

# DENVER *Tourism* ROADMAP



## 10-YEAR DESTINATION MASTER PLAN





# Executive Summary: Imagine It's 2035

**This Denver Tourism Roadmap is a 10-year destination master plan to optimize the city's visitor economy in alignment with community priorities.**

There are few other cities in North America with as many major developments in the works as Denver. The result of that urban transformation will significantly increase Denver's attractiveness for visitors, and in turn, visitor dollars will be highly valuable for helping fund the long-term success of many of those developments.

Let's look 10 years out and imagine it's 2035. Downtown Denver looks much differently than it does today, both in terms of experience and scope.

The 16th Street Mall has been heralded as one of the great pedestrian-friendly downtown gathering places in the world following its complete reconstruction. During daytime, residents, visitors and downtown workers fill restaurants and retail spaces operated by local and regional owners. There's a very Denver- and Colorado-specific narrative all along the thoroughfare. City leadership helped ensure that the 16th Street Mall performed as a platform for the region's creative community, imbuing the vibe with local stories showcasing local values. When you're in Downtown Denver in 2035, you don't feel like you could be in any downtown anywhere else.

At night, live music fills all kinds of evening establishments. There are cultural performances, festivals, community events and/or sporting events almost every night of the week catering to people from all walks of life and socioeconomic segments.

Upper Downtown and the Denver Arts Complex are thriving all week long, due in part to the masterful expansion of the Colorado Convention Center. The reason for the area's success is based on how well the public and private sectors collaborated to enable the development of a true convention center and cultural district, including new headquarter hotels and a wide variety of amenities and attractions.

Lower Downtown is another bustling community and visitor hub around Union Station. The neighborhood's zealous commitment to historic preservation and the original, founding narratives of the city are now respected and copied nationwide.

People who visit and live in Denver are usually outdoors types, so the many parks and other green spaces throughout Downtown Denver are humming with energy throughout the year. Families, couples, leisure and business travelers and everyone else commingle easily outdoors because Denver’s DNA is forged in a celebration of active lifestyles and a healthy community spirit.

Denver’s vibrancy didn’t happen by accident. It took a bunch of industry and community leaders in 2025 to come together and fully commit to achieving their shared long-term goals for Denver.

The launch of the Denver Tourism Roadmap in early 2025 established a new destination vision for the city through the lens of the visitor economy: **“Denver is the world’s most cultural and dynamic outdoor city.”** Everything existed in Denver to deliver on that vision at the time, but the coalition of stakeholders in the community and travel industry rolled up their sleeves, worked their networks, raised new funding, leaned in and made it happen.

Downtown Denver looks different in another way as well. It’s much bigger in 2035 and more integrated with the rest of the city.

The Auraria District is seamlessly connected to the central business district with the successful reunification process traversing North Speer Boulevard and Cherry Creek. The three universities and Ball Arena have helped fill Downtown Denver businesses seven days a week. Likewise, the River Mile neighborhood in 2035 is a modern, mixed-used and vibrant district along South Platte River that gave Downtown Denver a true waterfront experience.

From a visitor perspective in 2035, Downtown Denver is a launch pad for neighborhoods beyond the urban core. The RiNo Art District especially is a major draw for every type of traveler. The creative community has been leading Denver’s evolution as a vibrant global city by providing spaces and places for the city’s best and brightest to express their creativity on par with other major global metros. The RiNo BID renewal in 2025 was a major catalyst for Denver expanding beyond its well-earned sports, business and beer reputation forged in the early 21st century.

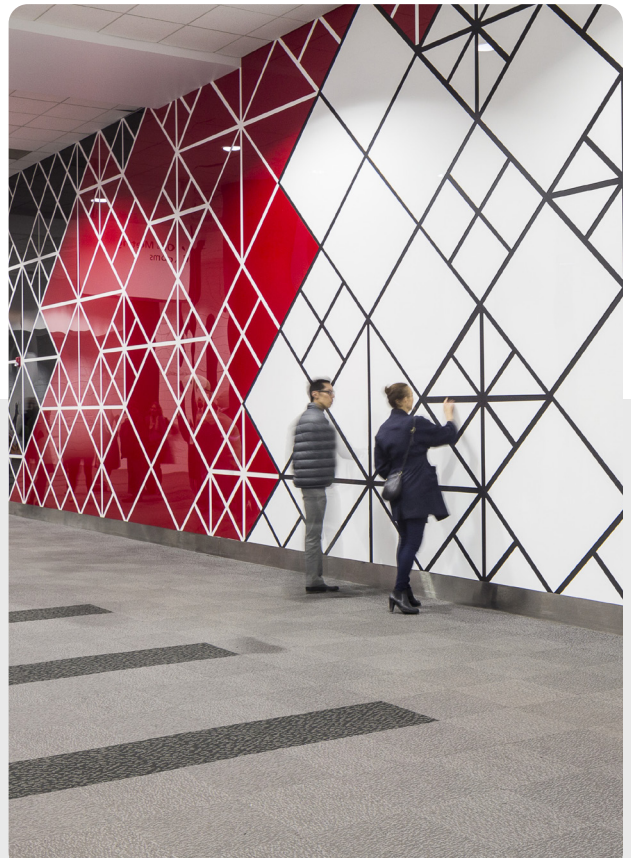
In 2035, visitors from around the world see Denver as one of America’s true cosmopolitan capitals and a global connectivity hub, with an unparalleled outdoor spirit welcoming everyone to the pulsing heart of the Rocky Mountains.

