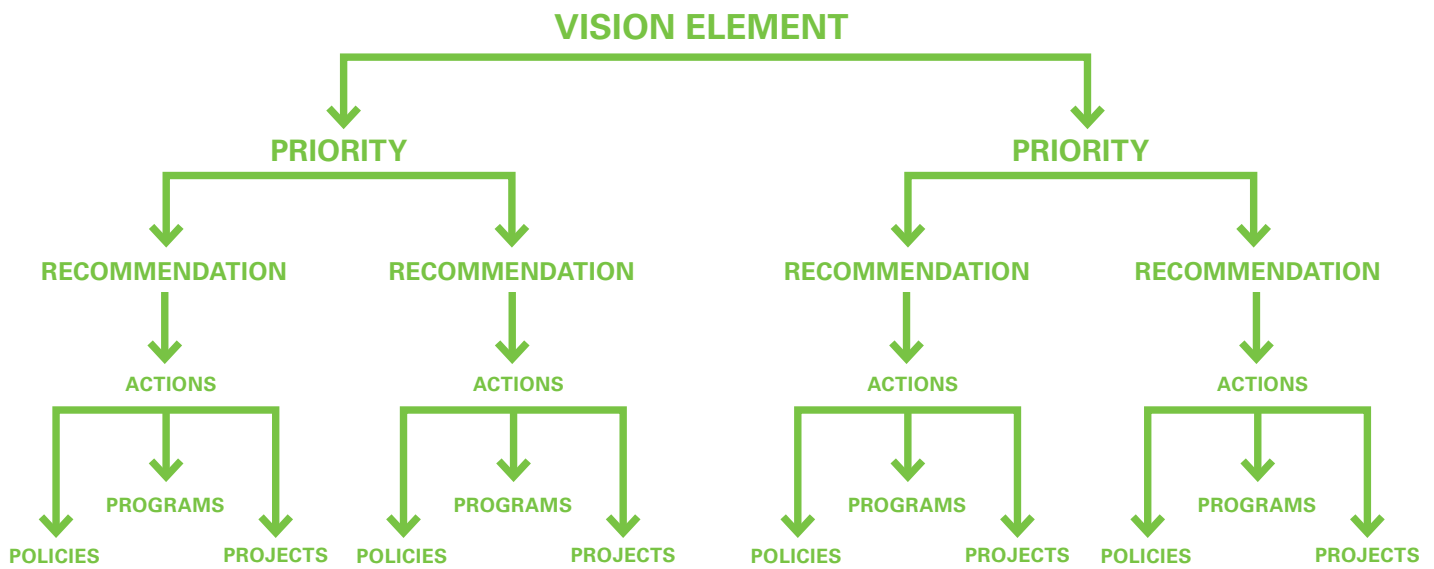
Recommendations provide an overall strategy for addressing specific issues, such as regulations on policies on food and beverage or inadequate wayfinding. These recommendations are then further supported by a set of actions, comprised of the “three p’s”— programs, projects and policies. The programs, projects and policies are the heart of the plan, providing measurable actions that determine how and when the recommendation is executed. A list of definitions is provided below to clarify the terms used in the document and their relationship to each other.

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“The success of our Downtown relies on a feeling of connection: to each other and to our City.”

--Councilman Albus Brooks, District 9

Term	Definition
Vision Element	A guiding topic for each section of the plan
Priority	A subtopic covered by a vision element
Recommendation	A specific strategy to address a given priority
Action	A project, program or policy to enact the recommendation
Projects	A built project or physical improvement
Programs	Soft programming, events or other activation efforts
Policies	A policy that allows a new set of actions to be completed



Each recommendation contains an actionable list of policies, programs and projects. This approach reflects a **holistic view of parks planning** by giving equal weight to physical projects, soft programs, the regulatory environment and operations.

Gone are the days of park planning being limited to signature parks and needs assessments. Cities across the country have shown that successful park systems rely on a trifecta of investment, from a supportive regulatory environment to inclusive programming and strategic capital investment. Urban parks and public spaces present unique challenges that cannot be solved through any one action but through a careful layering of strategies.

This plan is a result of extensive public outreach, subject expert working groups and engaged advisory, executive and technical committees. By vetting the recommendations through these stakeholders, the plan delivers an implementable list of projects, programs and policies that have community endorsement and advocacy. These actions are supported by case studies and metrics that will hold the plan accountable to set standards.

The implementation of the Outdoor Downtown will require a great deal of collaboration between stakeholders, the public and the City. This plan is a call for investment from us all, be it spending a Sunday morning cleaning up the Platte River, visiting the food trucks at Civic Center Eats or going on a family bike ride. To have a more just, beautiful, memorable and safe downtown, we each have to play our part.



↑ From Top:  
Theater District Parade of Lights  
Southwest Rink at Skyline Park  
Photos:  
CC | Brian Papantonio  
DDP





**#1**

**UPGRADE BASIC AMENITIES.**

Provide a mix of amenities to support daily and year-round uses of parks and public spaces for all ages.

Photo: Flickr | Dennis Skyley

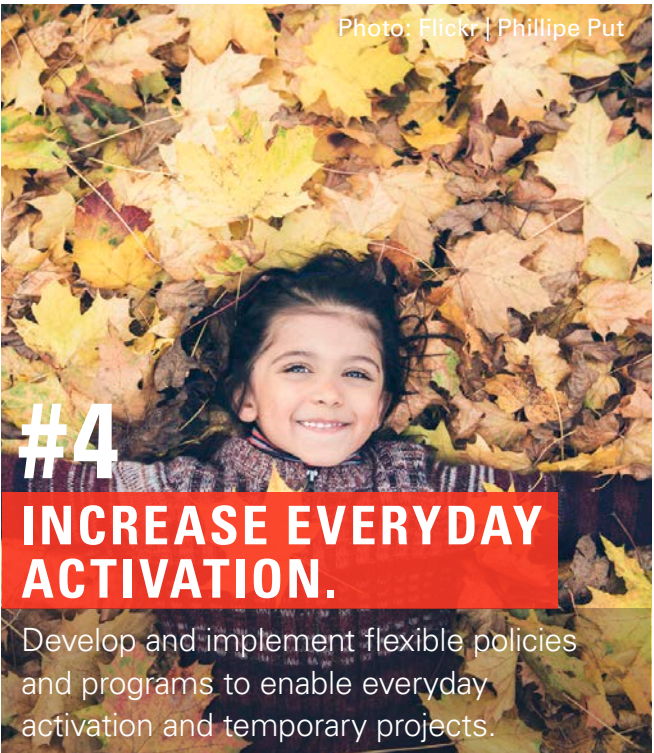
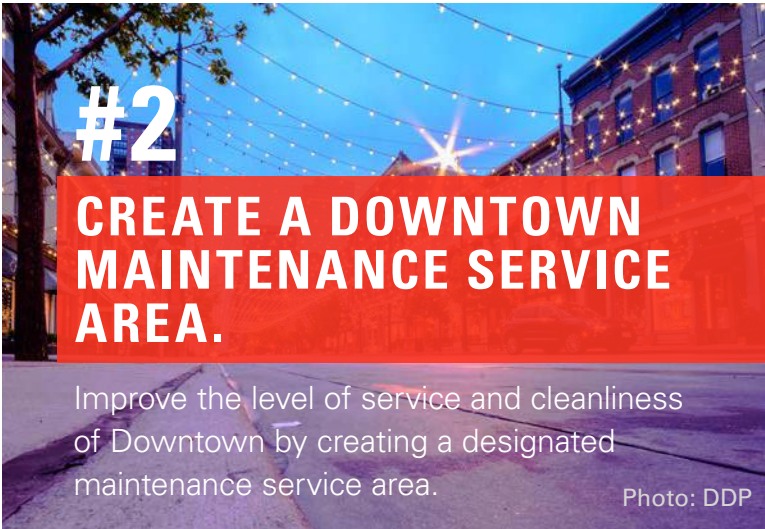


Photo: Flickr | Phillippe Put

**#4**

**INCREASE EVERYDAY ACTIVATION.**

Develop and implement flexible policies and programs to enable everyday activation and temporary projects.



**#2**

**CREATE A DOWNTOWN MAINTENANCE SERVICE AREA.**

Improve the level of service and cleanliness of Downtown by creating a designated maintenance service area.

Photo: DDP



**#5**

**BUILD NEW PARKS DOWNTOWN.**

Identify locations and acquire new park space to address service gaps across Downtown, such as Golden Triangle and Arapahoe Square.

Photo: DDP



**#3**

**BOLSTER SECURITY.**

Increase dedicated uniformed presence downtown by hiring additional park rangers and supporting park ambassador programs.

Photo: DDP

**TOP TEN RECOMMENDATIONS**





#6

**IMPLEMENT FOUR  
ICONIC PROJECTS.**

Fund and implement the four iconic projects, including the Downtown Loop, central plaza, signature playground and arts / culture park.

Photo: DDP



#7

**GROW OUR URBAN  
FOREST.**

Plant and maintain 1,000 new trees in Downtown Denver.

Photo: Art Poskanzer



#8

**DIVERSIFY FOOD &  
BEVERAGE OPTIONS.**

Change policies to support more food and beverage choices in Downtown parks and public spaces.

Photo: Flickr | Abdullah Albargan



#9

**ENGAGE THE PUBLIC &  
INCREASE STEWARDSHIP.**

Form a community organization to help engage citizens in the upkeep and stewardship through outreach activities.

Photo: DDP



#10

**CREATE A FUNDING AND  
GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE**

Create a committee of city leadership and key stakeholders to explore questions of feasibility and to determine how to fund, govern and implement the Outdoor Downtown plan.

Photo: DDP



## ASPIRATION

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To realize the full potential of Downtown's parks and public spaces by heightening their sense of safety, comfort, usability and excitement.





# A **SOCIAL** DOWNTOWN

---

EVERYDAY | WELCOMING | FAMILY-  
FRIENDLY | STIMULATING | SAFE

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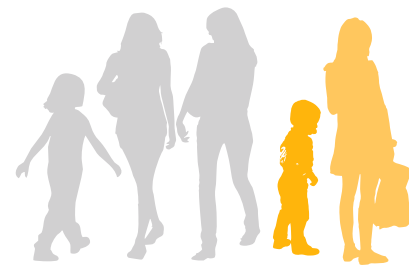
- SAFE & SECURE SPACES
- CLEAN & COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENTS
- EVERYDAY ACTIVATION



**Washington Square Park** in New York City addresses safety issues through daily activation, lighting, and uniformed presence.

## Fundamental to the public’s desire to spend more time in the Outdoor Downtown is that they **feel safe and included.**

Of the 2,000+ online respondents to the project’s initial public survey, 59.6% reported avoiding outdoor spaces Downtown due to feeling uncomfortable. Of those interviewed in person, 40.4% reported the same. While Denverites are drawn to outdoor spaces and activities, negative perceptions of safety and security of Downtown parks and public spaces give many of us pause when it comes to using the Outdoor Downtown. Uniformed presence in Downtown Denver has increased due to the Business Improvement District’s Downtown Ambassadors, private security program, and the City’s Park Rangers but only select portions of Downtown are regularly patrolled. To address public concerns about safety—a top priority for 37.1% of survey respondents—the plan takes a two-fold approach to improving security. This involves increasing uniformed presence and security infrastructure, such as lighting and cameras, as well as generating more daily activity in parks and public spaces to encourage more positive interactions and fewer nuisance activities.



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**3 out of 5** online survey respondents reported that they **avoid downtown** outdoor spaces because they feel uncomfortable.



The public desires a **level of maintenance** and diversity of **amenities** beyond what exists in Downtown public spaces today.

Overall, the public prioritized improving our existing parks and public spaces over the creation of new ones. The types of amenities people requested included 'more trees,' 'access to Wi-Fi,' 'restrooms,' and 'places to sit.' These modest requests point to a need for amenities that support the everyday use of parks, from water fountains to chairs that people can move into the sun. When measured against similar cities, Denver's current maintenance budget for Downtown parks reflects a significant gap in service (Fig. 1.1). In 2014, Chicago and San Francisco each had more than twice the annual funding for maintenance than Downtown Denver. Maintaining and making the most of the spaces we currently have is a vital step in meeting the public's expectations for Downtown parks and public spaces.

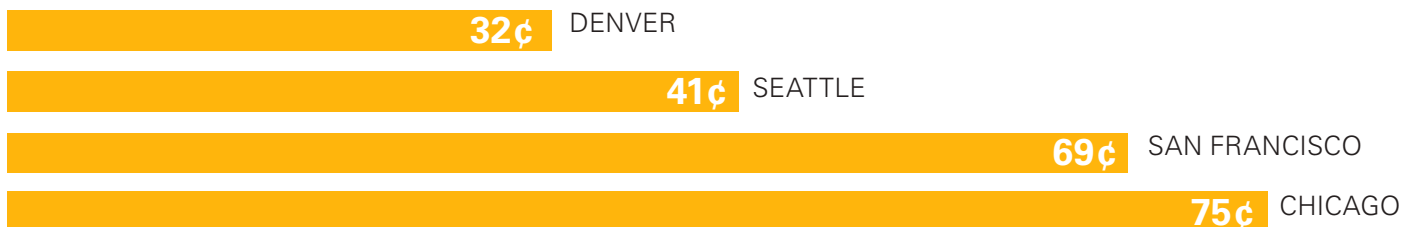
To create a more vibrant public realm, **everyday activation** is essential.

Everyday activation not only increases the vibrancy of Downtown but also perceived levels of safety. When asked "What would make you feel safer?" Downtown, 22.3% of public meeting attendees chose "more daily activities." This response was second only to "increased uniform presence" at 26.4%, implying that the presence of other people make people feel safer. In benchmarking against comparable cities, Denver is very competitive when it comes to the number of events hosted in the public realm. Many of these events, however, are large-scale, one-day events. This plan gives increased attention to the benefits of engaging the outdoors through recommendations for new policies, programs and projects directed at expanding and encouraging the daily use of our parks and public spaces.



↑ Washington Square Park Fountain  
 Park Police on Patrol  
 Chess Players  
 Flickr | Vasilio Sfinarolakis  
 Flickr | Elvert Barnes  
 Flickr | Phil Roeder

**Fig. 1.1: Yearly Maintenance Budget Per Square Foot of Park Space** 2014 Data



# SAFE & SECURE SPACES

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## Recommendation 1.1:

Improve the **safety and security** in Downtown parks and public spaces through multiple measures, including visible uniformed presence and improved lighting.

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### Fig. 1.1: Community Policing Resources

- 1. CRIME STOPPERS ANONYMOUS TIP LINE**  
*call-in number to anonymously report crime in the Metro area*  
 **720-913-STOP**  
 **Metro Denver Crime Stoppers App**
- 2. POCKETGOV**  
*app to report neighborhood disturbances and to access online government services*  
 **[www.denvergov.org/pocketgov](http://www.denvergov.org/pocketgov)**  
 **PocketGov App**
- 3. TRANSIT WATCH**  
*website and app to report crime and terrorism concerns to Denver police*  
 **[www.transitwatchdenver.com](http://www.transitwatchdenver.com)**  
 **RTD Transit Watch App**
- 4. 311 REPORTING**  
*call-in number to report abandoned vehicles, graffiti, neighborhood disturbances, snow removal and other community issues*  
 **311 within Denver**  
 **720-913-1311 outside Denver**

## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 1.1.1** Increase dedicated uniformed presence downtown to provide one Downtown park ranger per 15 acres of parkland, seven days a week, 20 hours a day.
- 1.1.2** Work with nonprofit partners and volunteers to develop ambassador programs to service areas beyond the extents of the Downtown Denver Business Improvement District (BID) and promote and expand the existing Park Hosts program.
- 1.1.3** Increase community policing of Downtown's parks and public spaces by promoting Crime Stoppers Anonymous Tips hotline, the PocketGov application, TransitWatch and 311 reporting.
- 1.1.4** Collaborate with security resources of the BID and private property owners to enhance the overall sense of security in Downtown's parks and public spaces.
- 1.1.5** Establish lighting standards consistent with IES (Illuminating Engineering Society of North America) Recommended Practices and conduct an audit of Downtown Denver parks and public spaces to identify areas of concern. Create a phased implementation plan to improve lighting levels across the Outdoor Downtown.
- 1.1.6** Expand Denver Parks and Recreation program to install video cameras in Downtown parks and public spaces and partner with private property owners to provide better surveillance of outdoor publicly accessible spaces.



# CLEAN & COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENTS

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## *Recommendation 1.2:*

Provide the staff, budget and facilities necessary to improve the **maintenance and cleanliness** of Downtown parks and public spaces.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 1.2.1 Form a Downtown maintenance service area within Denver Parks and Recreation to better reflect the intensity of uses in an urban setting and to address the specific maintenance needs of Downtown.
- 1.2.2 Create a dedicated centrally located Downtown facility for parks maintenance vehicles and personnel to be shared with Downtown Denver park rangers.
- 1.2.3 Assess and adjust the staffing and budget for the Downtown parks maintenance staff to provide the resources necessary to achieve 'green level' maintenance throughout Downtown, as described in the Denver Parks and Recreation Park Maintenance Standards.
- 1.2.4 Brand the uniforms and vehicles of Downtown Parks maintenance staff and rangers with the Outdoor Downtown logo so that they have a more visible presence and promote the Outdoor Downtown.
- 1.2.5 Amend the Denver Parks and Recreation Planning, Design and Construction Standards to strengthen the requirements for durability and quality of materials in urban environments.



## CASE STUDY: PARK AMBASSADORS

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In Denver, the Downtown Ambassadors both welcome visitors and **assist the police**.