## Strategic Framework

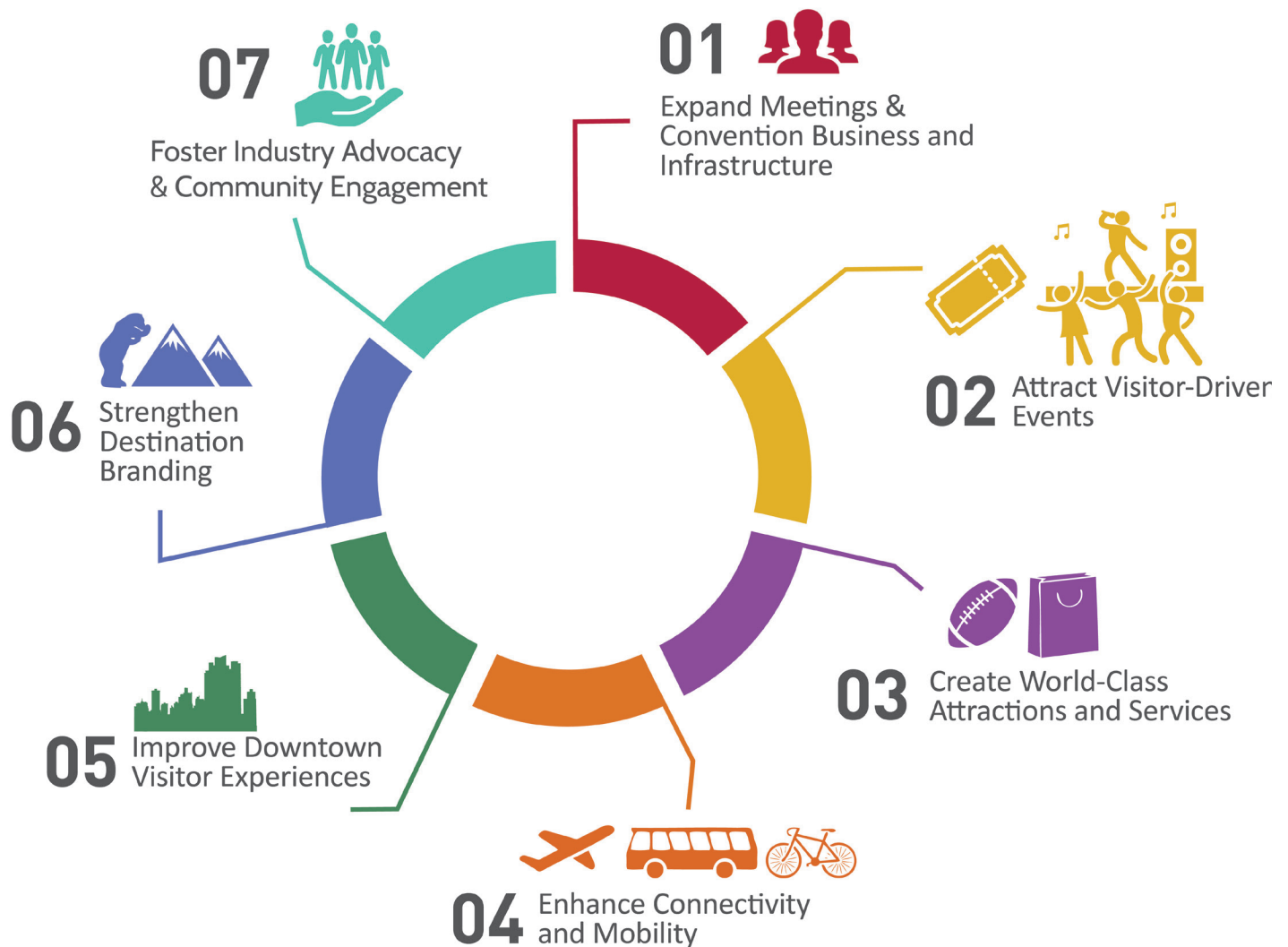
The Denver Tourism Roadmap’s strategic framework consists of seven overarching strategic goals with a series of actionable initiatives for each. The entire framework was developed based on a year of industry and community stakeholder engagement during 2024.

### The stakeholder engagement included:

- More than 25 individual interviews with high-level city and industry leaders.
- A total of 256 community and industry stakeholders participated in a DestinationNEXT Assessment to evaluate 24 variables related to the strength of the visitor experience and public/private sector alignment.
- 12 focus groups with leaders in various industry/ community segments ranging from hotels to transportation.
- A resident sentiment survey was fielded to engage the community and help inform the plan’s priorities and guiding principles. More than 600 residents participated in the 2024 survey.



## The seven strategic goals for the Denver Tourism Roadmap are:



The strategic goals and actionable initiatives were finalized by the project team in collaboration with VISIT DENVER and the Denver Tourism Roadmap Steering Committee, composed of VISIT DENVER's Board of Directors.

## Implementation Strategy

Looking forward, the implementation process to move this plan forward involves developing flow charts that identify people and organizations who are committed to executing all the various action items. There should also be timelines, targets and performance measurements established to ensure accountability and promote successes on an ongoing basis.

Some of the plan's initiatives are short-term and can bear fruit quickly. Other initiatives will require sustained efforts and resources for years to come.

Many people living and working in Denver contributed to the development of the Denver Tourism Roadmap. Together, they identified what they believe is best for the future of the city and they defined how visitor dollars can best help Denver become the world's most cultural and dynamic outdoor city in the next 10 years.

It is now up to the community to achieve that vision so area residents and business owners can create a better life for themselves, their loved ones and their neighbors.





# Table of Contents

- Introduction** ..... 7
- Regional Alignment** ..... 11
- Guiding Principles** ..... 12
- Denver’s Tourism Industry Today** ..... 13
- Destination Vision** ..... 18
- Strategic Goals & Initiatives** ..... 20
  - Expand Meetings/Convention Business and Infrastructure ..... 21
  - Attract Visitor-Driven Events ..... 24
  - Create World Class Attractions & Services ..... 27
  - Enhance Connectivity and Mobility ..... 30
  - Improve Downtown Visitor Experiences ..... 33
  - Strengthen Destination Branding ..... 36
  - Foster Industry Advocacy and Community Engagement ..... 39
- Implementation Strategy** ..... 42



# DENVER *Tourism* ROADMAP



## Introduction

**The purpose of the Denver Tourism Roadmap is to establish a groundwork for optimizing the city’s visitor economy and increasing visitor spending in alignment with the needs of the community.**

This 10-year destination master plan builds on the success of the previous Denver Tourism Roadmap completed in November 2016. The first six overarching strategic goals for this plan are the same as the 2016 version, but the more than 50 actionable initiatives are all new. There is also a new seventh strategic goal in this plan: “Foster Industry Advocacy and Community Engagement.”

Denver’s visitor economy has been enjoying tremendous success the past few years. According to Longwoods International, Denver welcomed a record 37.4 million visitors in 2023, generating \$10.3 billion in tourism revenue. That figure is well beyond the previous record of \$9.4 billion that visitors spent in 2022.

The reasons for developing a new Denver Tourism Roadmap in 2025 are clear.

First, no city should rest on its laurels in the global visitor marketplace today. Other cities in Denver’s competitive set, such as Las Vegas and Dallas, are investing billions of dollars in modern new infrastructure, attractions and experiences. Second, there is an unprecedented amount of new development in Denver, much of which can benefit significantly from visitor spending. There needs to be updated strategies integrating all those developments together and defining how visitors will navigate among them. And third, cities across the continent saw the direct benefits of increased public and private collaboration during the COVID pandemic. Every destination master plan today, just like this one, must prioritize industry and community engagement to ensure and enhance local quality of life.

Therefore, the process to develop the Denver Tourism Roadmap delved deeply into local public and private sector planning documents to ensure synergies between this plan and others. That is critical. Local government, industry and community leaders must be aligned around the Roadmap’s strategic framework. More than anything else, that will determine to what degree all the actionable initiatives are implemented successfully.

The year-long process to develop the Denver Tourism Roadmap included five phases:

1) Project Research, Planning & Management; 2) Destination Assessment; 3) Stakeholder Engagement; 4) Visioning Workshop; and 5) Plan Development & Validation. Following the launch of the Roadmap, there will be another phase with VISIT DENVER specifically to develop a new 3-year strategic plan for the organization, which will include some dedicated, high-level strategies to help steward the implementation of this plan forward.

Regarding phase #3, the project teams conducted more than 25 individual interviews and facilitated 12 focus groups with industry and community stakeholders. These engagement sessions were the most important part of the process because the plan needs as much support from stakeholders as possible to help implement the action items.

# Denver Tourism Roadmap Steering Committee

The Steering Committee tasked to oversee the development of the Denver Tourism Roadmap was composed of VISIT DENVER's Board of Directors. They have been invaluable for leading the development of the Denver Tourism Roadmap, identifying top priorities, championing the plan in the community, and vetting all final deliverables.

**Paul Andrews**

President & CEO, National Western Stock Show & Rodeo

**Leon Barnes**

VP of Human Resources, Comcast Cable Corporation

**Matt Bell**

SVP of Venue Operations, Kroenke Sports & Entertainment

**Luis Benitez**

VP of Global Government Affairs, LuluLemon

**Albus Brooks**

VP of Business Development & Public Affairs, Milender White

**Matthew Burkett**

CEO & Founder, The Flyfisher Group

**Jennifer Chang**

Director of U.S. Federal, Cisco AppDynamics

**Rob Cohen**

Chairman & CEO, IMA Financial Group

**David Coors**

Vice Chairman, Molson Coors Beverage Company; Executive Chairman, Coors Spirits Company

**David L. Corsun**

Director & Professor - Fritz Knoebel School of Hospitality Management, University of Denver

**Navin C. Dimond**

CEO & Founder, Stonebridge Companies

**Greg Feasel**

President & COO, Colorado Rockies Baseball Club

**Brent Fedrizzi**

Co-President & COO, AEG Presents Rocky Mountains & PNW

**Andrew Feinstein**

CEO & Managing Partner, EXDO Group Companies

**Jack Finlaw**

President & CEO, University of Colorado Foundation

**Beth Gruitch**

Owner/Partner, Crafted Concepts

**Chris Hinds**

Denver City Council District 10, EVP, Matrix Design Group, Inc.

**Walter L. Isenberg**

CEO & Co-founder, Sage Hospitality Group

**Bruce A. James**

Shareholder, Brownstein, Hyatt, Farber & Schreck, LLP

**Damani Leech**

President, Denver Broncos Football Club

**Nick LeMasters**

President & CEO, Cherry Creek North BID

**Greg Leonard**

General Manager, Hyatt Regency Denver at the Colorado Convention Center

**Alison Mitchell**

General Manager, Clayton

**Todd D. Munson**

EVP & Director of Banking Services, Vectra Bank of Colorado

**Cindy Parsons**

Executive Director of ESG & Social Responsibility & Impact, CSG International

**Jenn Ridder**

Chief of Staff, Office of Mayor Mike Johnston

**Manny Rodriguez**

Chief Marketing & Experience Officer, UCHHealth

**Katie Ross**

Chief Marketing Officer, Denver Art Museum

**Brian Roth**

Regional Sales Director, United Airlines

**Jorge Sanchez**

President & CEO, Hermes Worldwide, Inc.

**Amanda Sandoval**

Denver City Council District 1

**Daniel Scherer**

SVP of General Management & Market Development, OUTFRONT Media

**Frank Schultz**

Owner & CEO, Tavern Hospitality Group

**Janice Sinden**

President & CEO, Denver Center for the Performing Arts

**Hollie Velasquez Horvath**

Regional VP, Xcel Energy

**Robert Venus**

Vice President General Manager

**Sid Wilson**

President, A Private Guide, Inc.

**J.J. Ament**

President & CEO, Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce

**Dr. Angelic Cole**

President/CEO, Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce

**Mike Ferrufino**

President & CEO, Colorado Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

**Kourtney Garrett**

President & CEO, Downtown Denver Partnership

**Debra Johnson**

General Manager & CEO, Regional Transportation District

**Deborah Jordy**

Executive Director, Scientific & Cultural Facilities District

**Adeeb Khan**

Executive Director, Department of Economic Development & Opportunity

**Amie Mayhew**

President & CEO, Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association

**Melanie Mills**

President & CEO, Colorado Ski Country USA

**Sonia Riggs**

President & CEO, Colorado Restaurant Association

**Kate Rizzo**

General Manager, Sodexo Live!

**Phil Washington**

CEO, Denver International Airport

**Tim Wolfe**

Director, Colorado Tourism Office

**Gretchen Hollrah**

Executive Director, Denver Arts & Venues

**A. Barry Hirschfeld**

President & CEO, A.B. Hirschfeld & Sons

**Edward A. Robinson**

Retired, Robinson Management, LLC

**Ed Gerrity**

Retired, Delta Airlines

**Al Timothy**

Retired, MillerCoors

## Honorary Board Members

Colorado Governor **Jared Polis**

Denver Mayor **Mike Johnston**



## Project Team

**Paul Ouimet**

Founder, MMGY NextFactor

**Cassandra McAuley**

Managing Director, MMGY NextFactor

**Greg Oates**

SVP Innovation, MMGY NextFactor

**Shelly Green**

Executive Consultant, MMGY NextFactor

**Teresa Allan**

Senior Manager, Client Success, MMGY NextFactor



# Plan Development Process

2024	Activities
<b>January</b>	Project Team Familiarization Trip Project Goal Setting Community Engagement Planning Project Management Planning
<b>February</b>	Steering Committee Launch Review of City/Industry Planning Documents
<b>March</b>	DestinationNEXT Stakeholder Survey Launch Destination Assessment Steering Committee Meeting
<b>April</b>	Focus Groups & Interviews
<b>May</b>	Focus Groups & Interviews
<b>June</b>	Focus Groups & Interviews Customer Advisory Board Meeting Steering Committee Meeting
<b>July</b>	DestinationNEXT Results Analysis
<b>August</b>	Visioning Workshop
<b>September</b>	Stakeholder Engagement Analysis
<b>October</b>	Plan Development Steering Committee Meetings
<b>November</b>	Plan Development
<b>December</b>	Plan Validation

## Stakeholder Engagement

Understanding the priorities of community and industry leaders in Denver forged the foundation for all decision-making throughout the development of the Denver Tourism Roadmap.

**25+**

INTERVIEWS WITH  
INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY  
STAKEHOLDERS

**12**

FOCUS GROUPS  
WITH  
119 PARTICIPANTS

**256**

RESPONDENTS TO  
DESTINATIONNEXT  
ASSESSMENT

**619**

RESPONDENTS TO  
RESIDENT SENTIMENT  
SURVEY







# Regional Alignment

A wide range of existing planning documents from the city, county and private/non-profit organizations were analyzed to inform the development of the Denver Tourism Roadmap. VISIT DENVER and the project team recognize and respect the overwhelming body of planning work and construction being done in Denver. This plan is designed to help support the success of those plan’s strategic initiatives across the city.