- The program was initiated in Downtown Denver in 2005. The primary goal was to provide a welcoming presence to visitors Downtown.
- In 2016, the program has grown to a 24-7 presence to enhance the sense of safety Downtown. The Security Ambassadors partner with social outreach workers, Denver Police Department and park rangers.

# CLEAN & COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENTS

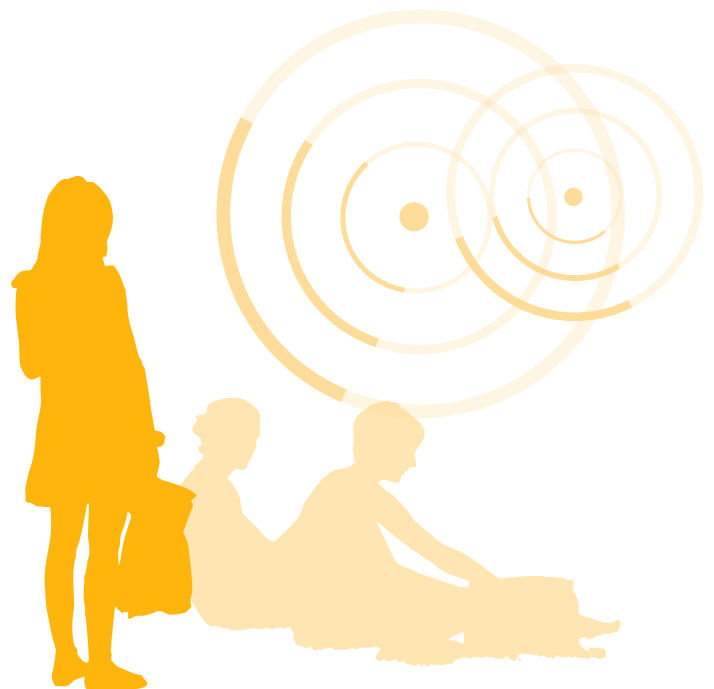
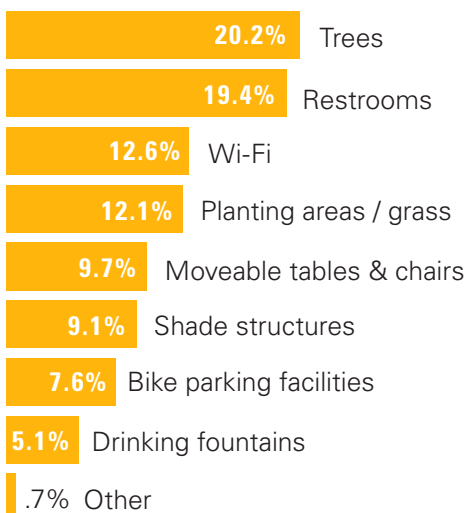
## Recommendation 1.3:

Provide **additional amenities** within Downtown Denver parks and public spaces, including public restrooms, drinking fountains, seating, trash and recycling, Wi-Fi, trees and landscaped areas.

## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 1.3.1 Establish design standards for urban site furnishings and conduct an audit (benches, trash, picnic shelters, recycling, etc.) of Downtown Denver parks and public spaces to identify underserved areas. Create a phased implementation plan to enhance site furnishings across the Outdoor Downtown.
- 1.3.2 Establish year-round operations for the existing restroom facilities in Civic Center Park, Skyline Park and Commons Park.
- 1.3.3 Provide permanent, year-round fully staffed restroom facilities in all existing Downtown Denver special-use parks, and ensure that all planned new Downtown special-use parks include restroom facilities.

Fig. 1.2: Rank your top three priorities for basic amenities.





# EVERYDAY ACTIVATION

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## *Recommendation 1.5:*

Provide a spectrum of **food and beverage** services across price points and with varying levels of permanence in Downtown's parks and public spaces.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 1.5.1 Support diverse food choices Downtown that complement but do not compete with existing businesses. Revise permit requirements for food vendors in Downtown parks and public spaces. This may include reviewing current regulations on food truck locations, etc.
- 1.5.2 Pursue a permanent food and beverage concession building in Skyline Park, and a full-service restaurant in the McNichols Building in Civic Center Park.
- 1.5.3 Create a district or districts in Downtown Denver that allow for the sales and consumption of alcoholic beverages in designated outdoor public spaces.
- 1.5.4 Update regulations in order to allow for the decoupling of food and beverage service from brick-and-mortar establishments into the public realm.



Blarney on the Block | Greeley  
Flickr | City of Greeley

## CASE STUDY: OPEN CONTAINER DISTRICTS

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Greeley, CO created a four-block **Entertainment District** in 2013 to energize downtown.

- The "Go-Cup" District allows bars and restaurants to serve drinks in special outdoor cups from 5-11pm Fridays.
- Local businesses in the Downtown Promotional Association have reported a 60% increase in business from Go-Cup nights.
- Other Colorado cities have adopted similar programs, including Aspen and Central City.

# EVERYDAY ACTIVATION CONT.

## Recommendation 1.5:

Develop and implement flexible policies and programs to enable **everyday activation** and foster public stewardship of the parks and public spaces, including pilot, demonstration or temporary projects.



Ocean Beach Parklet | San Francisco, SF  
Mission District Parklet | San Francisco, SF  
CC | San Francisco Planning Department



## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 1.5.1 Create flexible policy and permitting mechanisms to allow for temporary use of parks and non-parks public land (rights-of-way, etc.) for demonstration projects and events, such as the Downtown Denver BID's Prototyping Festival.
- 1.5.2 Adopt a process to evaluate, test and refine demonstration projects, such as pop-up dog parks, beer gardens, playgrounds and outdoor markets, to study projects, provide meaningful public input, and proactively enhance the user experience.
- 1.5.3 Define geographically desirable and flexible open spaces in Downtown Denver that may be activated and programmed.
- 1.5.4 Streamline the process for event permits and licenses to make it easier to put on public and private events in a timely and cost-effective manner in the publicly owned spaces.
- 1.5.5 Provide a crowdsourcing campaign or other mechanisms for neighborhood organizations and community partners to participate in the prioritization and funding of those projects.
- 1.5.6 Develop an annual capital budget to fund amenities and/or programs to make permanent the successful demonstration and/or temporary projects in 1.3.1, 1.3.2 and 1.3.3.
- 1.5.7 Review and revise the admission-based events policies in the Denver Parks and Recreation Public Event Policy.
- 1.5.8 Work with the Department of Public Works to establish criteria for and to designate key areas of the public right-of-way— such as sidewalks, streets, bridges, alleys and public plazas— in various Downtown locations to facilitate appropriate special events through enhanced infrastructure and an expedited permitting process.
- 1.5.9 Develop staff position(s) at Denver Parks and Recreation or the Downtown Denver Partnership to focus on activation of the Outdoor Downtown.



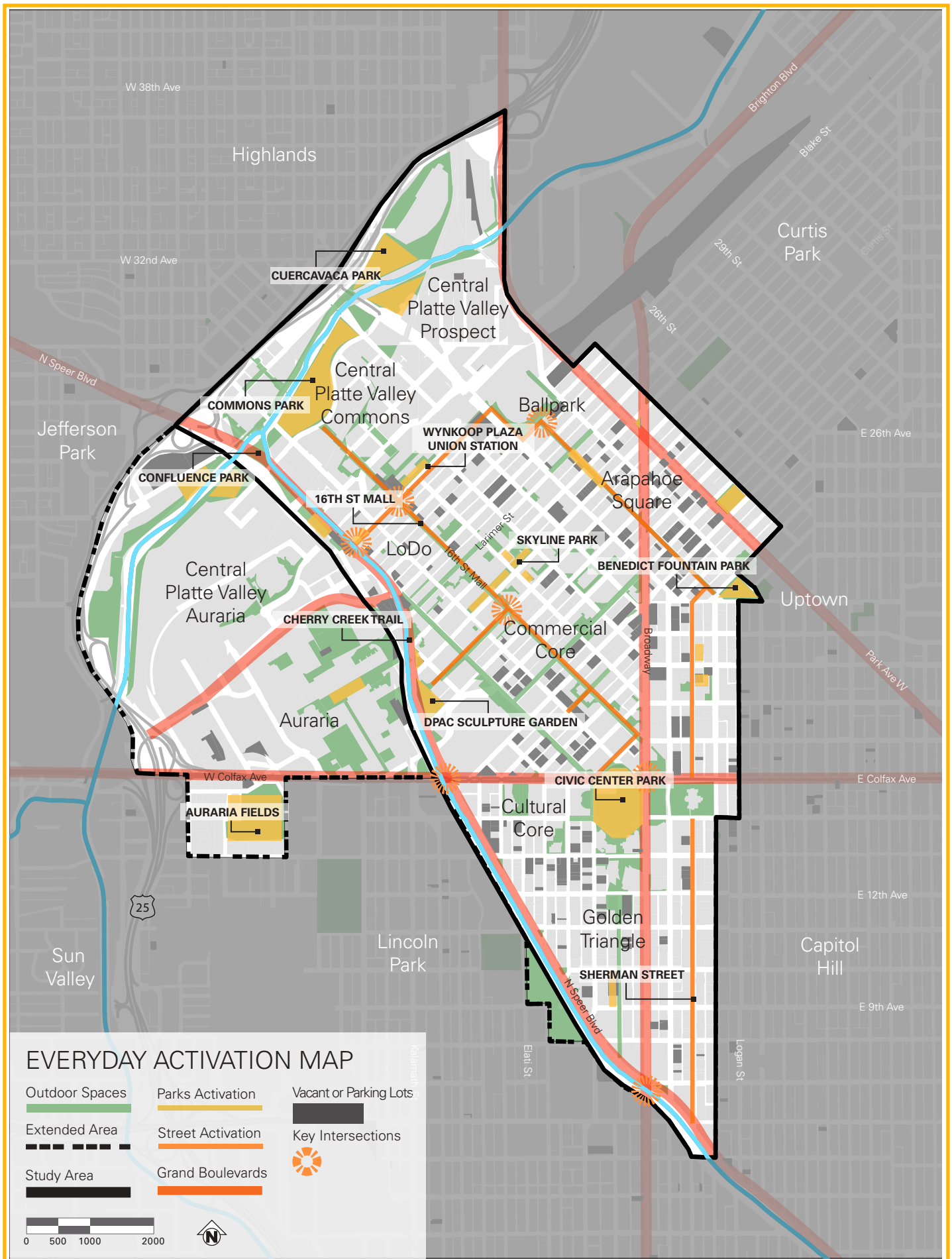


Fig. 1.3



## ASPIRATION

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Downtown parks and public spaces that better support the daily fitness needs of residents and that create novel urban recreational experiences unique to Denver.





# A RECREATIONAL DOWNTOWN

---

ACTIVE | HEALTHY | DIVERSE |  
MULTI-GENERATIONAL | INCLUSIVE

---

- EQUITABLE RECREATION SPACE
- HEALTH & WELLNESS



**Brooklyn Bridge Park** repurposed piers to meet the City's passive and active recreation needs.

While Coloradoans are known for their high levels of fitness, Downtown parks and public spaces do not support the **daily recreation needs** of Downtown residents and employees.

Colorado consistently tops the charts as one of the fittest states in the country. A 2012 study by the Center for Disease Control ranked Colorado first among all 50 states for lowest obesity rate and body mass index (BMI) percentages. Denver itself ranked sixth for fittest city in the country in the 2015 American Fitness Index rankings. While fitness and outdoor exploration are integral to the culture and ethos of the state, Downtown Denver remains underused as an outdoor destination and place for recreation. Survey results noted that only 9 percent of respondents listed exercise as a favorite thing to do in Downtown outdoor spaces, while even fewer (4 percent) listed group sports. The lack of recreation amenities (fields, courts, etc.) and athletics programs in Downtown, as well as an uneven distribution of park space, affect the overall accessibility of athletics and recreation facilities.

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In 2015, **83.2%** of Coloradoans reportedly worked out in the last month,<sup>1</sup> yet only **9%** of survey respondents reported it as one of their favorite things to do in Downtown outdoor spaces.

<sup>1</sup> Colorado Health. [2015 Colorado Health Record Card.](#)



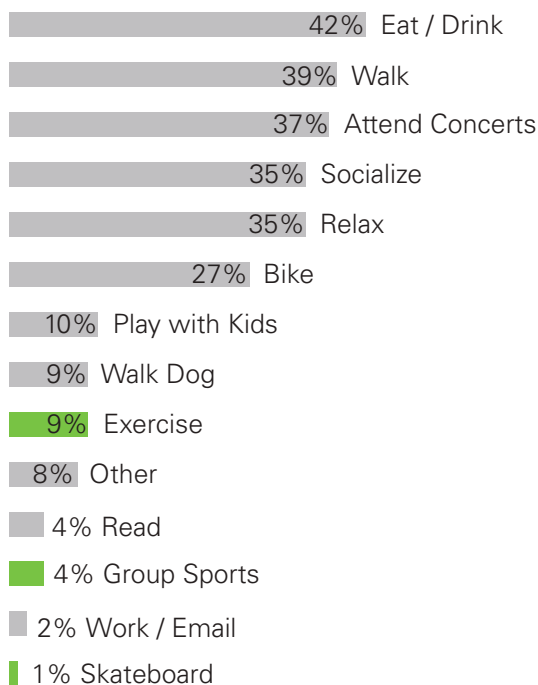
With a growing population and limited room for expansion, Denver needs to **think creatively** about how to integrate recreation amenities throughout Downtown and in every neighborhood park.

During the recent development boom in Downtown Denver, Denver Parks and Recreation has been unable to provide an adequate supply of parks space to serve the growing population. This is further exacerbated by the lack of available land for park acquisition within the planning area. To provide adequate, flexible and active parks in Downtown Denver, we need to re-think the ways in which we use park spaces by providing infrastructure, amenities and programming that serve all populations throughout the day and across all seasons.

In addition to dedicated park land, we must partner with community organizations, City departments and private land owners to provide recreational use of the non-park public realm, repurposing— either temporarily or permanently— underused outdoor spaces that can meet the needs of Downtown users. In doing so, we can create a dynamic network of parks, public spaces and recreational amenities to serve the population now and into the future.

### PUBLIC SURVEY

*What are your favorite things to do in Downtown outdoor spaces currently?*



↑ Brooklyn Bridge Park, NY  
 Left: Soccer Fields  
 Right, above: Stair Overlook  
 Right below: Kayak Boat Launch  
 Flickr | Maciek Lulko  
 Flickr | Dumbo NYC  
 Flickr | Charlie O'Donnell

# EQUITABLE RECREATION SPACE

---

## *Recommendation 2.1:*

Provide new neighborhood or special-use park space in underserved Downtown neighborhoods to ensure that all Downtown residents are within a **five minute walk** of a **neighborhood** or **special-use park**.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 2.1.1 Review and revise Denver Parks and Recreation park typologies and definitions to include unique urban categories that reflect the size constraints, higher levels of use, programmatic uses, increased maintenance and acquisition and operational costs typical of Downtown parks and public spaces.
- 2.1.2 Create new neighborhood or special use parks in the Golden Triangle, Arapahoe Square and Ballpark neighborhoods to ensure that all Downtown residents are within a 5-minute walk or quarter-mile walk radius of a neighborhood or special-use park.
- 2.1.3 Provide a mix of amenities and infrastructure in all Downtown parks to support daily and year-round use for the greatest possible cross-section of users, including playgrounds, game tables, fountains, dog runs, planting areas, hardscaped plazas, lawn areas, etc.

## DESIGN TOOL: GAP ANALYSIS MAPPING

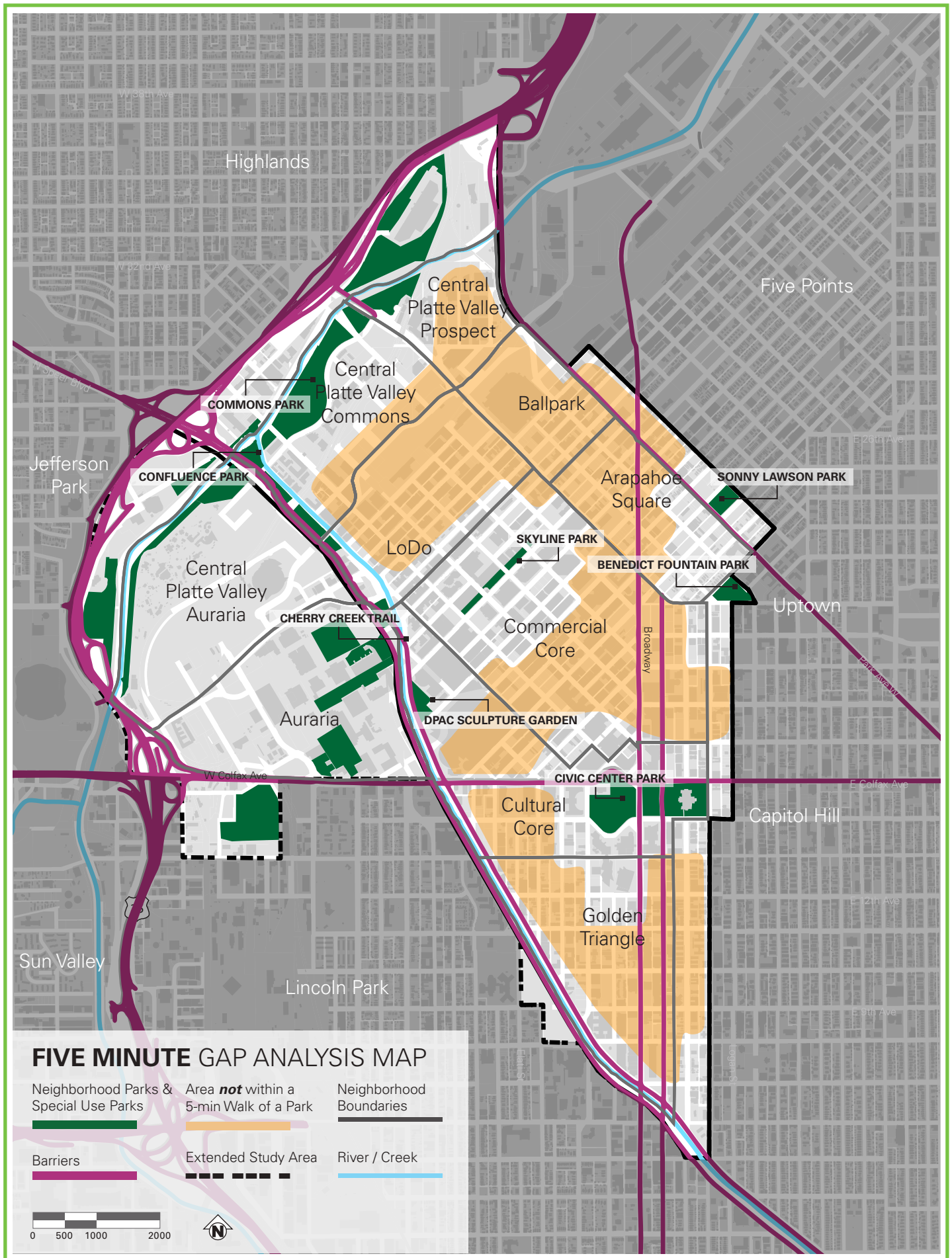
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Gap analysis mapping uses geospatial information to determine which areas Downtown are **underserved recreationally**.