- Comprehensive Plan 2040
- 16th Street Mall Project
- 2023 Denver Economic Development & Opportunity Strategic Plan
- Denver Moves Everyone 2050
- Vibrant Downtown Denver
- Blueprint Denver
- Together We Will: Public Health & Public Safety
- Downtown-Auraria Reunification Vision
- Imagine 2020: Denver’s Cultural Plan
- The Outdoor Downtown
- Downtown Parks Update
- The Lower Downtown Neighborhood Plan
- Neighborhood Planning Initiative Strategic Plan
- Housing an Inclusive Denver
- Near Northwest/Near Southeast/ West/East/East Central Area Plans
- Galleria and Sculpture Park Activation
- Denver Moves: Pedestrians & Trails



- Downtown Area Plan
- Upper Downtown: A Renewed Focus



The River Mile Master Plan



Strategic Plan 2024-28



Economic Activity Study of Metro Denver Culture



Vision 100 and Operation 2045 (Two phases of strategic plan)

# Guiding Principles

**These guiding principles reflect the core values for community and industry stakeholders living in Denver.**

## **Reconnect the City With Itself**

There are so many major urban developments reshaping Denver, including the 16th Street Mall, Auraria District, North Speer Boulevard and Cherry Creek, and the River Mile neighborhood along South Platte River. Upon completion, these developments will vastly expand the footprint of downtown that will be a major catalyst for Denver achieving its vision as a truly global city. Success depends on connecting all the new neighborhoods and existing communities with seamless multimodal mobility options and extensive wayfinding to maximize quality of life for residents and quality of place for visitors.

## **Strong Connection With the Outdoors**

Denver's proximity to some of the world's most popular mountain ranges has always imbued the city with a strong connection to nature. That same outdoor spirit is prevalent in the city as well, where residents want to be outside 12 months of the year. Therefore, improving walkability, expanding outdoor green spaces and a greater focus on environmental sustainability are paramount to provide residents and visitors more ways to cherish the city's relationship with nature.

## **Welcoming Spirit & Sense of Security**

Many stakeholders emphasized the need for Downtown Denver to feel exceptionally welcoming for all residents and visitors. There have been major improvements in safety and security, but there's more work to be done to attract more families with children, older generations and residents living outside the downtown core. Enhancing the optics of safety and security is an iterative process that will take a number of years, but making people feel more comfortable during every day and night of the week is an absolute must because many of the initiatives in this plan depend on that.

## **Dynamic & Diverse Destination Vibe**

Denver is a complete and vibrant city with so much to offer as a place to live, visit and invest. Denver is a huge college and professional sports. The food and beer scene competes with the best in the country. There's a robust arts and cultural community and an established innovation sector leading in multiple advanced industries. However, the visitor doesn't always feel that broad spectrum of energy when traveling to Denver, especially downtown. Residents and industry stakeholders love having so much to experience in their city, but they feel more can be done to amplify certain aspects of the community, especially the creative sector. RiNo does an excellent job at that, but locals would like to see more of that vibe in the urban core.

## **Ambitious, Optimistic & Can-Do Attitude**

Denver evolved from a gateway destination to a visitor destination in its own right in one generation. Denverites have proven they can accomplish great things when they put their heart into it and work together around a shared vision for the future. That commitment and intention is exactly what this destination master plan requires to succeed. Visitors can feel the western frontier spirit in Denver, passed down from generations of men and women who built this great city at the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. That same can-do attitude is required again to realize Denver's destiny as a global metropolis and a beacon for the best of America.



# Denver's Tourism Industry Today

To set the stage for the developing the Denver Tourism Roadmap's strategic framework, it's important to understand how the global visitor economy is evolving.

## Global Industry Trends

### 1 The rise of generative AI:

ChatGPT and the many other AI models augment strategic planning for destination, event and community development. AI also gives industry stakeholders the ability to optimize and personalize marketing efforts at scale.

### 2 Community development is destination development:

Workforce housing and workforce development are now critical priorities for any destination master plan. Resident quality of life is influencing strategic planning more, and crime and homelessness are reaching crisis levels in many cities. Community wellbeing and alignment is now a cornerstone for destination/tourism development.

### 3 Remote work is impacting downtown vibrancy:

Downtown occupancy remains low in North America following the COVID pandemic, although national retailers have been closing down for more than a decade. This is having negative impacts on the quality of downtown vibrancy, so cities are relying more than ever on the visitor economy.

### 4 Return of meetings business is uneven:

Cities with more resident traffic and visitor amenities downtown and near convention centers are faring better. Cities are increasing their event incentive funding to compete more effectively in a very competitive marketplace. Meeting planners are faced with unprecedented rising costs, and tier-2 cities will benefit from that.



## 5 Outdoor recreation remains strong:

The robust surge in demand for outdoor experiences began during the pandemic and continues today. There is an increasing focus on innovating outdoor experiences to be more competitive.

## 6 Visitors are aligning travel and purpose:

More people are booking travel based on how experiences will contribute to their own personal goals. Travel industry content needs to evolve to engage purposeful travelers more effectively.

## 7 Sustainability and DEI continue to be growing priorities for meeting planners in some states:

More event RFPs require vetting of partners in social and environmental stewardship. Travelers are increasingly interested in places and products that make a positive impact in the community. Red states are now challenging this trend though, and many association planners are adapting city selection criteria accordingly.

## 8 Mobility and transportation are major challenges:

Cities are prioritizing investments in transportation infrastructure to support growth. Multimodal mobility ecosystems are essential to provide more streamlined options for visitors and locals. Midsize cities with modern mobility systems and easily navigable urban cores are becoming more and more popular travel destinations.

## 9 Fierce competition in sports tourism:

Arguably the fastest growing segment in travel today, youth sports and sports tourism in general are rising as a major competitive market for destinations. Today, there are massive investments in new and upgraded facilities, along with supporting hotel inventory.

## 10 Innovation is increasingly a competitive advantage:

More cities of all sizes are investing billions in modern infrastructure and high-tech product development to compete for visitors. Investing in innovation is no longer just a priority for tier-1 cities.



# Current Tourism Profile

According to Longwoods International, Denver welcomed a record 37.4 million visitors in 2023, generating \$10.3 billion in tourism revenue. That is almost 10% higher than the previous record of \$9.4 billion that visitors spent in 2022. The following data verifies the health of Denver’s growing visitor economy, breaks down travel spending behavior and highlights overall economic and employment impacts.

## Visitor Economy

- The 37.4 million total visitors in 2023 include 20.5 million overnight visitors and 16.9 million day visitors.
- There were 7.6 million “marketable” leisure visitors in 2023. This segment has the most discretion on where to vacation and responds to tourism marketing. This audience is the primary focus of much of VISIT DENVER’s marketing efforts and spends more time and money in-market than any other leisure visitor type.
- Denver visitors spent \$10.3 billion in 2023, including \$8.8 billion from overnight visitors and an additional \$1.6 billion in spending from day visitors.
- Denver overnight visitors spent nearly \$2.5 billion on accommodations, and nearly \$1.5 billion on food and beverages.
- Expenditures by overnight visitors on transportation reached nearly \$3 billion. Retail purchases were \$1 billion, while overnight visitors spent nearly \$750 million on paid attractions and other recreational and sightseeing activities.
- On average in 2023, leisure travelers spent \$428 per day. Business visitors spent \$433 per day, and day visitors spent \$88 per day.
- Out-of-state overnight leisure travelers comprised 69% of visitors.