The design team used GIS (geographic information system, insert map at right shows raw data) to synthesize a number of factors that impact access, such as sidewalks, major traffic barriers, water bodies and access points. On the map to the right, the orange represents areas currently **not** within a five minute walk of a neighborhood park. Gap analysis maps allow the City to identify service gaps and plan out capital expenditures / property acquisitions for new parks aimed at leveling access to public space across Downtown.







**FIGURE 2.1**

# EQUITABLE RECREATION SPACE CONT.

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## *Recommendation 2.2:*

Create a network of various sized parks, public spaces and venues to ensure that all Downtown residents, employees and visitors have access to **quality outdoor space** within a **three minute walk**.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 2.2.1 Work with public officials and private property owners to develop guidelines to improve the quality and public accessibility of open spaces in private developments, such as private plazas, activated alleys and other open spaces. Include mechanisms to reduce liability for property owners.
- 2.2.2 Create new publicly-owned or publicly-accessible public space in underserved areas, including Ballpark, CPV Prospect, Golden Triangle, Commercial Core, Cultural Core and Arapahoe Square, to ensure that all Downtown residents, employees and visitors are within a three minute walk (or 800-foot walk) of quality open space.
- 2.2.3 Work with community organizations and resident neighborhood organizations to build the community identity and brand of parks by neighborhood and including site elements unique to each location.



Photo: Flickr | Slaaven

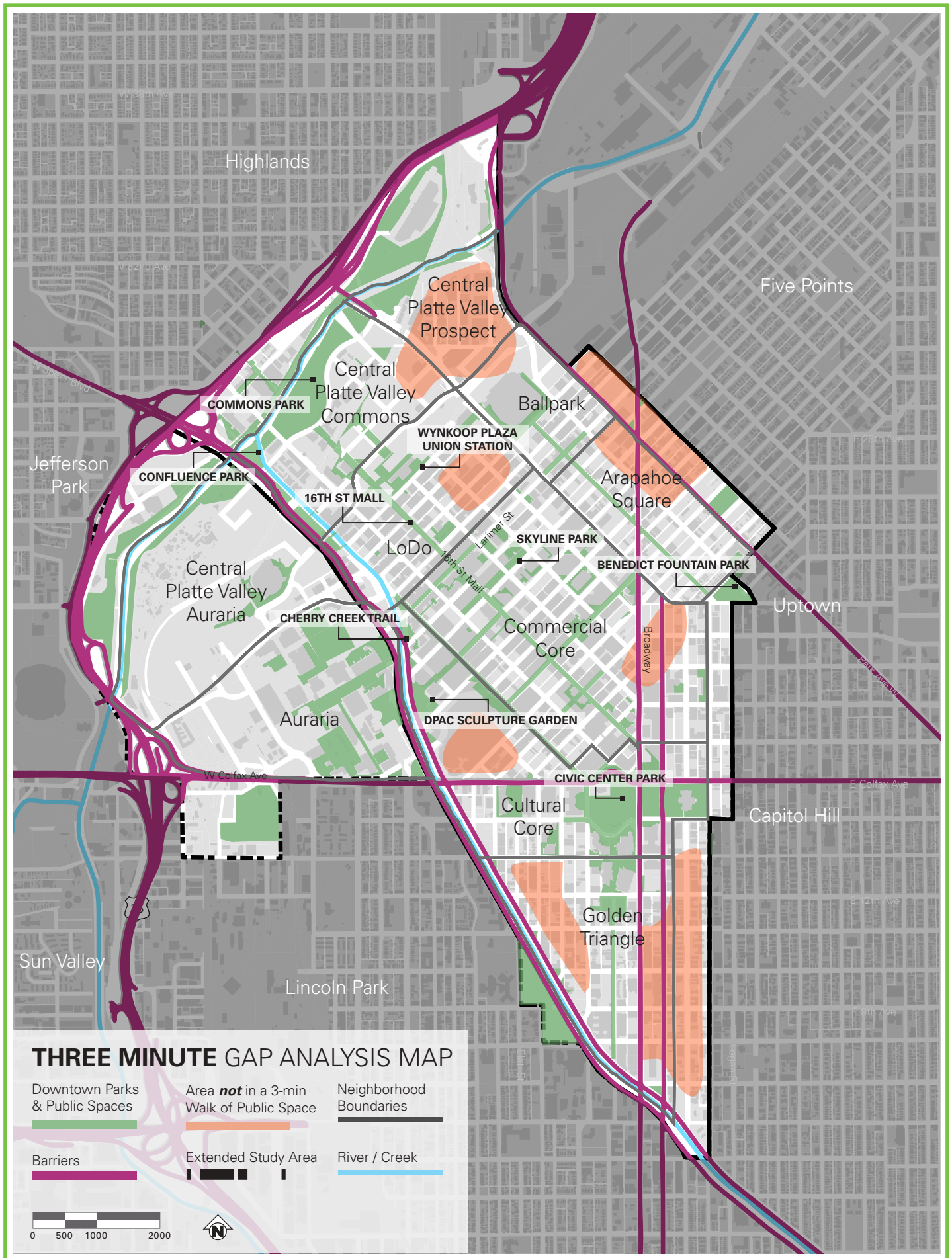
## CASE STUDY: EQUITABLE PARKS PLANNING

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Vancouver committed to **providing green space** within a five minute walk of 100% of residents by 2020.

- As part of the Greenest City 2020 Vision plan, the City of Vancouver outlined sustainability goals for access to nature, trees planted, natural space acquired and tree canopy. All goals are monitored and progress is posted publicly on the City's website.
- Thus far, 97.7% of Vancouverites live within five minutes of green space. By comparison, 86% of Denver residents live within a 10 minute walk of green space, according to 2016 ParkScore rating by the Trust for Public Land.





**FIGURE 2.2**

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

---

## Recommendation 2.3:

Create a **network of sports facilities** to serve Downtown recreational leagues and residents.

## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 2.3.1 Partner with private land owners, nonprofit groups and others to identify a network of existing sports and athletics facilities in Downtown Denver and to provide public access, while addressing concerns relative to site access and liability.
- 2.3.2 Provide infrastructure to support group exercise, games (e.g., chess, Ping-Pong, foosball), court sports (e.g., basketball, futsal, pickle ball), winter activities (e.g., ice skating, hockey, curling), and other active uses in new and existing Downtown Denver parks and public spaces.
- 2.3.3 Convert selected natural grass athletic fields to synthetic turf and install synthetic fields in all new facilities to support year-round use.
- 2.3.4 Implement a signage and outreach program to add mile markers, stair counts and other fitness metrics to select downtown parks, public spaces and bike / pedestrian facilities.

Left to Right:  
Denver Volleyball League  
Denver Kickball League  
DPR





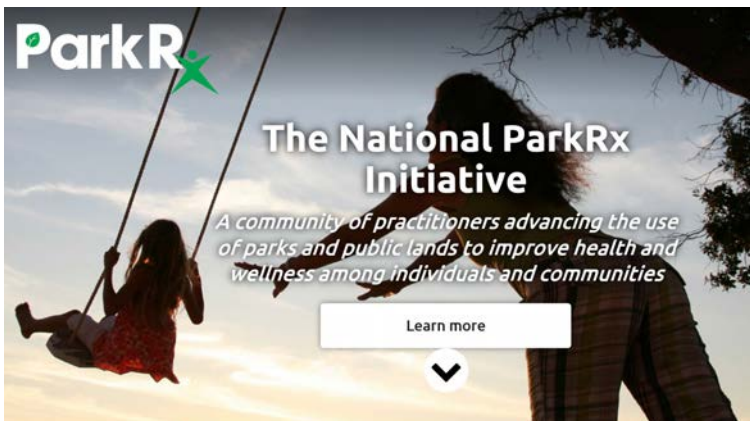
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*Recommendation 2.4:*

Provide a range of **year-round** and **multi-generational programs** and activities that meet the needs of the Downtown population.

*Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 2.4.1 Implement a public-outreach program to encourage the use of Downtown parks and public spaces for active recreation and healthy living. Report outcomes to the National ParkRx Initiative to hold Denver Parks and Recreation to a national standard for health outcomes through park use.
- 2.4.2 Create urban sports leagues managed by Parks and Recreation that are specifically for Downtown residents, office workers and students. Leagues will be tied to zip codes to ensure that the City meets the recreational needs of Downtown residents.
- 2.4.3 Expand POFA (private outdoor fee-based activities) program to activate downtown parks with classes and activities from the private sector.



**Outside** Gear Travel Fitness Adventure Culture Video Magazine

## How Cities Are Making Their Residents More Active

Planners of cities both large and small are working overtime to build the parks, trails, and bike paths to help residents be more active than ever

By: Andrew Tillin Oct 26, 2016



## CASE STUDY: NATIONAL PARKRX INITIATIVE

ParkRx is a partnership to **improve health outcomes** through active park use.

- ParkRx (Park Prescriptions) provides resources to healthcare providers to inspire patients to improve their health through use of free or low-cost open space resources.
- ParkRx is co-led by the National Recreation and Park Association, the Institute of Golden Gate, and the National Park Service.



## ASPIRATION

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To enhance the day-to-day experience of life Downtown by allowing easy and intuitive movement to and through the city and by offering opportunities to explore every corner.





# A CONNECTED DOWNTOWN

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ACCESSIBLE | MULTIMODAL | COHESIVE  
| KINETIC | ENGAGING | INNOVATIVE

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- NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS
- A WALKABLE, BIKEABLE CITY
- TECHNOLOGICAL DOWNTOWN



In Copenhagen, Denmark, 80% of residents cycle throughout the winter.

Downtown Denver's streets are largely oriented to cars. A more equitable and imaginative allocation of rights-of-way, as well as better connections between trails, will foster a more **people-friendly Downtown.**

Targeted adaptations of rights-of-way, enhanced trail connections, and safer intersections are needed to allow pedestrians and cyclists to safely traverse and experience the city. Ultimately, these connections are not just infrastructure improvements but a way for people to better connect to the city and share it with others. Downtown bicycle and pedestrian networks should be improved and expanded, with attention given to providing safe connections to and through Downtown from adjacent neighborhoods and the regional trail systems.

Nearly all Downtown public spaces are within a quarter-mile walking distance to a public bus or light rail stop (a quarter-mile represents the distance most people can comfortably walk within five minutes). Key amenities such as Coors Field, City of Cuernavaca Park, Civic Center Park and the State Capitol Grounds

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In a 2015 commuting survey, **6.5%** of commuters **bike to work** in Downtown Denver. Another 5.6% walk, 38.5% drive alone, and 40.6% use transit. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Downtown Denver Partnership. [Downtown Denver Commuter Survey 2015.](#)



are located more than a quarter-mile away from any light rail stop. Many people, however, interpret a quarter-mile walk as inconvenient or prohibitive in an urban setting, and for this group a more modest 80 percent of Denver’s Downtown outdoor spaces are accessible within a 500-foot walking distance. In addition to distance, some outdoors spaces, like Civic Center, are surrounded by high-volume roadways and could benefit from connectivity enhancements for cyclists and pedestrians.

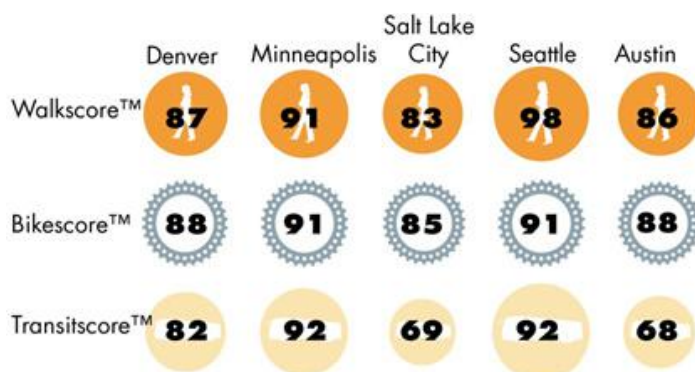
## The **ease of circulation** in Downtown Denver is an important factor in the success and use of the overall parks and public spaces network.

Where connections are easy, efficient and multimodal, people are more apt to feel comfortable, safe and connected to the outdoor environment. The website, [walkscore.com](http://walkscore.com), compiles Walkscores™, Bike Scores™ and Transit Scores™ for major American cities. These scores reflect the relative quality and proximity of walking, cycling or taking public transit within the downtown core of each city, with a top score of 100. These scores only represent the Downtown areas, not the cities at large.

When compared to peer cities from around the country, Denver is near average in providing a multimodal downtown, with scores on par or superior to cities such as Austin and Salt Lake City. Seattle and Minneapolis, however, receive notably better walk and transit scores by comparison, in part from significant public investment into bike and pedestrian infrastructure and well-planned open space connections. As we aspire to a Downtown that is one of the most livable cities in the world, we must strive to improve the connectivity of our Downtown. Seattle provides important clues to achieving that goal, as their downtown receives a near perfect Walkscore™. The City has made deliberate efforts to bridge barriers, such as highways, with trail connections and innovative land bridges. Seattle is also currently in the process of burying the Alaskan Way Viaduct to restore connectivity between the waterfront and Downtown.



Copenhagen, Netherlands  
 Bike commuters in winter  
 Public bike parking  
 Amagertorv neighborhood  
 Flickr | Mikae Colville-Andersen  
 DW | Jamie Fogle  
 DW | Jamie Fogle



### MOBILITY SCORES

# NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

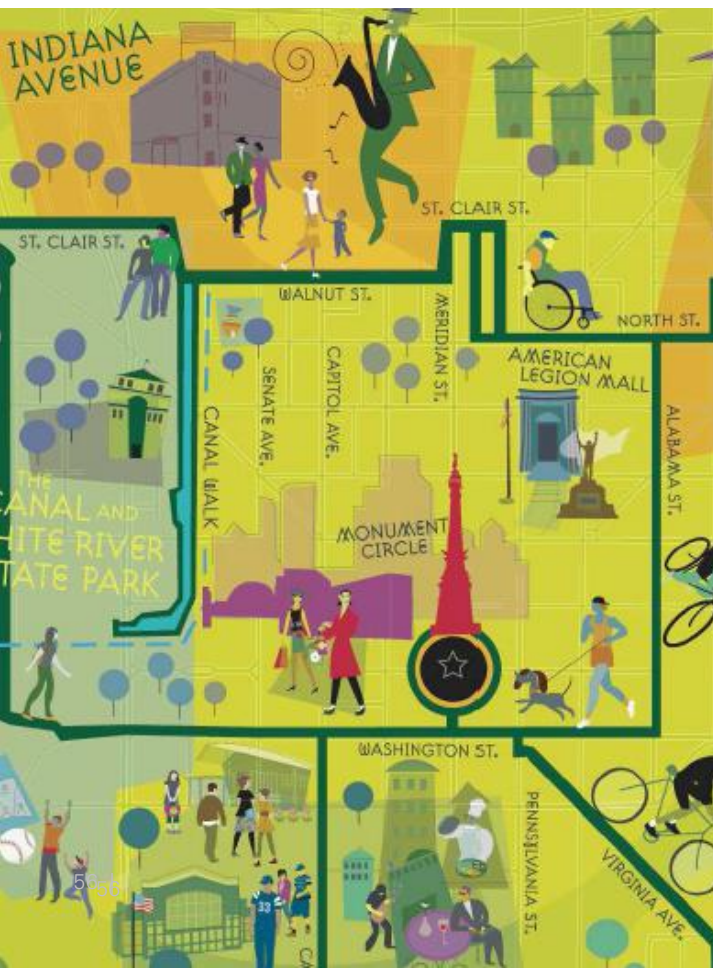
## Recommendation 3.1:

Coordinate with Denver Moves plans to **improve pedestrian, transit and bicycle connections**

to and through Downtown Denver from surrounding neighborhoods, transit stations and regional trails.

## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 3.1.1 Create and implement enhanced design, safety and identification standards for major pedestrian and bicycle corridors to and through Downtown Denver, consistent with the NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials) Urban Bikeway Design Guide and Urban Street Design Guide and Denver's Livable Streets Initiative.
- 3.1.2 Enhance key pedestrian intersections, transit station areas and transitions from parks to priority pedestrian corridors, as indicated in Fig. 3.1., through the installation of traffic islands, bulb-outs, seasonal planting, enhanced lighting and clear wayfinding.



## CASE STUDY: BIKEWAY BRANDING

The **Indianapolis Cultural Trail** is heavily branded to incorporate the city's cultural history into a citywide bike and pedestrian loop.

- Custom lighting fixtures and paving patterns establish continuity across the Downtown.
- Branding of cultural trail used to acknowledge the contributions of key capital donors.
- Local artist used for the district map to create a culturally rich identity for the trail.



# A BIKEABLE, WALKABLE CITY

## Recommendation 3.2:

Create **distinct gateways** and **wayfinding** to encourage navigation of Downtown Denver through parks and public spaces.

## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 3.2.1 Create a consistent brand identity for the Outdoor Downtown and implement a wayfinding system that visually connects Downtown Denver's parks and public spaces, including site furniture, lighting and signage. Develop coordinated branding for each Downtown park to build local identity.
- 3.2.2 Install iconic lighting and/or public art installations to activate key portions of the Cherry Creek Trail and Platte River Trail in Lower Downtown, Central Platte Valley Commons and the Cultural Core.
- 3.2.3 Provide directional signage and wayfinding at "decision points," such as transit stations, entries to regional trails, special-use parks and local landmarks.



### BIKE & PEDESTRIAN MAP

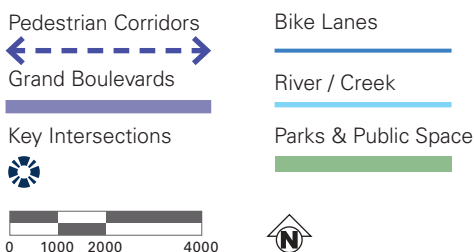
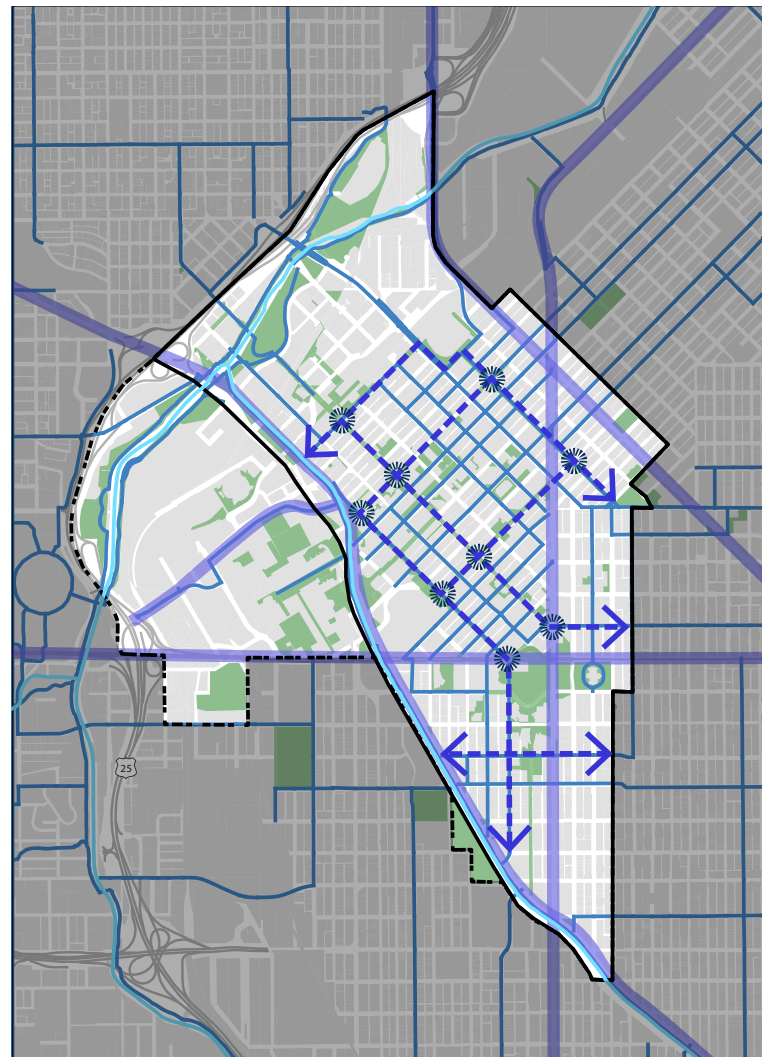


FIGURE 3.1







In Vancouver, **trips by bike grew 40%** from 2008 to 2011, sparked in part by city infrastructure improvements.

Data Source & Photo: City of Vancouver

## A WALKABLE, BIKEABLE CITY CONT.

### *Recommendation 3.3:*

Coordinate with Denver Moves plans to **improve facilities** within the Downtown area and provide amenities along bike and pedestrian routes.

### *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 3.3.1 Enhance the transitions from regional trail systems to on-street facilities at Speer Boulevard and Lawrence Street, Speer Boulevard and Arapahoe Street and 15th Street and the South Platte River trail by implementing clear wayfinding, enhanced lighting and safe separation of modes.
- 3.3.2 Create bike commuter stations within a three-minute walk of Civic Center Station, Convention Center Station, and Union Station to include bike storage, shower rooms and maintenance kiosks.

# TECHNOLOGICAL DOWNTOWN

## Recommendation 3.4:

Expand the capacity of outdoor parks and public spaces to **accommodate technology** and foster places where people can work and conduct more of their lives outdoors.

## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 3.4.1 Partner with local or national technology companies to fund a free Downtown Denver Wi-Fi demonstration area, as done in San Francisco and New York City.
- 3.4.2 Implement a pilot project of flexible outdoor work stations in the Commercial Core with plug-in stations, work tables, Wi-Fi and shade structures. If successful, expand program to other downtown locations.
- 3.4.3 Use the best technology available to assist in navigation, to advertise programs and activities, to address service requests, to pull event permits and to enhance awareness of the Outdoor Downtown. Technologies may include applications, websites, navigation systems and kiosks.
- 3.4.4 Work with technology partners to pioneer innovative uses of the public realm, such as smart benches, interactive wayfinding and responsive public art.



Market Street

## CASE STUDY: PUBLIC WIFI

Cities across the country have leveraged public-private partnerships to offer free **Wi-Fi in public spaces.**

- Since 2014, the City of San Francisco has partnered with Google to offer free Wi-Fi in over 40 parks and public spaces across downtown and by partnering with Ruckus Wireless and Layer42 Networks for three miles of Market Street.
- In New York, Bryant Park has the longest standing free public Wi-Fi program, beginning in 2002. The Bryant Park Corporation partnered with Sky-Packets to offer the free service.

Photo: Flickr | Davide D'Amico



## ASPIRATION

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The public realm will be an active participant in the cultural life of the city by acting as a stage for expression and by exhibiting the full range of Colorado culture in a condensed urban form.





# A CULTURAL DOWNTOWN

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VIBRANT | ARTFUL | STORIED |  
INNOVATIVE | LAYERED | AUTHENTIC

---

- A CULTURALLY VIBRANT DOWNTOWN
- EXPLORE HISTORY



Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle functions as a public art gallery and a much needed pedestrian connection to the waterfront.

Denver's Downtown parks and public spaces host a number of iconic cultural events but **lack the amenities** to encourage creative uses on a **daily basis**.

Access to cultural performances, activities and celebrations is important to the Downtown Denver community. Downtown Denver is home to a concentration of historic, civic, and cultural assets that contribute to the vibrancy of the urban core. Facilities including the Denver Performing Arts Complex, the Denver Art Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art provide nationally-recognized performances and exhibits. The Colorado State Capitol, City and County Building and Denver Justice Center represent our civic pride and governance. In addition to these assets, outdoor spaces provide a recognizable link to Denver's history, including Civic Center Park, Speer Boulevard and the 16th Street Mall.

Denver's arts, culture and entertainment scenes are increasingly putting the city on the national map. However, many of the city's premier cultural events occur outside of Downtown. New Belgium Brewing's iconic bicycle celebration, Tour de Fat, takes place 3 miles east of Downtown in City Park. The Underground Music Showcase, Denver's version of South by Southwest, takes place 1.5 miles south of Downtown on South Broadway.

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In a 2015 survey by the National Endowment for the Arts, **Denver ranked #1** of American cities in number of **trips to theaters, concert halls, and museums made by residents.** <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wenzel, John, "Colorado takes top spots in new NEA arts-engagement survey." [Denver Post](#). 08/31/2016.

Meanwhile, events that do take place Downtown are often siloed indoors— such as the Great American Beer Festival— or could expand their use of the public realm, as seen during the Biennial of the Americas. While Downtown does not want to compete with or usurp these specific events, it is vital that Downtown parks and public spaces are active in cultivating and celebrating Denver’s culture.

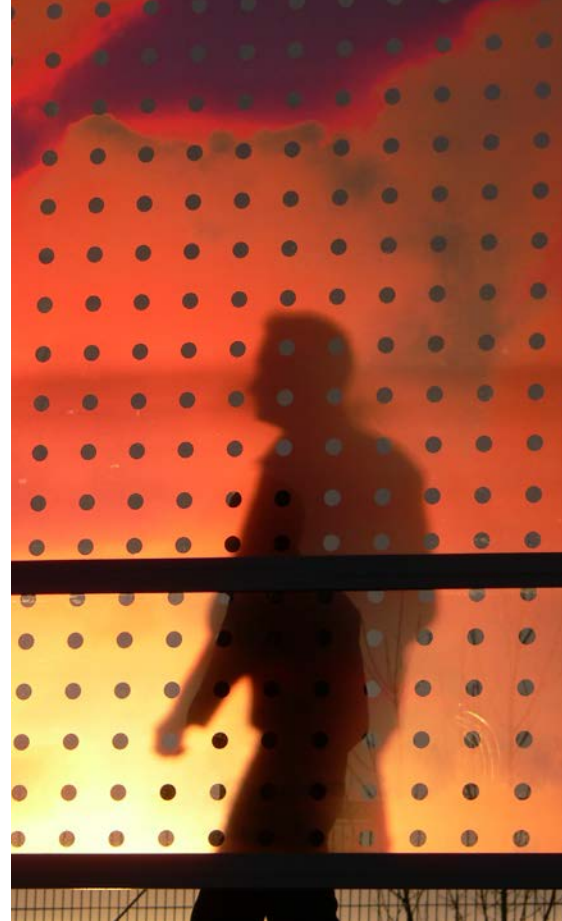
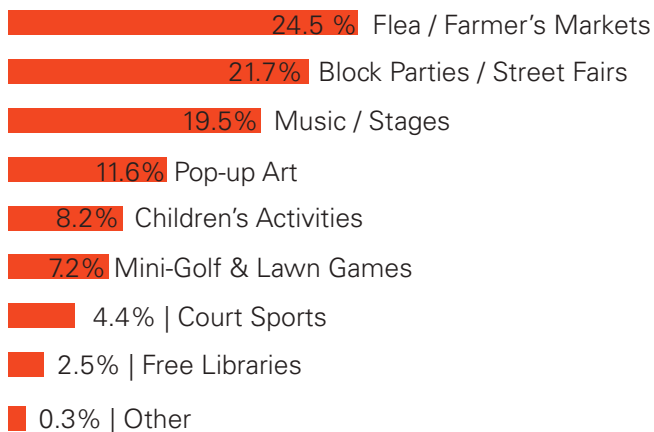
This plan yearns to open the use of **public spaces as cultural venues** with the goal of expanding Denver’s vibrant culture into streets, parks and public spaces.

Although big iconic events create vibrancy in bursts, it is unexpected everyday activities, performances and events that will imbue Downtown’s parks and open spaces with cultural inspiration on a daily basis. When attendees were surveyed at the second public meeting, cultural events topped the list of drop-in activities people would like to see, including: 24.5% for flea and farmers markets, 21.7% for block parties and street fairs and 19.5% for music and stage performances.

Parks and public spaces offer an opportunity to embed performance, art and culture into the public realm to encourage daily interaction and use. In order to do so, this plan recommends the creation of new performance spaces in outdoor spaces and upgrading the basic infrastructure in parks so that performance spaces are equipped for events large or small.

### DROP-IN ACTIVITIES

*What types of **drop-in activities** would you like to see in the Outdoor Downtown?*



Clockwise:  
 Olympic Sculpture Park  
 Perre’s Ventaglio III by Beverly Pepper  
 Seattle Cloud Cover by Teresita Fernandez  
 Wake by Richard Serra  
 Flickr | Daniel Stockman  
 Flickr | Larryn Celia  
 Flickr | B Mully



# A CULTURALLY VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

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## *Recommendation 4.1:*

Provide a range of **performance** and **creative spaces** in parks within each Downtown neighborhood that support individual expression, impromptu performances and programmed use on a daily basis.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 4.1.1 Provide infrastructure to support stage performance, amplification, performance art, and other cultural activities in special uses parks.
- 4.1.2 Adopt open hours to encourage informal and self-organizing groups to use stages and performance areas during non-peak times.
- 4.1.3 Waive rental fees and offer free promotion for cultural partners, such as Denver Arts & Venues, to use outdoor spaces for performances.



Photo: Flickr | MF Fitzgerald

## **CASE STUDY: MURAL PROGRAMS**

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The **Wynwood Walls** in Miami are one of the largest open air street art galleries.

- Mural program unites the 70 art galleries, stores and bars that make up the Wynwood Arts District.
- Overseen by the Wynwood Arts District Association since 2007; murals bring life to industrial district.
- District benefits from the influx of international artists each year from Art Basel.

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*Recommendation 4.2:*

Catalyze and support the **integration of art** and culture into the Outdoor Downtown.

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“A vibrant arts and cultural sector is essential to creating and maintaining a healthy, innovative urban community.”

Jayne Buck, VISIT Denver



*Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 4.2.1 Expand the reach and visibility of the mural program facilitated by Denver Arts & Venues' Urban Arts Fund, a graffiti prevention and youth development program which facilitates the creation of new murals in perpetually vandalized areas, with particular focus on walls within a quarter mile of entrances to the Cherry Creek and South Platte Trails and in Downtown alleys.
- 4.2.2 Crowdfund ideas for the integration of art into parks and public spaces with a biannual 'Art in the Outdoors' competition and work with a corporate sponsor to install a winning concept, in tandem with the Biennial of the Americas.
- 4.2.3 Designate space on the 16th Street Mall, along Common Parks Promenade and in Civic Center Park for rotating art installations, supported by Arts & Venues, the IMAGINE 2020 Cultural Plan and nonprofit art organizations.
- 4.2.4 Compile programming from Downtown Denver Partnership, Civic Center Conservancy, Downtown Denver BID, Denver Parks and Recreation, Visit Denver, Denver Arts & Venues, Denver Theater District, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Scientific and Cultural Facilities District and the private sector to provide a year-round calendar of urban events and activities, available online and through partner organizations.
- 4.2.5 Determine programming service gaps by analyzing factors of inclusivity, such as proximity to transit, cost of events, audience and topic diversity, and accessibility for differently abled populations. Use staff position described in Recommendation 1.4.7 to implement this program.



The Chicago parks district hosts **Lollapalooza** every year in order to fund free summer camps for all kids.

Photo: Flickr | Daniel X. O'Neil

## A CULTURALLY VIBRANT DOWNTOWN CONT.

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### *Recommendation 4.3:*

Create programs, amenities and activities in Downtown parks and public spaces that promote experiences **unique to Denver.**

### *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 4.3.1 Identify permissible satellite locations for iconic Denver events, such as the Great American Beer Festival, the Biennial of the Americas, and the Denver Auto Show, to extend into public spaces, with the condition that all funds secured through these programs fund an endowment for Downtown parks and public space maintenance.
- 4.3.2 Working with community partners, host an annual Parks-sponsored Outdoor Downtown day to celebrate Downtown and creative use of the public realm.
- 4.3.3 Allow flexible use of parks and public spaces in Downtown neighborhoods as venues where communities can come together for neighborhood-specific service projects and block parties. Work with community coordinating districts and resident neighborhood organizations to encourage these uses.
- 4.3.4 Promote the policies, projects and programs of the plan by using the Outdoor Downtown brand and logo.
- 4.3.5 Develop a coordinated family of brands for Downtown parks and public spaces that celebrate their urban identity and the unique characteristics of their neighborhood.



# EXPLORE HISTORY

## Recommendation 4.4:

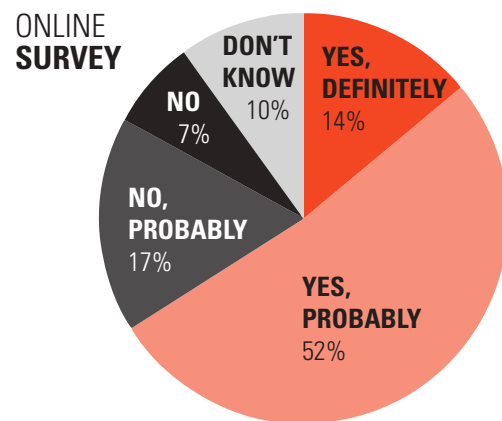
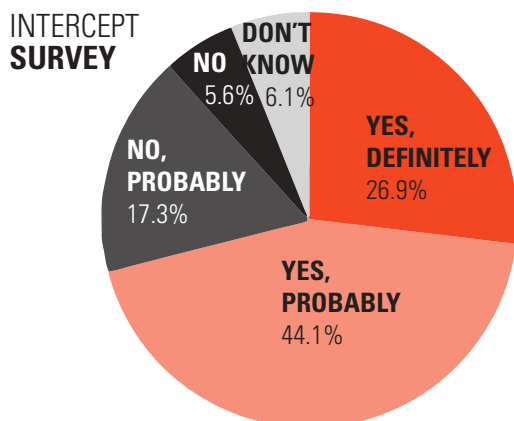
**Enliven** Downtown **historic public spaces** and parks by honoring their legacy, introducing innovative programming and better utilizing these spaces.

## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 4.4.1 Partner with History Colorado and Colorado Preservation, Inc. to inventory and assess the historic landmarks of Downtown Denver parks and public spaces to recognize and maintain historic structures and cultural landscapes, such as artifacts of the City Beautiful movement.
- 4.4.2 Bolster the parkway character and quality of Speer Boulevard between Colfax Avenue and Wewatta Street, including enhanced seasonal planting, canopy cover, lighting and identity markers at key access points to Downtown at Stout Street, Arapahoe Street, Market Street and Wewatta Street.
- 4.4.3 Work with Historic Denver to develop educative signage and self-guided tours that identify historically-contributing or noteworthy attributes of Downtown Denver parks, adjacent buildings, streets and landscapes in designated historic districts.
- 4.4.4 Fund and implement the 2005 Civic Center Park Master Plan.

## PAID EVENTS

*Would you be willing to pay for admission to unique performances, concerts or sports events?*





## ASPIRATION

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To increase our emotional connection to Downtown Denver and to each other by fostering a public realm that inspires us to act as stewards of the land, to be proud of our city, and to live more of life outside.



# A SUSTAINABLE DOWNTOWN

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BALANCED | THRIVING | RESILIENT |  
RESPONSIBLE | CIVIC | VISIONARY

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- A GREENER DOWNTOWN
- ECONOMIC VITALITY
- STEWARDSHIP





The **Lurie Garden** covers 5 acres in the heart of Chicago and is home to **222 species** of plants.

While Denver has preserved parkland along Downtown's two main waterways, the vast majority of Downtown is **covered in pavement**, with only 4% tree cover Downtown.

Cities face unique challenges when it comes to sustainability, from urban heat island effect to inadequate open space networks. For Downtown Denver to provide an adequate open space system, the City must enact several sustainability initiatives in tandem. The successful pursuit of these initiatives, including environmental sustainability, economic vitality and community stewardship, supports the community's desire to ensure that Downtown Denver remains a healthy place for decades to come. This master plan utilizes the triple bottom line definition of sustainability as providing mutual benefit to people, profit and planet.

The urban tree canopy is important to the comfort of Downtown residents, employees and visitors, provides habitat for urban wildlife, and mitigates the urban heat island effect caused by dense development. Beyond canopy cover, environmental

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In a comparative study of 20 American cities, **Denver ranked the lowest** in terms of urban tree canopy coverage.<sup>1</sup>

1. Nowak, David & Eric J Greenfield. "Tree and Impervious Cover Change in US Cities." 2012: [Urban Forestry & Urban Greening](#) 11: 21-30.



sustainability extends to the health of our downtown waterways, stormwater cycling, and efforts to mitigate air pollution. With the impacts of a changing climate more unpredictable and extreme, creating a Downtown that is resilient to flood and drought will increase the overall long-term sustainability of downtown.

## Investing in Downtown parks and public spaces is **a win-win** for our business community, residents and the city itself.

Parks projects in cities around the country have shown the transformative and revitalizing effect that great parks, squares, plazas and trails can have on a downtown. From creating entirely new urban neighborhoods centered on parks, to constructing a city's signature gathering place, parks are key in stimulating economic growth and development.

A 2011 study by the New York City Economic Development Corporation on the economic impacts of parks reported that properties within a five-minute walk of new parks saw significant growth in property values and new development. Central Park West saw a 73% increase in property value over eight years, while areas near the Highline / Battery Park area saw a 103% increase and those near Prospect Park area saw an astronomical 410% increase.

While the economic benefit of parks is well understood, it is the hedonic value of parks— how they make us feel and better connect us to each other— which draws many of us to spend weekends playing volleyball in Washington Park or meeting with friends in Cheesman Park. Our Downtown parks experience neither the adoration nor the personal investment that these non-Downtown counterparts receive. Stewardship, as part of the sustainable vision for the Downtown, asks each of us to reinvest in these public spaces by spending time there, by supporting businesses around them, and engaging in environmental stewardship.



Lurie Garden | Chicago, IL  
Garden in fall  
Salvia plantings  
Rabbit in the garden  
Flickr | Kathy Carey  
Flickr | Brad Hoc  
Flickr | Brad Hoc

# A GREENER DOWNTOWN

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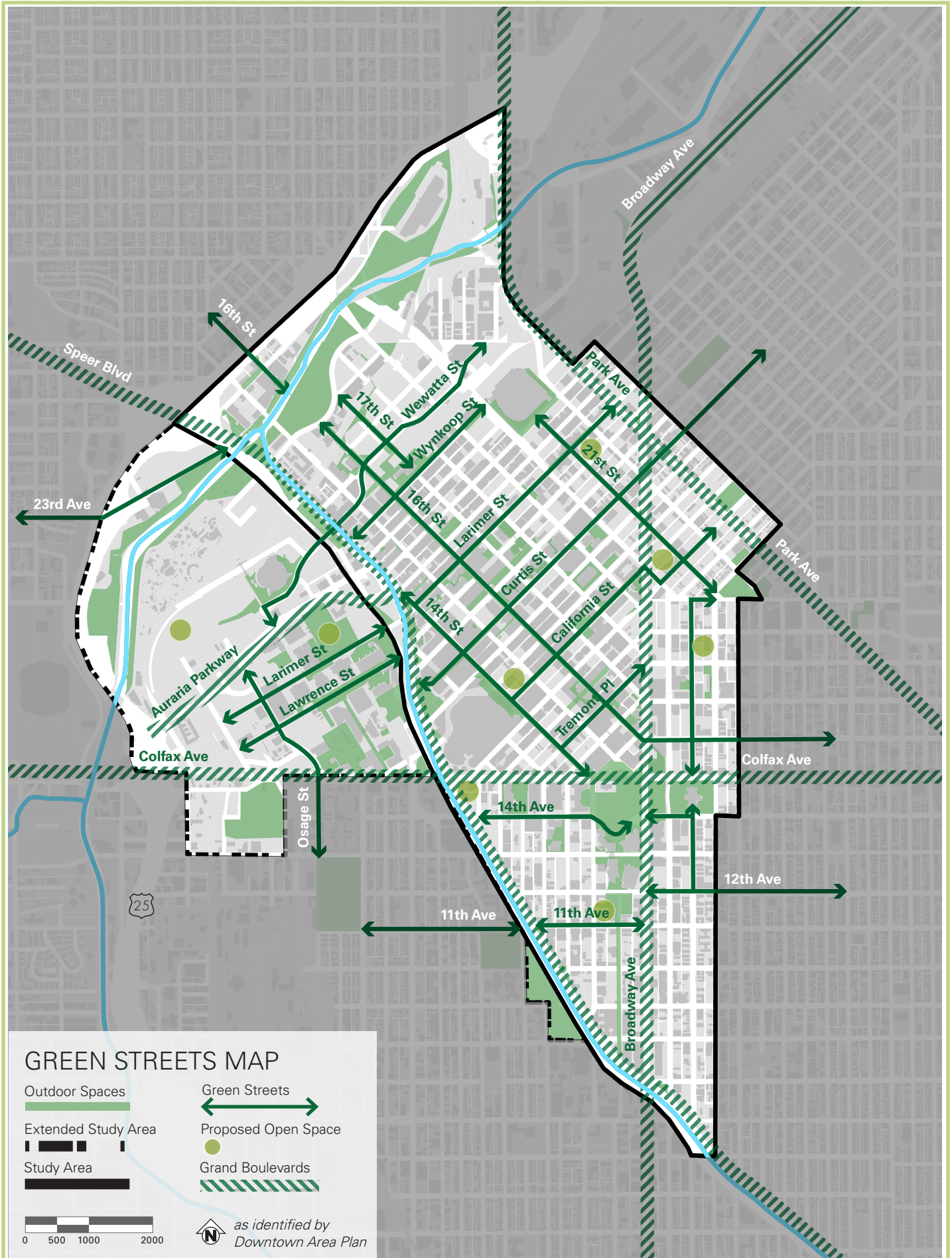
*Recommendation 5.1:*  
Expand the  
Downtown Denver  
**tree canopy**  
by planting and  
maintaining 1,000  
trees over the next  
ten years.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 5.1.1 Update the Downtown Denver tree inventory and health audit every two years.
- 5.1.2 Pursue funding for a designated Downtown maintenance crew to assume the care of street trees within the Downtown core, modelled after the Downtown BID's Tree Health Program.
- 5.1.3 Complete a shade and canopy coverage master plan for the Downtown area to develop goals and expectations for diversity, tree spacing, tree pit size and design. Implement a pilot project between the Department of Public Works and the Forestry Office to test and refine standards.
- 5.1.4 Fund and implement a tree planting regimen to retrofit 50 conventional tree pits each year for 10 years to allow for adequate uncompacted soil to support healthy trees and to achieve tree canopy coverage goals.
- 5.1.5 Revise the 1993 Streetscape Design Manual to include specific provisions for Downtown that establish and clearly communicate standards, regulatory requirements and enforcement for street tree spacing, planting, maintenance and replacement in the public right-of-way.







**FIGURE 5.1**

# A GREENER DOWNTOWN CONT.

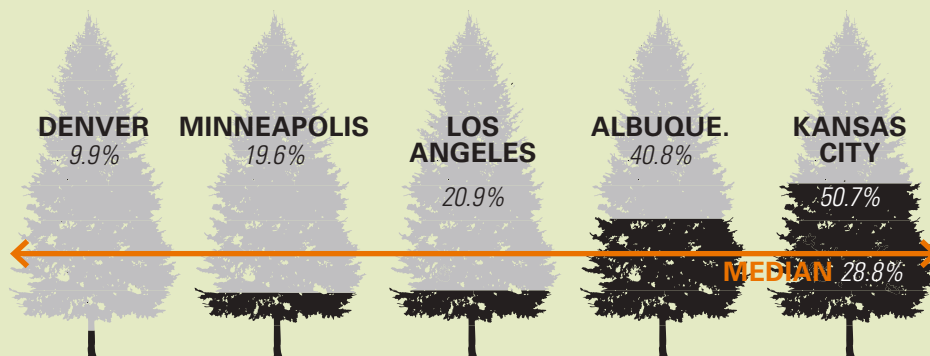
## Recommendation 5.2:

Create a regulatory framework for priority **green streets** and guidelines to improve the quality of the Downtown streetscape network, improve air and water quality, and increase the amount of impervious surfaces.

## Policies, Projects & Programs

- 5.2.1 Support the department of Public Works to establish regulations and policies for implementation of green streets as defined by the water quality implementation strategy.
- 5.2.2 Utilize best practices for stormwater management and green infrastructure, as defined by the standards set in Denver's Ultra-Urban Green Infrastructure Guidelines, in the future design and renovation of designated Downtown parks and public spaces.
- 5.2.3 Inventory and implement a Downtown-wide alley improvement program, with incentives for adjacent private property owners that activate and enhance the environmental and visual quality of alleys and other publicly-accessible service areas.
- 5.2.4 Work with City departments to establish regulations to include performance standards for the expansion of impervious surfaces in public rights-of-way with a goal of a 10% increase Downtown.
- 5.2.5 Implement pilot green infrastructure projects in public rights-of-way, including along Speer Boulevard, Colfax Avenue, Park Avenue, and Broadway Boulevard.

## CASE STUDY: URBAN FORESTS



When measured against 20 other American cities, Denver ranked the lowest for **urban tree canopy**.

When looking specifically at Downtown, the Forestry Office estimates that overall canopy coverage is substantially less than that of the City and County at large— at 4%— and well below the Department's stated goal of 10% coverage in Downtown.





The **Charles River Reservation** offers **17.1 miles** of running trails & boat access in central Boston.

Photo: Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism

### *Recommendation 5.3:*

Support the **ecological health** of Downtown through stewardship of its waterways, tactics to increase resiliency and targeted efforts to increase biodiversity.

### *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 5.3.1 Work with the Department of Environmental Health and local partners Trout Unlimited and the Greenway Foundation to monitor the health of Downtown's urban waterways and assist the Department of Environmental Health in meeting their goal of having swimmable and fishable waters in all Denver lakes and streams by 2020.
- 5.3.2 Work with the Forestry Office to review and approve a list of urban-adapted tree, shrub and plant species to expand the approved street tree list for Denver's public rights-of-way for urban conditions.
- 5.3.3 Work with park rangers and Denver Public Schools to develop outdoor classroom programs to educate youth on the natural environment and to encourage nature engagement.
- 5.3.4 Include native species in green infrastructure and park planting beds to increase habitat and forage for urban wildlife, such as birds and pollinators.



# A GREENER DOWNTOWN CONT.

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## *Recommendation 5.4:*

Enhance **seasonality** and celebrate Denver's climate through planting displays, flexible amenities and year-round programming.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 5.4.1 Bolster seasonal and perennial plantings to maximize bloom time in neighborhood and special-use parks and to enhance key pedestrian corridors, as indicated on the Green Streets Map, by creating a hierarchy of planting treatments in existing planting beds and new planting areas at park entry points and gateways.
- 5.4.2 Provide designated space for seasonal lawn sports (e.g., bocce, croquet, badminton) in Civic Center, Skyline Park and Commons Park and explore a third-party vendor to rent equipment by 2020.
- 5.4.3 Increase the amount of movable furniture in Downtown parks and public spaces to allow users to move into and out of sunny or shaded areas.
- 5.4.4 In tandem with everyday activation, evaluate, refine and measure pilot projects, such as sun decks, beach volleyball, ice skating, beer gardens or temporary beaches, which expand on Denver's year-round, outdoor culture.
- 5.4.5 Partner with community organizations, local farmers and property owners to allow for short-term, long-term, seasonal and year-round opportunities for community gardens and urban agriculture on public-private land.



Ice skating & Christmas Market  
Bryant Park | NYC

Flickr | Angelo Amboldi



Lunch Hour,  
Bryant Park | NYC

Flickr | K Jarett

# ECONOMIC VITALITY

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## *Recommendation 5.5:*

Increase the **economic vitality** of Downtown parks and public spaces by diversifying funding, activating park edges, and partnering with the private sector.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 5.5.1 Incentivize private commercial property owners to reconsider ground-floor uses next to Downtown parks and public spaces to encourage active retail and/or restaurant uses in these spaces. Have Policy Task Force explore possible regulatory requirements for ground-floor uses next to parks.
- 5.5.2 Update policies to allow for corporate sponsorship of specific parks and public spaces, including the provision that funds secured through sponsorships are dedicated to endow the maintenance, activation and operation of Downtown Denver parks and public spaces.
- 5.5.3 Expand the list of revenue-generating activities permitted in parks and public spaces, including the provision that funds secured through these activities are dedicated to endow the maintenance, activation and operation of Downtown Denver parks and public spaces.
- 5.5.4 Update Downtown development regulations and guidelines to allow for publicly-accessible open space to contribute to building frontage requirements.
- 5.5.5 Identify priority districts and corridors in Downtown and develop tools and regulations to incentivize or require active ground-floor uses adjacent to the parks and public spaces.



## CASE STUDY: ACTIVE EDGES

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**Bryant Park** both extends into the city and provides a respite.

- Ground-floor retail on the streets adjacent to Bryant Park turn the area into a commercial node as well as a much loved public park
- Movable furniture throughout the park makes it a popular lunchtime destination with food vendors as well as provides support for restaurants nearby.

# STEWARDSHIP

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## *Recommendation 5.6:*

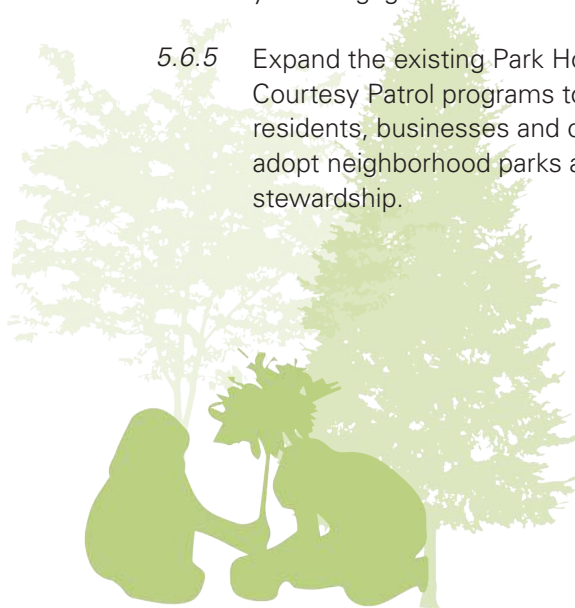
Increase citizen / corporate / nonprofit **stewardship** of Downtown parks and public spaces.

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Bay Area nonprofit, Friends of the Urban Forest, has planted more than 50,000 trees in San Francisco since 1981, totaling 47% of the city's street tree canopy.