## Denver International Airport (DEN)

DEN is Colorado’s largest economic engine, bringing in \$33 billion annually. Based on the strength of its domestic network, DEN has outperformed nearly every other airport in the country during and after the pandemic on a host of measures.

In terms of passenger counts, DEN is the third busiest in the country and fifth busiest in the world. In 2022, DEN had 69.3 million passengers, surpassing the previous record set in 2019. For 2023, DEN set another record, welcoming 77.8 million passengers, up 12.3% over the previous year.

DEN is also planning for future growth. Vision 100 and Operation 2045, the two phases of DEN’s strategic plan, will enable the airport to prepare for and reach 100 million annual passengers in the next eight to 10 years.

## Economic & Employment Impact

The tourism industry is a major contributor to the employment and tax base in Denver and the surrounding metro area. In 2023:

- The tourism industry employed 44,750 people in Denver City and County.
- The tourism industry employed 73,600 people in the Denver metro area.
- The City of Denver received \$589 million in local taxes supported by tourism and dedicated \$130 million to the tourism sector. The City of Denver therefore received a net benefit of \$459 million or a benefit of \$1,559 per household.
- For every dollar spent directly on the tourism industry, the City of Denver gained \$4.52 in revenue.



37.4M

VISITORS  
IN 2023



20.5M

OVERNIGHT  
VISITORS IN 2023



\$10.3B

VISITOR SPEND  
IN 2023



69.3M

AIRPORT  
PASSENGERS IN 2023



\$589M

IN LOCAL TAXES  
SUPPORTED BY  
TOURISM

# DestinationNEXT Stakeholder Assessment

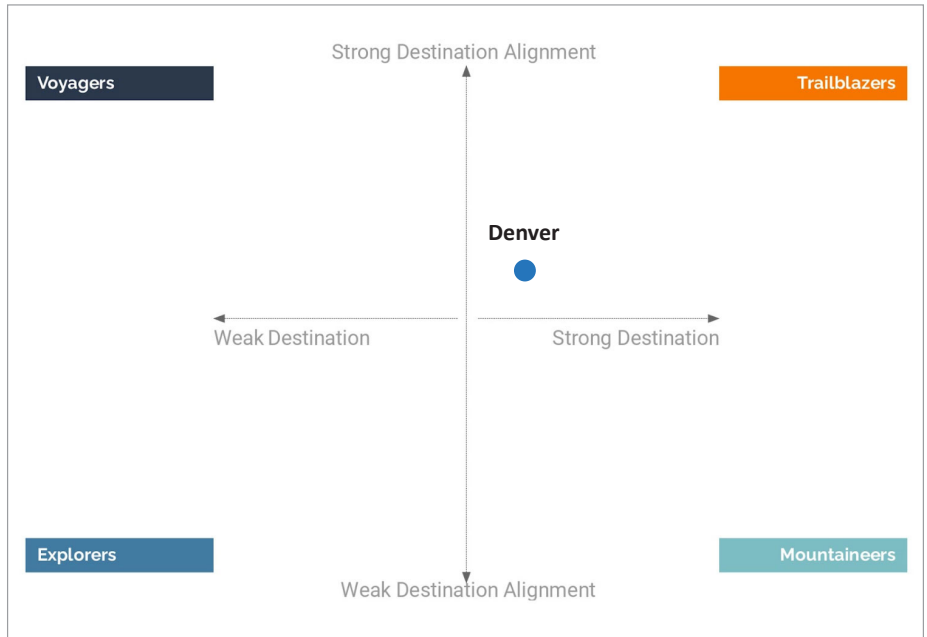
Developed by MMGY NextFactor, the comprehensive DestinationNEXT Assessment tool is a global tourism industry standard designed to empirically measure how a specific destination’s visitor economy is performing across a wide spectrum of indicators.

The methodology incorporates an in-depth survey of government officials, tourism leaders, community organizations, business owners and other key stakeholders. The survey questions focus on 24 different variables related to overall destination strength, including visitor industry infrastructure, experiences and services, and overall destination alignment, focusing on how well government, community and industry leaders work together.

The survey data is then plotted into a quadrant scenario model that compares the destination with more than 400 DestinationNEXT Assessments in other communities. The results provide valuable business intelligence identifying the greatest opportunities and most significant challenges for the region’s visitor economy.

## Denver 2024 DestinationNEXT Results

A total of 256 local industry and community stakeholders participated in the Denver 2024 DestinationNEXT survey.



## Highest and Lowest Ranked Variables

The following are the highest and lowest ranked variables in VISIT DENVER’s 2024 DestinationNEXT survey of community and industry stakeholders. A ranking of 3.5 is average based on more than 400 DestinationNEXT Assessments in other cities. The red flags in this survey with the lowest scores, where attention is most required according to respondents, are: health and safety (homelessness/crime), local mobility and access, and workforce development.

### Highest Ranked

#### Destination Strength Variables (out of 5)

Outdoor Recreation	4.65
Attractions & Experiences	4.28
Arts, Culture & Heritage	4.26
Conventions & Meetings	4.21
Sporting Events	4.21

### Highest Ranked

#### Community Alignment Variables (out of 5)

Economic Development	4.32
Organization Governance	4.25
Business Support	4.25
Regional Cooperation	4.18
Government Support	4.07

### Lowest Ranked

#### Destination Strength Variables (out of 5)

Health & Safety	2.78
Local Mobility & Access	3.28
Accommodation	3.73
Communication Infrastructure	3.80
Events & Festivals	3.88

### Lowest Ranked

#### Community Alignment Variables (out of 5)

Workforce Development	2.93
Emergency Preparedness	3.61
Funding Support & Certainty	3.83
Community Group & Resident Support	3.86
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion	3.96







# Destination Vision

**The following Destination Vision provides high-level direction for the future of Denver’s visitor economy, based on the collective input from a diverse spectrum of community leaders and travel industry stakeholders.**

The Destination Vision is a desired future state for Denver. It is not a consumer-facing marketing statement. Rather, it’s a due north for organizations in Denver to come together and collaboratively implement the initiatives in the Denver Tourism Roadmap.

During the development of the plan, three unique thematic signatures emerged from the community engagement throughout the city:

1. Denver is, and always has been, an outdoor destination.
2. Denver was built on the vision and energy of its people, creating a dynamic destination and community spirit.
3. Denver is hyper-connected to the world.

Based on those three signatures, the following Destination Vision for the Denver Tourism Roadmap is:

“ Denver is the world’s most cultural & dynamic outdoor city. ”

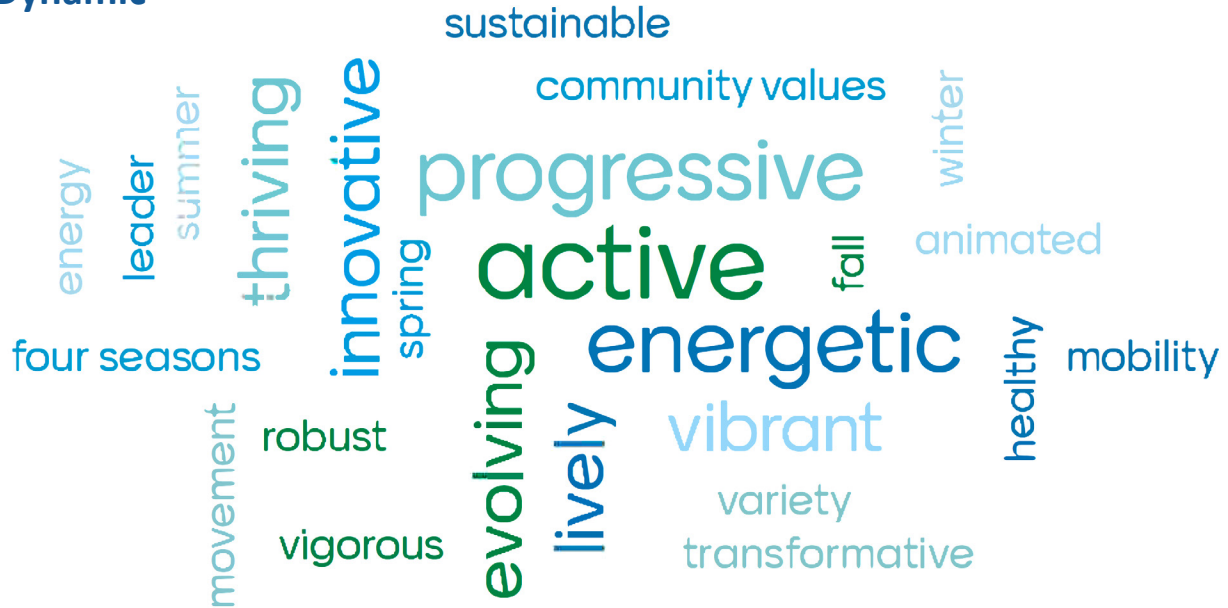
---

## Exploring the Meaning

To vet that Vision, the Steering Committee explored all the various meanings of “dynamic” and “culture.” The purpose of the exercise was to expand how community and industry leaders define those themes, and therefore increase consensus to embrace them.

The following two word clouds show the many variations on the themes of dynamic and culture. One high-level takeaway was the importance of characterizing culture well above and beyond the specificity of arts and culture. It goes without saying that arts and culture is of major importance for Denver achieving its vision as a global city. Culture can mean many different things to many people.

### Dynamic



### Culture



# Strategic Goals & Initiatives

The strategic framework for the Denver Tourism Roadmap is anchored by seven overarching goals, each supported by actionable initiatives. These goals and initiatives were crafted through an extensive year-long community engagement process, ensuring they reflect the priorities of public officials, industry leaders, and residents alike.

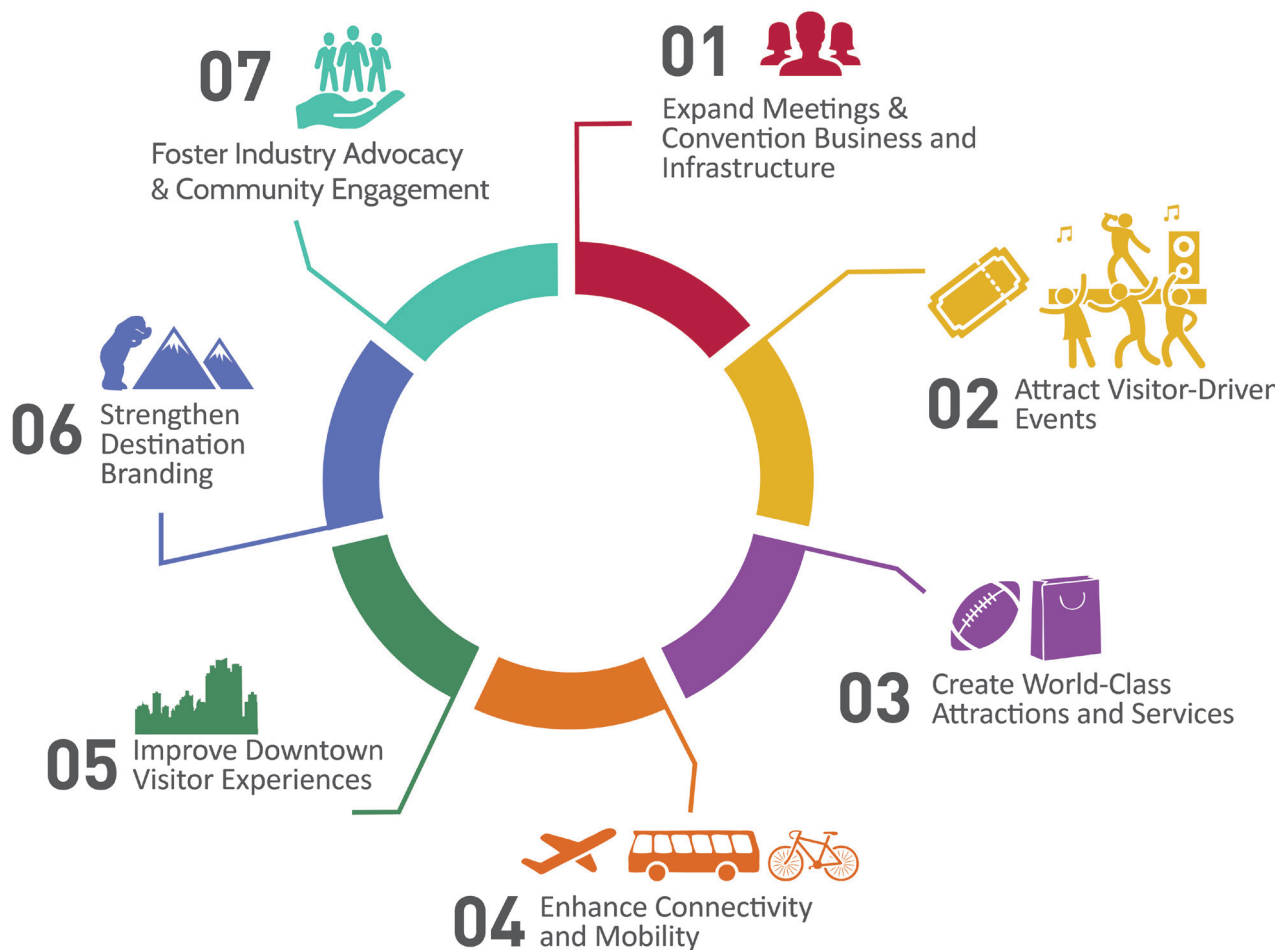
For a 10-year destination master plan, the high-level strategic goals typically remain consistent over time. However, the specific initiatives under each goal are dynamic and adaptable, requiring regular review and refinement within the framework of implementation work plans. This approach allows the roadmap to remain a living document, responsive to shifts within the community and the visitor economy.