## *Policies, Projects & Programs*

- 5.6.1 Create a funding and governance committee of city leadership and key stakeholders to explore and address questions of feasibility, funding, governance and phasing of implementation for the Outdoor Downtown plan.
- 5.6.2 Establish a Downtown-focused entity, either public or private, to complement and support existing conservancies and open space organizations and to provide additional resources for the stewardship of our parks and public spaces, including additional funding and maintenance, opportunities for corporate sponsorships, and volunteer stewardship of our open spaces.
- 5.6.3 Develop a campaign and toolkit to educate property owners about the economic benefits of parks and public space, including private realm tactics developed for Denver's Living Streets initiative, to encourage stewardship, beautification and active uses around parks and public spaces.
- 5.6.4 Create a "frontyard" campaign to engage citizens in the upkeep and stewardship of our Downtown parks and public spaces through outreach activities, public service events and youth engagement.
- 5.6.5 Expand the existing Park Host and Volunteer Courtesy Patrol programs to encourage residents, businesses and civic leaders to adopt neighborhood parks and promote stewardship.





# CASE STUDY: CONSERVANCY MODELS



## *Civic Center | Denver, CO*

- The Civic Center Conservancy was started in 2004 by private citizens who understood the ability of a revitalized Civic Center to enhance economic vitality, cultural vibrancy and quality-of-life.
- In addition to providing greater advocacy for and marketing of Civic Center, the Conservancy has been instrumental in changing the reputation of the park through engaging programs, such as Civic Center EATS food truck lunches and forthcoming Art in the Park installations.
- While the City of Denver provides maintenance and security for Civic Center Park, the Conservancy has no revenue streams from park operations or taxing districts, requiring it to privately fundraise for all operations, programs, future capital improvements.



## *Central Park | New York, NY*

- Central Park Conservancy combines fundraising with advocacy in order to both raise funds for the Park and to educate the public on its ecological and social value.
- The Conservancy also runs the Institute for Urban Parks, which acts as its educational arm. The Institute divides its educational efforts between the Center for Urban Park Discovery and the Center for Urban Park Management.



## *Discovery Green | Houston, TX*

- To fund unique programming and art installations, Discovery Green uses corporate sponsorship for physical infrastructure and for events.
- Discovery Green uses many funding sources, from food service to corporate sponsorship, in order to offer a high level of maintenance and service to users. These coordinated services allow the park to engage in high-intensity uses, from concerts to large-scale runs, without damaging the grounds.



## *The Highline | New York, NY*

- Friends of the Highline leverage their volunteer program to maintain their diverse and labor-intensive planting palette.
- Friends of the Highline engage volunteers to help keep the park's extensive planting areas in top shape; they also run a number of educational programs on the park's unique ecology and species.





# FOUR **ICONIC** PROJECTS

---

DEFINITIVE | BELOVED | EXPLORATORY  
SEMINAL | AUTHENTIC | MEMORABLE

---

- CENTRAL PLAZA
- SIGNATURE PLAYGROUND
- ARTS & CULTURE PARK
- DOWNTOWN LOOP



# #1

## THE PROJECT IS ICONIC.

An essential attribute of each capital project is that it positively contributes to Denver's reputation as a world-class city and expands the city's capacity to enjoy the public realm.

Photo: CC | Cindy Stutz



# #2

## THE PROJECT IS HIGHLY VISIBLE.

Looking to iconic projects in other cities, such as Central Park in New York and Millennium Park in Chicago, a central location and high visibility are desirable attributes for intense-use parks and public spaces.

Photo: Flickr | Angelo Amboldi



# #3

## THE PROJECT SERVES THE GREATEST NUMBER OF USERS.

A key goal of this plan is equitable use of the public realm for residents, visitors, workers, and students alike.

Photo: Clvic Center Conservancy | Evan Semon



# #4

## THE PROJECT IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE.

Close proximity to transit as well as easy pedestrian and bicycle access will increase usership of these iconic projects and promote public access.

Photo: Flickr | Moments for Zen

## SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

In addition to the previous recommendations geared primarily toward daily activation, maintenance, programming and operations, the Master Plan identifies **four capital projects that are intended to provide new or reimagined public spaces** that celebrate the unique character of Denver.

These proposed projects aspire to support the vision elements described in this plan— social, recreational, connected, cultural and sustainable— in unique ways, and promise to serve as the stage for vibrant, multi-generational activities throughout each day and across all seasons. At left, four key factors are cited to determine proper sites for the iconic projects. These factors revolve around questions of accessibility, usership, visibility, and that they are authentic to Denver and further promote the City as culturally and economically important.

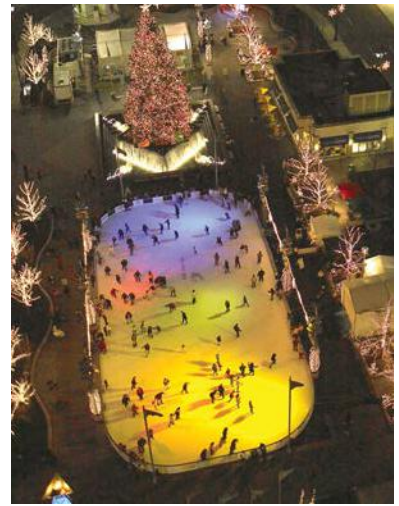
These transformative capital projects include:

- A **central gathering space** in the Commercial Core to support civic gatherings, temporary or demonstration events, outdoor office use and activation of the Commercial Core both during and outside of business hours.
- A **premier children’s playground** central to Downtown’s emerging residential neighborhoods to support the growing population of families attracted by the opportunities available in urban living.
- An **iconic arts and culture park** to support the celebration of Denver’s renowned arts community and its multicultural past, present and future.
- A **dedicated bike and pedestrian loop** across Downtown to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle movement, connect Denver’s residential neighborhoods, incorporate green infrastructure, and celebrate Downtown’s historic resources.



In the Outdoor Downtown public survey, **86.4%** agreed with this statement: **“I want a thriving downtown.”** By comparison, only 44.2% of respondents agreed with **“I feel a connection to downtown.”**





Clockwise:  
 Wynkoop Plaza | Denver, CO  
 Campus Martius Plaza | Detroit, MI  
 Gråbrødretorv | Copenhagen, NE  
 Civic Center | Denver, CO  
 Bikers | Copenhagen, NE

Photos:  
 DPR  
 Flickr | Dig Downtown Detroit  
 DW | Jamie Fogle  
 CCC | Think Darryl  
 DW | Jamie Fogle



# CENTRAL PLAZA

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Many Downtowns have defined **central public spaces** that are synonymous with cultural and civic pride, demonstration and daily activity.

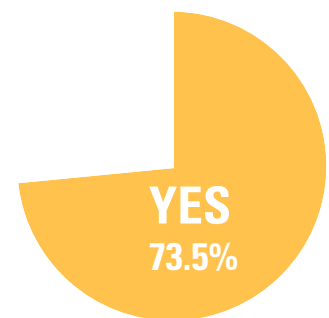
These spaces—such as Pioneer Square in Portland, Washington Square in New York City, and Union Square in San Francisco—are often must-see destinations for visitors, go-to sites for public discourse and the stage for events large and small, elaborate or impromptu. These areas function less as typical parks and more as a vibrant extension of the urban fabric.

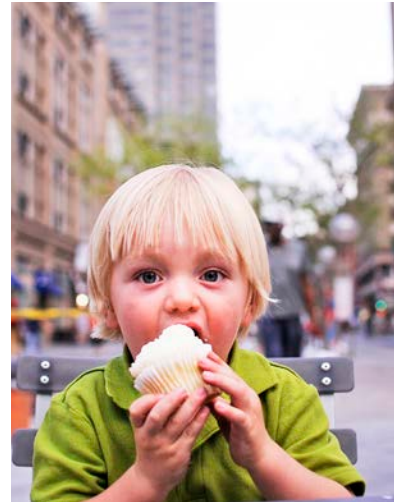
Downtown Denver currently lacks a publicly owned and programmed central plaza space within the Commercial Core that functions in this way. When polled at the second public meeting, over 73% of respondents supported the concept of a new central plaza space in the Commercial Core. As our Downtown population continues to grow, we should seek to provide such a space with the following attributes:

- The size and scale of the space is critical to its success, as it should be large enough to support a range of activities and congregations, yet is small enough to feel comfortable and intimate with respect to both its surroundings and social behavior. Given the scale of development in the Commercial Core, the central gathering space should not be larger than one-half of a typical Downtown block.
- The design of the space should provide for flexibility of use, including large gatherings and small events, with an emphasis on hardscaped areas, high-quality urban edges and integrated seating and shaded areas.
- Park edges should have active uses that integrate with and enliven the space. Street edges should consider design elements that gracefully transition— rather than disconnect— ground-floor uses and plazas.

---

In the second public meeting, **73.5%** of attendees agreed that a **Central Plaza** would positively contribute to Downtown.





Clockwise:  
 Adventure Playground | Berkeley, CA  
 Meet in the Street Event | Denver, CO  
 Maggie Daley Playground | Chicago, IL  
 Teardrop Park | NYC  
 Washington Square Park | NYC  
 Currie Barracks Playground | Calgary, AB

Photos:  
 CC | Teddy Cross  
 DDP | Larry Laszlo  
 DW | Amanda Jeter  
 Flickr | Caption Kidder  
 CC | Vasilios Sfinarolakis  
 DW



# SIGNATURE PLAYGROUND

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As residential growth continues in Downtown, it is necessary to provide the amenities in our Outdoor Downtown that support the needs of the entire Downtown community, including **children and young families.**

While many of our current parks and open spaces are adequate in supporting adult activity, Downtown Denver is lacking in recreation and play spaces for children. Cities such as New York and Chicago can serve as models for incorporating playgrounds into existing urban parks to ensure that children have access to outdoor play space within their neighborhood. This plan recommends that we look for opportunities to expand such spaces throughout Downtown Denver's neighborhood parks.

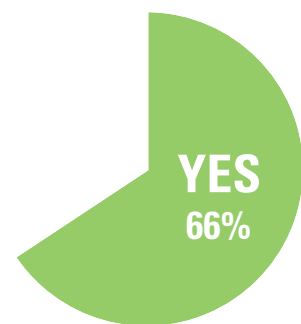
As we aspire, however, to embrace resident families in Downtown, this plan recommends the creation of a premier children's playground in Downtown to emphasize a life-long commitment to quality outdoor recreation and play space and to symbolize our commitment to a family-friendly Downtown Denver.

The playground should include the following attributes:

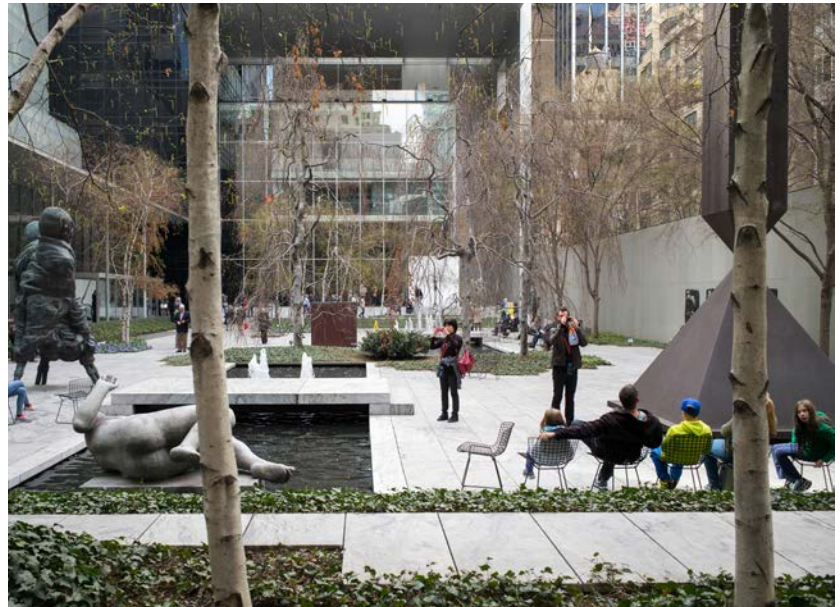
- A location within a five minute walk of a Downtown residential district, while also visible and easily accessible from transit and/or significant cultural facilities is recommended to appeal to children of all abilities.
- The playground, like our Colorado landscape, should be designed to be useful in all seasons. Attention should be made to ensuring that winter play is emphasized and that play elements within the playground reflect unique attributes of Denver and Colorado.
- The playground should combine traditional play structures with experiential elements that encourage adventure play and relate and respond to the context of Downtown Denver.

---

In the second public meeting, **66%** of attendees agreed that a **Signature Playground** would positively contribute to Downtown.







Clockwise:  
 Levitated Mass, Michael Heizer | Los Angeles, CA  
 Sky Cloud | Chicago, IL  
 MIT | Cambridge, MA  
 MOMA Sculpture Garden | NYC  
 Richard Serra at MOMA | NYC  
 Flamenco, Alexander Calder | Chicago, IL

Photos:  
 Flickr | M-Bot  
 Flickr | Ole Bendik Kvisberg  
 Flickr | W Silver  
 Flickr | Susan Sermone  
 Flickr | Susan Sermone  
 Flickr | SB Duchamp

# ARTS & CULTURE PARK

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The expansion of access to **cultural activities** in the Outdoor Downtown is an essential component of the master plan's recommendations.

In support of this, the plan also recommends a visible commitment to the emphasis of arts and culture through the creation of an iconic arts and culture park at the current location of Sculpture Park in the Denver Performing Arts Complex (DPAC) complex.

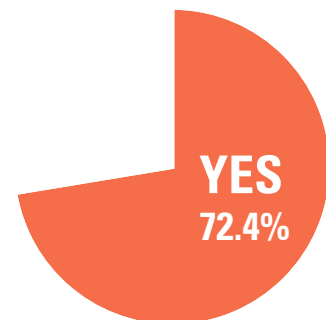
Aligned with Arts & Venues' "The Next Stage Vision Plan" to reimagine DPAC, the iconic arts and culture park would provide an extension of Downtown Denver's vibrant visual and performing arts and cultural activities into a stimulating, multi-function park space. Sculpture Park offers a location with both high visibility and adjacency to some of Downtown's signature civic, cultural and educational facilities, including the Colorado Convention Center, DPAC and the Auraria Campus. When polled at the second public meeting, over 72% of respondents supported the concept of an iconic arts and culture park in Downtown Denver.

The arts and culture park should include the following attributes:

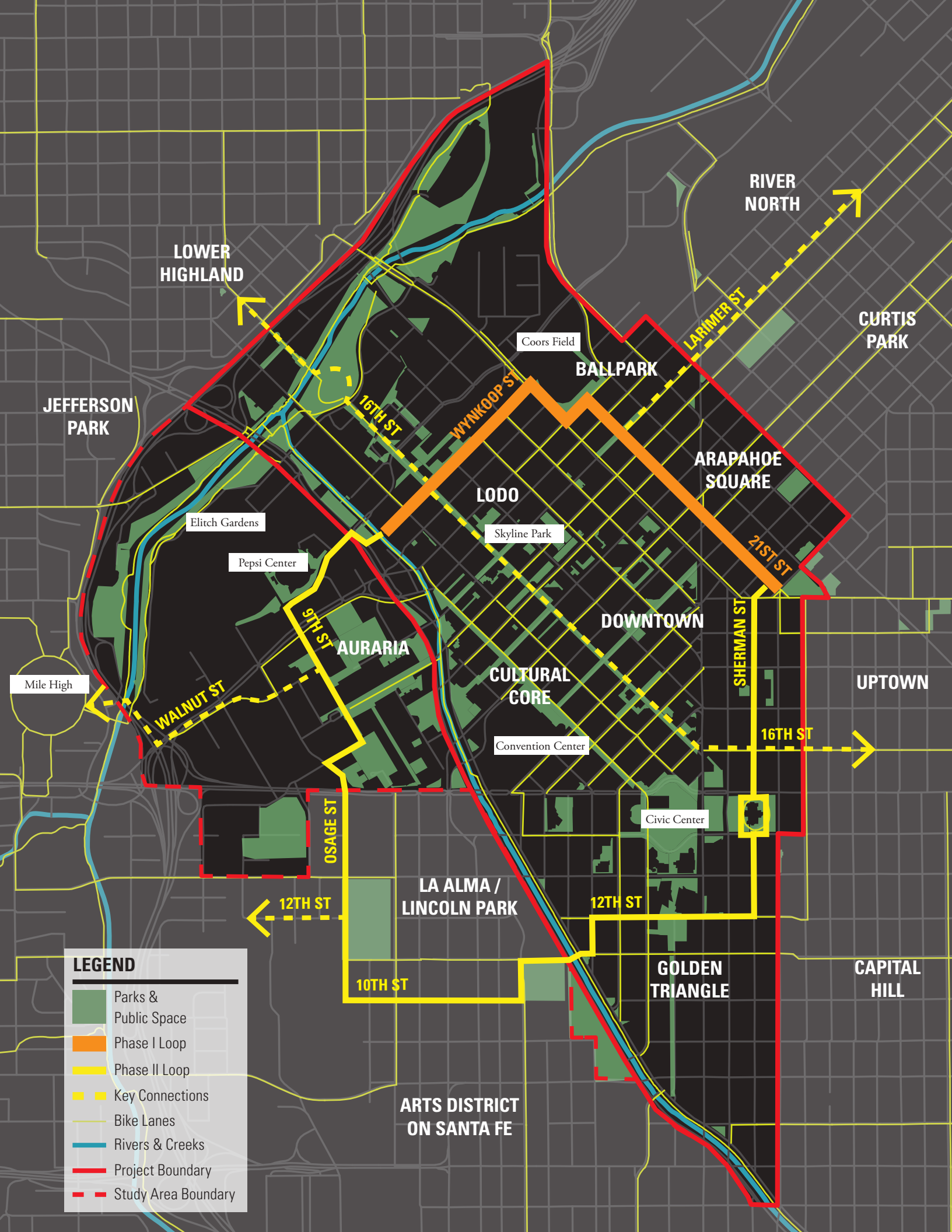
- The park should support a range of visual and performance arts. This includes curated art and sculpture exhibitions, large concerts or cultural events, art-making and performance spaces and state-of-the-art audio/visual infrastructure.
- The park should serve as an extension of DPAC performance spaces and future complex users, including the Denver School of the Arts, providing a visible platform for performance and education.