A structured flow chart guiding execution and tracking progress will keep the plan agile, enabling continuous alignment with local developments and market trends. The plan includes both short-term initiatives and longer-term ambitions, some of which will require years to realize.

VISIT DENVER will adopt varying levels of involvement based on its resources. For select initiatives, it will lead or co-lead efforts, while for others, it will support and enable aligned organizations. In some instances, VISIT DENVER's role will be advisory, ensuring it contributes insight and influence toward collective goals.

The successful implementation of this roadmap will rely on local community and industry champions stepping forward to lead specific actions, build coalitions, and drive effective execution.

## The seven strategic goals of the Denver Tourism Roadmap are:





# Expand Meetings/Convention Business and Infrastructure



Denver stands at a pivotal moment in its evolution as a premier conventions and meetings destination. The Colorado Convention Center (CCC) has long served as an economic engine for the city, but today's competitive landscape demands a bold vision that transforms the facility and its surrounding district into an integrated campus that seamlessly blends business, culture, entertainment and innovation.

The meetings and conventions industry represents a crucial driver of Denver's visitor economy, delivering substantial economic impact through direct spending, tax revenues and support for local businesses. However, competition for valuable convention business has intensified as cities across North America make unprecedented investments in their facilities and surrounding districts.

To maintain and grow Denver's market share, the city must reimagine the CCC not just as a venue, but as the heart of a dynamic urban experience that showcases Denver's unique attributes and values.

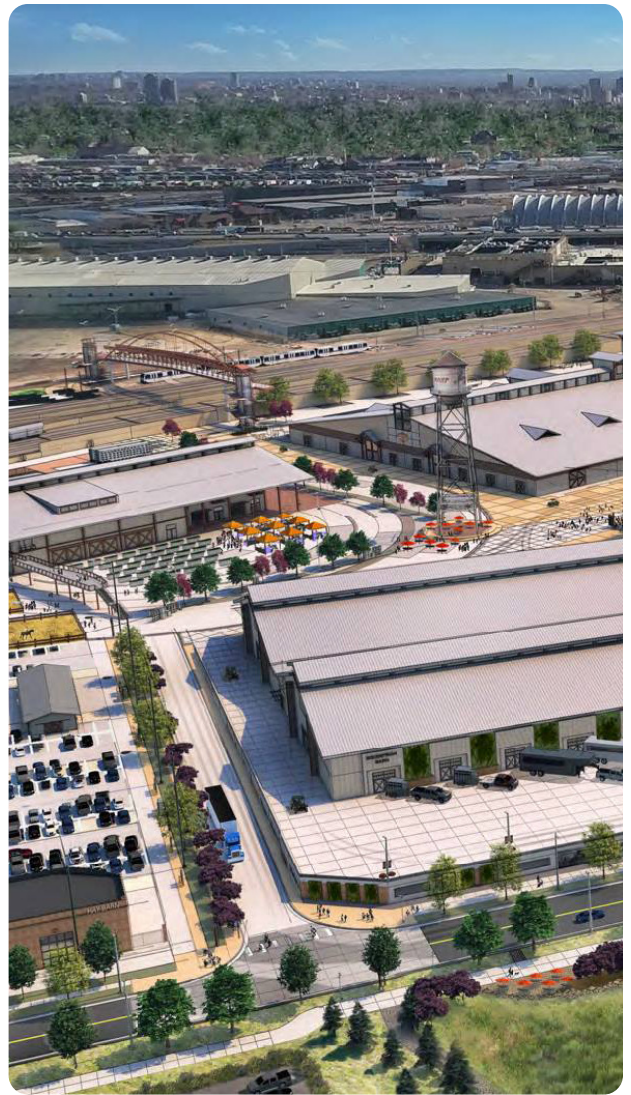
Central to this vision is the creation of a true convention and cultural campus that extends beyond the CCC's walls. The Downtown Auraria Unification Vision and Off-Center Project present opportunities to weave the convention district into the fabric of downtown, creating fluid connections between meeting spaces, hotels, entertainment venues and cultural institutions like the Denver Art Museum and the Clyfford Still Museum. Imagine attendees seamlessly transitioning from a conference session to exploring the vibrant RiNo Art District, or enjoying a performance at the Denver Performing Arts Complex, or exploring some of Denver's coolest local neighborhoods like Cherry Creek and Highland. This integration will transform the attendee experience from one of isolated convention activities to immersive engagement with Denver's vibrant urban core.

The addition of a new large downtown meeting hotel, such as the proposals for an 800-1,000 room hotel within a block of the CCC, will address a critical need for increased room inventory while enhancing the district's energy and walkability. Complementing these developments, Denver envisions a network of creative offsite venues that capitalize on the city's distinctive spaces and places, providing convention planners with unique options for large gatherings that showcase Denver's character. Imagine a reception held at the Denver Botanic Gardens, a gala dinner at the historic Union Station or a teambuilding event at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre.

Technology will play a pivotal role in differentiating Denver’s convention experience. By investing in best-in-class digital infrastructure and interactive experiences within the CCC, Denver can create memorable moments that highlight Colorado’s excellence in sports, outdoor recreation, arts, culture and culinary innovation. Imagine attendees utilizing augmented reality to experience a hike in the Rocky Mountains or a virtual reality tour of Denver’s craft breweries. The integration of essential attendee services, from daycare to quiet spaces, reflects Denver’s commitment to inclusivity and modern business needs.

The National Western Center’s evolution into a multi-purpose facility presents additional opportunities to diversify Denver’s event portfolio, hosting events like the National Western Stock Show and Rodeo alongside conventions and conferences. Meanwhile, a new Convention Ambassador Program will leverage local industry leaders to attract high-value conventions in advanced sectors like aerospace, technology and renewable energy. This combination of physical infrastructure, technological capability and human capital positions Denver to compete effectively for national and international events.

Success in this endeavor requires more than building structures. It demands creating experiences that resonate with today’s meeting planners and attendees while generating lasting economic benefits for Denver’s community.