---

In the second public meeting, **72.4%** of attendees agreed that an **Arts & Culture Park** would positively contribute to Downtown.







LOWER  
HIGHLAND

RIVER  
NORTH

JEFFERSON  
PARK

CURTIS  
PARK

Coors Field

BALLPARK

LARIMER ST

Elitch Gardens

16TH ST

WYNKOOP ST

LODO

Skyline Park

ARAPAHOE  
SQUARE

Pepsi Center

21ST ST

9TH ST

AURARIA

DOWNTOWN

Mile High

WALNUT ST

CULTURAL  
CORE

Convention Center

SHERMAN ST

UPTOWN

16TH ST

OSAGE ST

Civic Center

12TH ST

LA ALMA /  
LINCOLN PARK

12TH ST

CAPITAL  
HILL

10TH ST

GOLDEN  
TRIANGLE

ARTS DISTRICT  
ON SANTA FE

**LEGEND**

- Parks & Public Space
- Phase I Loop
- Phase II Loop
- Key Connections
- Bike Lanes
- Rivers & Creeks
- Project Boundary
- Study Area Boundary



# DOWNTOWN LOOP

---

As the City of Denver moves away from an auto-dominated transportation system, infrastructure is needed to provide **safe and comfortable movement** across and through Downtown Denver for cyclists and pedestrians.

Beginning in 2015, Downtown Denver has seen a substantial increase in the number of on-street, protected bike lanes. These lanes provide enhanced connections for bicycle commuters. Shared bike and pedestrian lanes for recreational use, however, are largely non-existent in Downtown Denver with the exception of trails along the South Platte River and Cherry Creek Trail.

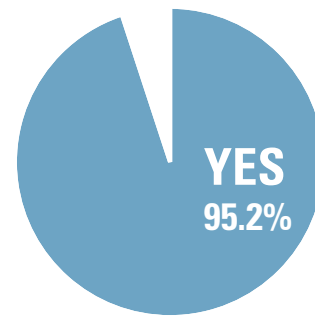
In order to provide enhanced recreational trail connections across Downtown Denver, the master plan recommends the creation of a dedicated bike and pedestrian loop to create a safe and stimulating route for residents and visitors to get outdoors and use active transportation as they engage in the many cultural and civic facilities and open spaces around Downtown. Much like the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, the Downtown bike and pedestrian loop may become a destination for visitors and a means to introduce locals to the unique and inspiring facets of Downtown in a new way.

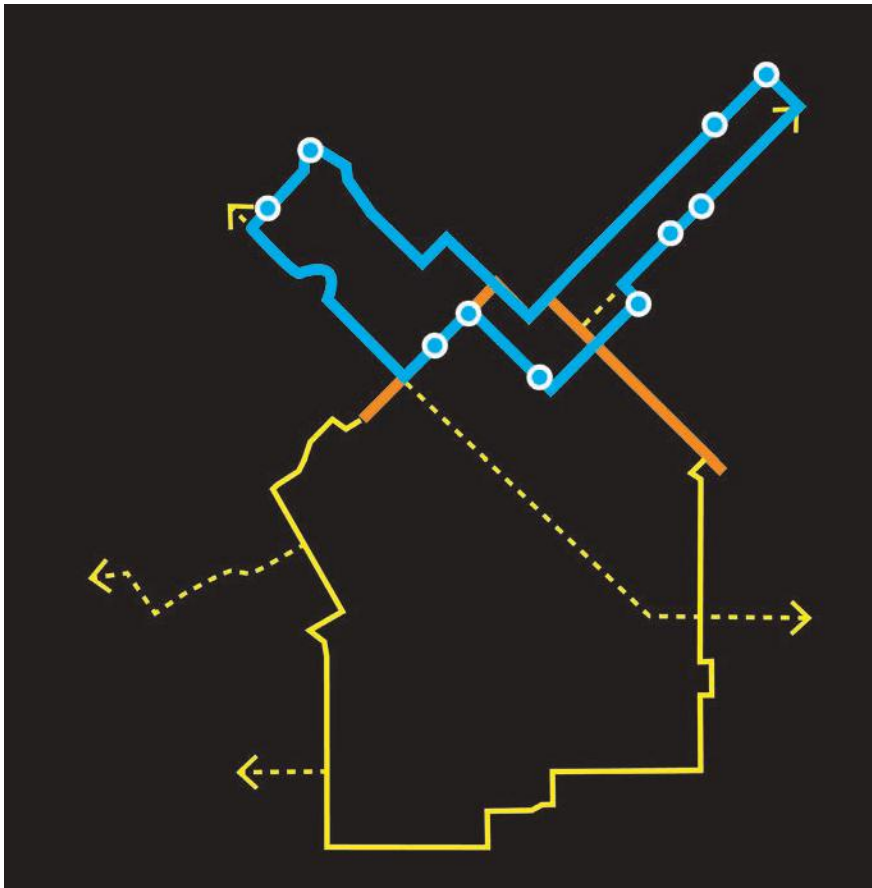
The Downtown loop should consider the following:

- The loop should be located on public property to the extent possible, with collaboration between City departments and Downtown stakeholders to negotiate routing and maintenance.
- The loop should be distinctly branded and incorporate wayfinding so as to be easy to navigate and to reflect unique aspects of the Downtown Denver cityscape.
- The loop should be separated from parallel vehicular traffic or incorporated into shared streets designs. Street crossings should emphasize the safety and comfort of cyclists and pedestrians.
- Opportunities abound in the organization of the loop and subloops that relate to specific social and cultural districts and development.

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In the second public meeting, 95.2% of attendees agreed that a **Dedicated Bike & Pedestrian Loop** would positively contribute to Downtown. This initiative received the most support of those proposed.



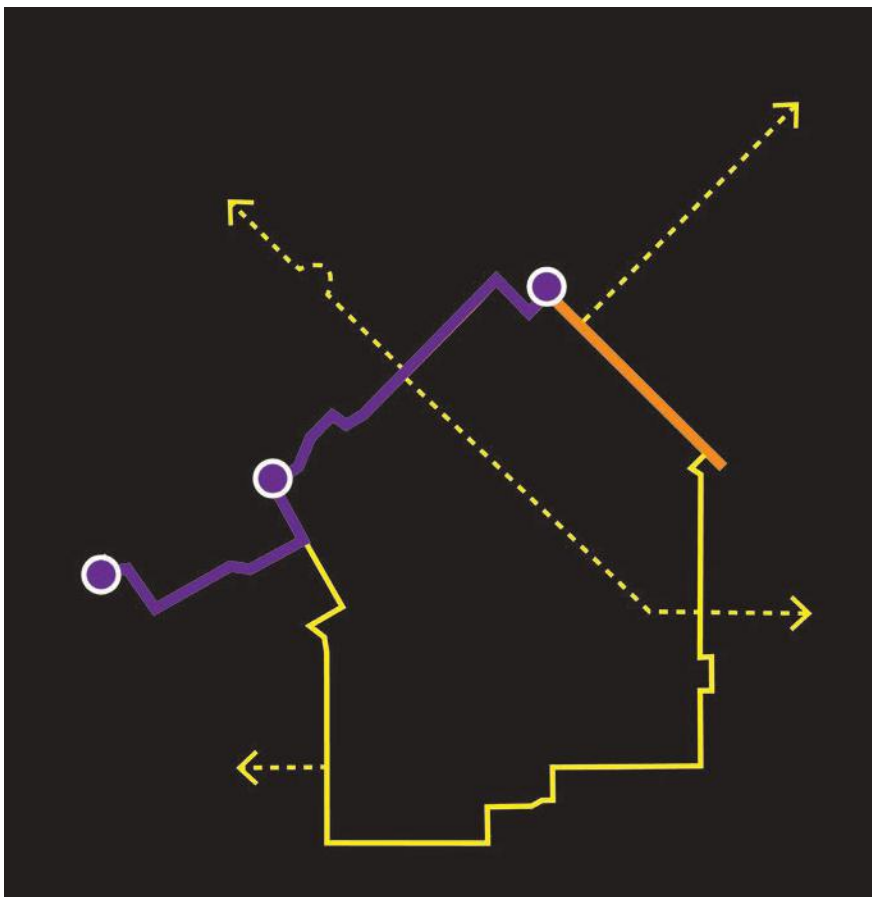


## BREWERY LOOP

The brewery subloop offers a cultural trail through the vibrant Denver beer scene in the RiNo, LoDo and Lower Highlands district. The subloop connects 10 Denver breweries with potential to connect to many more in the Cole and Five Points Districts.

### POSSIBLE BREWERIES:

- Prost Brewery
- Denver Beer Co
- Wynkoop Brewing Co
- Beryls Beer
- Epic Brewery
- Ratio Beerworks
- Our Mutual Friend
- Great Divide
- Jagged Mountain
- Breckenridge
- Rockbottom Brewery



## STADIUM WALK

The Stadium Walk connects Denver's three major sports stadiums: Coors Field, the Pepsi Center and Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

### DENVER TEAMS:

- Denver Broncos
- Colorado Rapids
- Colorado Avalanche
- Denver Nuggets
- Colorado Rockies



**MUSEUM & CIVIC TOUR**

The Museum & Civic Tour is a walking circuit of important cultural and civic icons in Denver, centered around the Cultural Core and Golden Triangle areas.

*MUSEUMS & DESTINATIONS:*

- Denver Public Library
- Denver Art Museum
- Kirkland Museum
- Clyfford Still Museum
- Denver Mint
- Denver Justice Center
- City & County Building
- Denver Firefighters Museum



**PARK TO PARK LOOP**

The Park to Park loop is a running and biking four-mile circuit across downtown. It links major downtown parks and public spaces as well as regional trails.

*DENVER URBAN PARKS:*

- Civic Center Park
- Cherry Creek Trail
- South Platte Trail
- Sculpture Park
- 16th Street Mall
- Confluence Park
- Millennium Bridge
- Commons Park
- Skyline Park







# RECOMMENDATION MATRIX

---

HOLISTIC | MEASURABLE | COMPLETE |  
LONGITUDINAL | ASPIRATIONAL

---

- SOCIAL
- RECREATIONAL
- CONNECTED
- CULTURAL
- SUSTAINABLE



## Assembled here is the **full matrix of recommendations** for the Outdoor Downtown Master Plan.

The intent of this section is to provide an easy-to-use reference guide that summarizes the content of the plan in just three pages. This user-friendly section presents the recommendations in the same sequential order as the vision element sections, while also assigning each recommendation a rough timeline: short term (0-5 years), mid term (5-10 years), and long term (10-20 years). With usability in mind, the matrix allows a thorough overview of the plan, while also providing enough detail to discuss the individual sections and to review the intended actions for each recommendation.

In developing the recommendations, often there was overlap between vision elements. What if a recommendation was both social and cultural? Once embraced, this ambiguity ultimately worked as a strength with the best recommendations embodying most, if not all, of the vision elements. By structuring the plan around these five vision elements, the plan aims to provide a flexible framework that will make Downtown parks and public spaces more vibrant and usable. Through the phased implementation of the policies, programs and projects presented here, the Outdoor Downtown will be not one thing but everything: social, recreational, connected, cultural, and sustainable at once.

---

“The success of our downtown relies on a **feeling of connection**: to each other and to our city.”

--Councilman Albus Brooks



# RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX

Rec. #	Action #	Action Item	Short Term	Mid Term	Long Term
<b>SOCIAL: SAFE &amp; SECURE SPACES</b>					
<b>1.1 Improve safety</b>					
	1.1.1	Increase uniformed presence to provide one park ranger per 15 acres of parkland	x		
	1.1.2	Partner with community to expand ambassador program across Downtown	x		
	1.1.3	Increase community policing through existing programs and applications		x	
	1.1.4	Collaborate with BID and property owners to increase safety		x	
	1.1.5	Establish standards to improve lighting Downtown			x
	1.1.6	Expand program to install video cameras in public spaces			x
<b>SOCIAL: CLEAN &amp; COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENTS</b>					
<b>1.2 Increase maintenance and cleanliness</b>					
	1.2.1	Form Downtown maintenance district within Parks and Recreation	x		
	1.2.2	Create Downtown central facility for maintenance and park rangers			x
	1.2.3	Assess and adjust staffing and budget to achieve 'green level' of maintenance		x	
	1.2.4	Brand uniforms and vehicles to increase presence of maintenance staff		x	
	1.2.5	Amend Design Standards to strengthen requirements for urban environments	x		
<b>SOCIAL: EVERYDAY ACTIVATION</b>					
<b>1.3 Provide additional amenities</b>					
	1.3.1	Establish design standards for site furnishings and conduct audit		x	
	1.3.2	Establish year-round operations of existing restroom facilities	x		
	1.3.3	Provide staffed restrooms in all special-use parks			x
<b>1.4 Spark everyday activation</b>					
	1.4.1	Create policy to enable temporary use of parks and public land	x		
	1.4.2	Test, refine & implement demonstration project ideas	x		
	1.4.3	Define desirable, flexible open spaces for activation and programming		x	
	1.4.4	Streamline permitting and license process for events	x		
	1.4.5	Use crowdsourcing campaigns to prioritize projects for Downtown	x		
	1.4.6	Develop annual budget to fund demonstration projects		x	
	1.4.7	Work with Public Works to designate key rights-of-way as special events venues			x
	1.4.8	Review and revise admission-based events policies		x	
	1.4.9	Develop staff position(s) for parks and public space activation	x		
<b>SOCIAL: EVERYDAY ACTIVATION</b>					
<b>1.5 Provide food &amp; beverage services</b>					
	1.5.1	Revise permit requirements on food and beverage in parks	x		
	1.5.2	Create permanent concessions stand at Skyline Park and restaurant in McNichols Building			x
	1.5.3	Create a district(s) to allow for sale of alcohol beverages in designated public spaces		x	
	1.5.4	Update regulations to decouple food and beverage from brick and mortar venues		x	
<b>RECREATIONAL: EQUITABLE RECREATION SPACE</b>					
<b>2.1 Add new neighborhood parks within a five minute walk</b>					
	2.1.1	Define downtown park typologies	x		
	2.1.2	Create new neighborhood parks accessible within a five minute walk			x
	2.1.3	Provide everyday amenities and infrastructure in all Downtown parks			x
<b>2.2 Create quality public space within a three minute walk</b>					
	2.2.1	Develop guidelines to improve quality of open spaces in private developments	x		
	2.2.2	Create new public spaces accessible within a three minute walk		x	
	2.2.3	Work with neighborhoods to build the community identity of public spaces	x		
<b>RECREATIONAL: HEALTH &amp; WELLNESS</b>					
<b>2.3 Create a network of sports facilities</b>					
	2.3.1	Expand public access to existing sports facilities through partnerships		x	
	2.3.2	Increase sports and recreation infrastructure in Downtown parks			x
	2.3.3	Convert sports fields to synthetic turf in select parks			x
	2.3.4	Implement outreach program to integrate fitness metrics into public realm	x		

# RECOMMENDATIONS MATRIX CONT.

## 2.4 Develop year-round programming

2.4.1	Public outreach for healthy living	x		
2.4.2	Create urban Parks and Recreation sports leagues		x	
2.4.3	Expand private outdoor fee-based activities program		x	

### CONNECTED: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS

## 3.1 Improve bike & pedestrian connections

3.1.1	Create bicycle/pedestrian corridor design standards		x	
3.1.2	Enhance key intersections, transit station areas and transitions from parks			x

### CONNECTED: A WALKABLE, BIKEABLE DOWNTOWN

## 3.2 Gateways & wayfinding

3.2.1	Brand wayfinding and site furniture for the Outdoor Downtown	x		
3.2.2	Install iconic lighting/art installation along Downtown regional trails			x
3.2.3	Provide directional signage at key 'decision points'		x	

## 3.3 Upgrade bike & pedestrian facilities

3.3.1	Enhance transitions from regional trails to on-street facilities			x
3.3.2	Create bike commuter stations within a three minute walk of transit stations		x	

### CONNECTED: DOWNTOWN WIRED

## 3.4 Equip public spaces with technology

3.4.1	Partner to fund and install free wifi demonstration project	x		
3.4.2	Install a pilot project of flexible outdoor work stations in Commercial Core		x	
3.4.3	Use technology to assist in navigation, programming and events		x	
3.4.4	Work with technology partners to pioneer innovative uses of the public realm			x

### CULTURAL: A CULTURALLY VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

## 4.1 Adapt outdoor spaces for performance

4.1.1	Install performance infrastructure in neighborhood and special-use parks		x	
4.1.2	Create open hours for informal use of performance spaces	x		
4.1.3	Waive venue fees for cultural partners (A&V, DPAC, etc)		x	

## 4.2 Catalyze art and culture in the public realm

4.2.1	Expand downtown regional trail mural program			x
4.2.2	Crowd-source ideas with a 'Arts in the Outdoors' competition	x		
4.2.3	Designate space for rotating art installations by Arts & Venues		x	
4.2.4	Partner with cultural partners on year-round outdoor events calendar	x		
4.2.5	Determine cultural programming gaps and the inclusivity of programs		x	

## 4.3 Create programs & spaces unique to Denver

4.3.1	Bring iconic Denver events to outdoor venues		x	
4.3.2	Create annual Outdoor Downtown day		x	
4.3.3	Allow flexible use of public spaces for community events and celebrations	x		

### CULTURAL: EXPLORE HISTORY

## 4.4 Celebrate & enliven historic spaces

4.4.1	Inventory historic landmarks in public realm	x		
4.4.2	Enhance the parkway character of the grand boulevards		x	
4.4.3	Create self-guided tours and educative signage for historic districts			x
4.4.4	Fund and implement the 2005 Civic Center Park Master Plan	x		

SUSTAINABLE: A GREENER DOWNTOWN

**5.1 Increase tree canopy**

5.1.1	Update the Downtown Denver tree inventory and health audit every two years	x		
5.1.2	Pursue funding for a maintenance crew to take over the care of street trees			x
5.1.3	Retrofit and replant 50 tree wells Downtown each year			x
5.1.4	Update 1993 Streetscape Design Manual		x	

**5.2 Integrate green infrastructure**

5.2.1	Support Public Works in the implementation of green streets		x	
5.2.2	Utilize best practices for stormwater management and green infrastructure		x	
5.2.3	Implement alley improvement program			x
5.2.4	Reduce impervious surfaces by 10%			x
5.2.5	Implement pilot projects in underutilized right of way		x	

**5.3 Increase city's ecological health**

5.3.1	Monitor and sustain health of urban waterways			x
5.3.2	Increase tree and plant diversity in parks and public spaces			x
5.3.3	Develop outdoor classroom program to engage youth with nature		x	
5.3.4	Include native species in planting to support urban wildlife	x		

**5.4 Enhance seasonality**

5.4.1	Bolster seasonal and perennial plantings	x		
5.4.2	Provide space for seasonal lawn sports		x	
5.4.3	Increase moveable furniture to allow people to move into sun or shade	x		
5.4.4	Test, measure, refine outdoor-oriented pilot projects	x		
5.4.5	Expand opportunities for community gardens and urban agriculture		x	

SUSTAINABLE: ECONOMIC VITALITY

**5.4 Encourage economic vitality**

5.5.1	Identify priority districts to incentivize active ground-floor uses by parks		x	
5.5.2	Allow event-based corporate sponsorship	x		
5.5.3	Expand revenue-generating events in parks and public spaces		x	
5.5.4	Update Downtown development regulations on open space frontage			x

SUSTAINABLE: CITIZEN STEWARDSHIP

**5.6 Promote stewardship**

5.6.1	Create funding and governance committee	x		
5.6.2	Establish Downtown-focused entity		x	
5.6.3	Educate property owners on economic benefits of public spaces		x	
5.6.4	Create a frontyard campaign to engage public and support stewardship	x		
5.6.5	Expand existing park host and volunteer courtesy patrol programs	x		







# IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

---

FEASIBLE | PHASED | LONGITUDINAL |  
COHESIVE | LAYERED | COLLABORATIVE

---

- THE CASE FOR MORE FUNDING
- FUNDING STRATEGIES &  
RECOMMENDATIONS
- DOWNTOWN DENVER ENTITY

As forward-looking as the ideas and recommendations of this Master Plan are, the reality is that **time, funding and people will be needed** to carry out the recommendations.

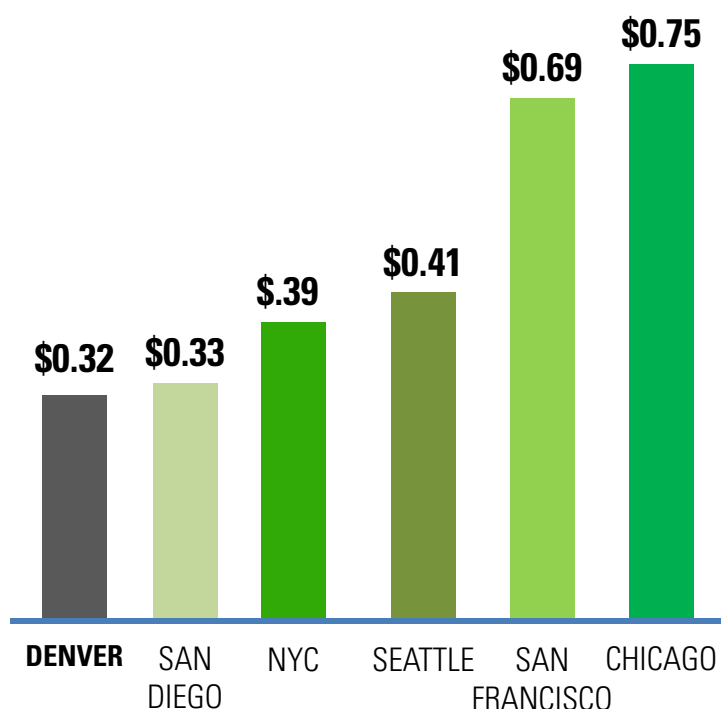
Funding is especially critical; it supports staff and programs, facility improvements, new amenities and future projects. Increased funding is not only needed to bring Downtown Denver up to par with other cities' downtowns and to meet the expectations of the Downtown community— especially in terms of maintenance for parks and public spaces— it is also necessary to implement the recommendations laid forth in this Master Plan.

### ***Maintenance & Operations***

The Park Operations division of Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) is responsible for the daily operation and management of the City's parks, parkways, trails, natural areas, urban forest, City greenhouse, tree nursery, wood reutilization site, and other land and water assets. Within the Outdoor Downtown study area, DPR manages and maintains 172 acres, which includes parks, trails, plazas, parkways, and open spaces. Approximately 112 of those acres are usable as park space. DPR maintenance is

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In a comparison of six cities, **Denver ranked the lowest** in terms of the maintenance budget allocated per park square foot.



**FIGURE 7.1**



divided into different levels of service based on the standard of care for the space, and each level has different costs associated with maintenance. 'Green' levels of service are the highest levels of care and highest cost of maintenance, 'Blue' levels are moderate care and moderate costs, while 'Yellow' levels represent the lowest level of care and costs, and are intended for areas to be left in a more natural state.

Denver currently spends an average of \$0.32 per square foot to maintain its Downtown parks and open space. This is **considerably less than other cities**, who may spend more than double this amount on downtown park maintenance.



From Top:  
Millennium Park | Chicago, IL  
Dolores Park | San Francisco, CA  
Gasworks Park | Seattle, WA  
Flickr | Connie Ma  
Flickr | Jerome Decq  
Flickr | Atomic Taco

The Master Plan recommends that Downtown Denver **increases its maintenance spending** to a total average of \$0.60 per square foot.

This figure would put Downtown Denver on par with other cities and position the City to be able to maintain vibrant and engaging Downtown parks and open space. The recommendation is based on a series of cost projection scenarios developed by the planning team that were based on different levels of increased maintenance for Downtown Denver. The recommended scenario uses maintenance cost increases based on the desire to become on par with maintenance spending for other Downtowns. (Some alternative scenarios that were considered included having all parks and open spaces maintained at the highest level of service currently provided by the DPR and having all parks and open spaces maintained at one level of service higher than their current level of service. Neither of those scenarios provided an increase in spending on maintenance that would be adequate to fund the higher maintenance envisioned in the Master Plan.)

### ***Programming, Security & Administration***

In addition to increased maintenance funding, the Master Plan calls for **enhanced security** plus expanded and **engaging programming** to help activate Denver's Outdoor Downtown.

Increased administrative services will also be needed to facilitate these enhancements within Downtown. Programming, security and administration improvements will all require an increase in current funding. When comparing Downtown Denver parks to other cities, it can be difficult to identify clear trends for these additional costs because: 1) they may be handled by different departments or subdivisions of the City and may not be easily broken down for the Downtown area; and 2) limited data is available from other cities. Due to these limitations, only a small sample of parks were able to be used for comparison.

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### **Funding increases**

*Operations & Maintenance:*  
\$0.28/square foot

*Programming & Administration:*  
\$0.05/square foot

*Security:*  
\$0.20/square foot

*Total:*  
\$0.53/square foot

Because not all parks sampled had their total budget information available, spending on security, programming and administration was looked at in comparison to spending on maintenance. Recommendations for funding increases for these three areas were similarly based on the recommended increase for maintenance funding.

**Programming** is handled by several different agencies and organizations within Downtown Denver, including both the City and private entities.

More funding will be needed overall to carry out additional programming proposed in the Plan. A minimum increase of \$0.05 per square foot for funding of programming and administration within Downtown parks and open space is recommended to help achieve these goals. It should be noted that the actual programming costs within individual parks will vary widely. For instance, signature parks will have higher programming costs than nature parks because they are more heavily used for events and activities.

**Security** for Downtown is provided through several sources.

The Denver Police Department provides law enforcement within Downtown while city park security is provided by the Park Ranger Program and the Volunteer Courtesy Patrol. Five park rangers, one permanent and four seasonal, are currently employed within Downtown, though none are dedicated solely to Downtown. Improved safety and security measures are proposed as part of the Outdoor Downtown Master Plan, including a greater visible uniformed presence. A minimum of \$0.20 per square foot increase for funding on security within Downtown parks and open space is recommended to provide for these improvements. Some of this funding can be used for more park rangers within Downtown (see Staffing). Denver could also consider establishing a special Downtown division of the park ranger program, expanding the Volunteer Courtesy Patrol or creating a new security program within Downtown to provide a greater uniformed presence.



↑ Bryant Park | New York, NY  
Central Park | New York, NY  
Flickr | Vishpool  
CC | Anthony Quintano



# FUNDING STRATEGIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

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**Achieving the funding** necessary to support the recommended increases in spending is crucial for implementing the Master Plan.

The recommendations and strategies presented here are aimed at bridging the gap between current funding levels for Downtown and what will be required to carry out the initiatives of the Plan to create a more vibrant and engaging Downtown.

## ***Determining Funding Options***

The Master Plan recommends that a **funding and governance task force be formed** to determine options for Downtown parks and public spaces.

### *Funding Strategies*

#### *1. A Multifaceted approach*

In order to raise the funds needed to implement the Master Plan, both **public and private sources** should be considered.

It can be difficult to raise all the needed funds from only one source and, as such, a variety should be considered by the task force. In addition, it is typically harder to raise funds for operations and maintenance than for capital projects (new projects are more attractive to donors than the everyday upkeep). Public and/or reliable funding may be better utilized for operational costs, while private contributions may be used in raising capital funds.



From Top:  
Palace of Fine Arts | San Francisco, CA  
Civic Center | Denver, CO  
CC | Ioda Ralta  
Flickr | Emerson12

## 2. Tiered funding

The first goal of the tiered approach is to **increase funding for existing park and public space operations** while generating some funding for minor capital improvements.

Regardless of the source of funds, one strategy that can be adopted in collecting funds is to take a tiered approach to funding increases. The tiered approach provides incremental steps, achievable over the short term, to reach the ultimate funding goal over the long term. For the Master Plan, funding increases were separated into three categories: operational funding (maintenance, programming, security and administration); capital improvement and projects funding; and capital operational funding (additional funding to operate, maintain, and program new facilities and parks created through capital projects.)

It should be noted that costs for capital projects vary greatly from project to project and year to year. Small-scale capital improvements, such as benches and restroom facilities, do not require large expenditures. Large-scale capital improvements, such as new parks and plazas, can require millions of dollars.

The first goal of the tiered approach is to increase funding for existing park and public space operations while generating some funding for minor capital improvements. The second, long-term goal is to raise additional funds for larger capital initiatives while maintaining high-quality operations for Downtown.

For example, the first tier (Tier 1) would be the base funding tier. It would seek to bridge the gap between the current funding levels and the funding levels needed to support the cost increases recommended in the Master Plan. Tier 1 would also aim to raise base capital funds for needed minor capital improvements, such as improving basic amenities within Downtown parks and public spaces. Tier 1 should be seen as the ramp-up phase for future funding increases.

*Fig. 7.2: Funding Tier Goals*

TIER	PRIMARY GOAL	SECONDARY GOAL
1 - Base Funding	Bridging the gap between current funding levels and the recommended funding levels of Tier 2	Raising base capital funds for needed capital improvements in parks and public spaces
2 - Recommended Funding	Achieving funding necessary to support enhanced maintenance, programming, etc. proposed in the Master Plan	Raising additional capital funds for additional improvements to existing parks and public space
3 - Gap Funding	Bridging the gap between Tier 2 capital funding and future capital funding levels	Maintaining high-quality operations for Downtown
4 - Major Projects Funding	Achieving additional funding to support major capital projects	Maintaining high-quality operations for Downtown

# FUNDING STRATEGIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

The second long-term goal is to **raise additional funds** for larger capital initiatives while maintaining high-quality operations for Downtown.

The goal of the second tier (Tier 2) would be increased funding to fully support the enhanced maintenance, programming, security and administration recommended in the Master Plan. Capital funding for Tier 2 would be increased as well in order to fund additional amenities, larger improvement projects and potentially small-scale and/or temporary projects to improve existing parks and public space.

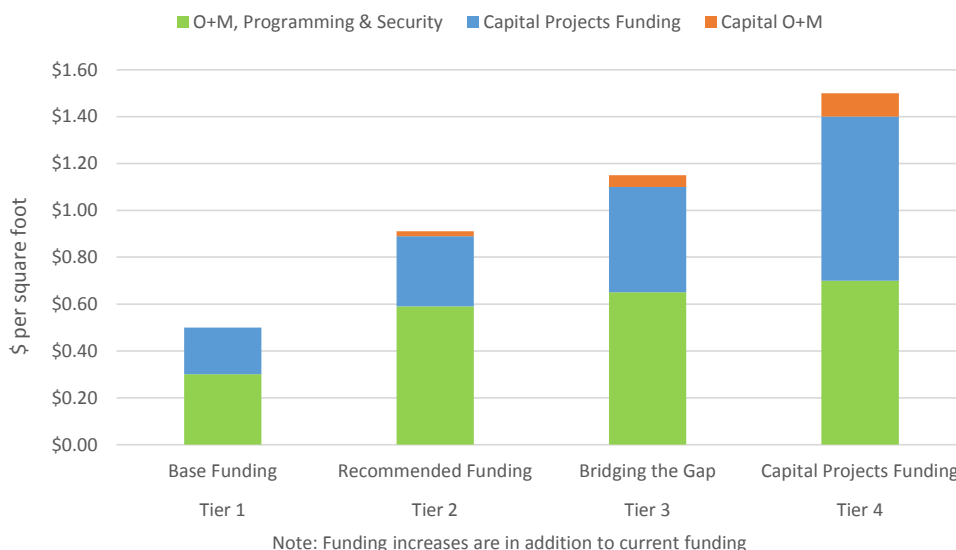
The third tier (Tier 3) would be a middle-ground tier to bridge the gap between Tier 2 and future funding levels. It would aim to generate more funding for larger capital initiatives and incorporate more private funding than previous tiers. Capital funding for this tier could be used to build new facilities and smaller parks and plazas or for major capital improvements to existing parks and public space. The proposed Downtown Bike and Pedestrian Loop or Signature Children’s Playground may be funded by this Tier. Operational

costs would not be expected to greatly increase and so operational funding would remain similar to Tier 2.

Tier 4 would be focused on achieving additional funding to support major capital projects within Downtown, including many of the transformative capital projects presented in this Plan. Much of the capital funding in Tier 4 is expected to be through private funding. Operational funding may increase slightly to support capital projects from the previous tier.

Figure 7.4 shows a recommended tiered approach for Downtown Denver. Increases in funding are shown as cost per square foot so that they can be applied as the amount of parks and public spaces within Downtown increases in the future. Operational costs (maintenance, programming, security and administration) per square foot are based on the analysis and recommendations presented earlier in the Master Plan. Capital funding costs per square foot were determined by estimating how much capital funding might be achievable for that tier, and then dividing that amount by the estimated amount of total park and public space in Downtown (each tier was estimated to have an increasing amount of park space).

*Fig. 7.3: Tier Funding Increases*





# DOWNTOWN DENVER ENTITY

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Maggie Daley Playground | Chicago, IL  
Flickr | Connie Ma

Many **signature parks have their own operational organizations** which operate and maintain the park.

Examples include Central Park and the Central Park Conservancy, Discovery Green and the Discovery Green Conservancy, Rose Kennedy Greenway and its Conservancy, Klyde Warren Park and the Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation, and many more. A few non-profits also manage several parks, notably the Pittsburgh Park Conservancy and the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy. In New York, the City Parks Foundation is responsible for assisting NYC parks that do not or cannot support a dedicated nonprofit arm.

For any nonprofit, it can be a challenge to gather funds, but nonprofits that oversee multiple parks and public spaces have the additional challenge of equitably allocating funds between properties.

## *Downtown Denver Entity*

A **new entity** is envisioned for Downtown Denver to activate and steward the Downtown parks and public spaces.

The new Downtown Denver parks entity would provide programming for Downtown parks and public spaces, represent Downtown Denver constituents, fundraise, and serve as an advocate for the Downtown spaces. The entity would also administer volunteer work and could provide or hire supplemental security for Downtown parks if deemed necessary. Unlike the case studies shared in this report, the City, not the entity, would be responsible for maintenance of the Downtown spaces.

The entity should have a public-private partnership agreement with the City of Denver, which outlines the responsibilities of each organization within Downtown. The entity should be allowed to partner with other organizations for programming, education, and other functions as needed. The City and the entity also must address permits and programming in their agreement: How will the organization's events and activities fit in with the City's current permitting rules? Will the entity supplement City programming, or will it assume responsibility for all programming within Downtown parks and public spaces? If this is the case, it is anticipated that a transition period will be needed between the two.

Independent entities often face challenges with funding and the Downtown entity will likely be no different. Other associations could be formed in coordination with the entity to assist in raising funds, such as a park district or business improvement district. Fundraising and distributing funds appropriately across Downtown will be imperative to the plan's success.