#### STRATEGIC GOAL

# 01 Actionable Initiatives

## Expand Meetings/Convention Business and Infrastructure

- a. The CCC and surrounding areas become a true convention and cultural campus. (e.g., Downtown Auraria Unification Vision, Off-Center Project).
- b. New downtown large meeting hotel (CCC Master Plan and SAG Study) and other hotels.
- c. Creative and unique offsite venues/experiences near the CCC for large attendee gatherings.
- d. CCC is best-in-class for technology infrastructure and digital experience.
- e. Elevated, fun and interactive attendee experiences within the CCC to showcase local excellence in sports/outdoor recreation, arts/culture (e.g., Colorado Music Hall of Fame) and food/beverage.
- f. The National Western Center is a multi-purpose facility that attracts a greater variety of events.
- g. A Convention Ambassador Program with local leaders in advanced industries helps capture national convention business.
- h. Attendee services within the CCC (e.g., daycare, mothers’ pods, quiet/sensory spaces, etc.)





# 02 Attract Visitor-Driven Events



Denver’s identity as a world-class destination is increasingly shaped by its ability to host memorable events that capture the imagination of visitors while enriching the lives of residents. The city’s diverse venues—from the iconic 16th Street Mall to emerging and evolving creative spaces like the RiNo Art Park and the Denver Performing Arts Complex—provide an extraordinary canvas for events that showcase Denver’s vibrant culture, innovative spirit and natural beauty. Imagine a fashion show set against the backdrop of the Denver Art Museum’s Hamilton Building, or a tech conference utilizing the immersive environments of Meow Wolf Denver | Convergence Station.

The evolution of the events landscape demands a strategic, collaborative approach to event development and execution. Through the formation of an event strategy committee working in concert with the City of Denver’s Office of Special Events, Denver can create a cohesive vision that maximizes the economic and cultural impact of its event portfolio. This partnership ensures that events are not just individually successful but collectively contribute to Denver’s brand identity and visitor appeal.

Denver’s vision encompasses a dynamic mix of signature annual events that celebrate its distinctive attributes. From culinary festivals like the Great American Beer Festival, which draws thousands of beer enthusiasts to the city each fall, to cultural celebrations like the Juneteenth Music Festival, which honors Denver’s rich African American heritage, these events serve as powerful drivers of visitation while strengthening the community fabric. The potential addition of prestigious events like the Sundance Film Festival and expansion of Denver’s existing festival calendar, such as the Denver Film Festival and the Five Points Jazz Festival, present opportunities to establish Denver as a leading cultural beacon in the western United States.

Sports and outdoor recreation events leverage Denver’s natural advantages and passionate fan base. By pursuing high-profile competitions like international soccer matches at Dick’s Sporting Goods Park, all-star games at Coors Field, and emerging sports trends like the Dew Tour, Denver can showcase its world-class facilities while attracting diverse audience segments. These events not only generate significant economic impact but also reinforce Denver’s reputation as a premier sports destination.



Looking to the future, Denver is uniquely positioned to host events that align with its growing reputation as a hub for innovation and creativity. By developing events focused on advanced industries like artificial intelligence, with events like the AI Summit at the Colorado Convention Center, esports tournaments at the National Western Center, and interactive technology showcases at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, Denver can attract high-value visitors while supporting the city's economic development goals. These events serve the dual purpose of driving tourism and strengthening Denver's position in the global innovation economy.

The attraction of major industry events, like U.S. Travel Association's IPW and the Global Business Travel Association Convention, represent strategic opportunities to showcase Denver to travel industry decision-makers, creating a multiplier effect that can influence future business development and visitation patterns. These gatherings position Denver as a leading voice in the global tourism conversation while generating immediate economic benefits.

Success in this arena requires careful curation of events that resonate with both visitors and locals, strategic use of Denver's varied venues, and seamless coordination among stakeholders. By executing this comprehensive events strategy, Denver will create a year-round calendar of distinctive experiences that drive visitation, enhance its destination appeal, and contribute to the city's prosperity and quality of life.



#### STRATEGIC GOAL

## 02 Actionable Initiatives

### Attract Visitor-Driven Events

- a. Event strategy committee to collaborate with the City of Denver's Office of Special Events to identify, recruit, implement and grow all types of events.
- b. Visitor-facing events across the city (e.g., on/off the Mall, Skyline Park, Glenarm, Civic Center Park/Greek Theater/Bannock, Sculpture Park, Fillmore Plaza, RiNo Art Park, NWC, World Trade Center at Fox Park).
- c. Signature annual events and festivals:
  - i. Culinary, beer, spirits and wine (e.g. Denver Food & Wine, Taste of Mexico, Green Chili Battle)
  - ii. Arts, culture, history, music and film (Sundance Film Festival, Jazz Fest, Biennial, Buskerfest, Latino Music Festival, large July 4 fireworks, Thanksgiving Parade)
  - iii. Sports and outdoors (e.g., all-star games, international soccer and rugby, motorsports, trending sports)
- d. Events focusing on advanced and creative industries in collaboration with the City of Denver (e.g., esports, Artificial Intelligence, tech trail with augmented reality, etc.).
- e. Host domestic and international industry events (GBTA, IPW).



# Create World Class Attractions & Services



Denver stands ready to elevate its destination appeal through transformative investments in attractions and experiences that will reshape the urban landscape and visitor economy. As global competition for leisure travelers intensifies, successful destinations must offer distinctive, immersive experiences that create lasting memories while authentically reflecting local character and culture.

At the heart of this transformation is the ambitious vision for stadium redevelopment. Imagine Empower Field at Mile High, home to the Denver Broncos, transformed with a retractable roof, capable of hosting major sporting events like the Super Bowl or NCAA Final Four, year-round concerts, and international exhibitions regardless of weather. This enhancement would significantly expand Denver's capacity to host major events, positioning the city as a premier entertainment destination in the country.



The development of a centralized music district presents an opportunity to amplify Denver's creative spirit and nightlife scene. Drawing inspiration from iconic entertainment districts like Austin's 6th Street and Nashville's Broadway Street, imagine a revitalized Larimer Square brimming with live music venues, clubs and restaurants, creating a distinctive sense of place and a natural gathering space for visitors and locals alike. This vibrant corridor would not only drive tourism but also support Denver's thriving local music industry and contribute to the city's renowned cultural vibrancy.

Denver's vision extends beyond individual attractions to embrace the authentic character of its diverse neighborhoods. Areas like Five Points, with its rich jazz history and iconic venues like the Rossonian Hotel, and South Broadway, known for its eclectic mix of vintage shops, art galleries and live music venues like the Hi-Dive, can be more "visitor ready" by investing in enhanced infrastructure, walkability and programming. That will create more compelling incentives for visitors to explore beyond downtown. This supports local businesses, encourages cultural preservation, and provides a more authentic and localized visitor experience.

Also, the development of new venues and event spaces at locations like Park Hill Golf Course, the National Western Center, with its state-of-the-art facilities for rodeos, equestrian events, and conferences, and the Denver Performing Arts Complex will expand Denver's capacity to host large-scale events while activating different areas of the city.

The activation of key public spaces along the Platte River, with its scenic trails and kayak rentals, and Confluence Park, where Cherry Creek and the South Platte River converge, and within Civic Center Park, home to the Denver Art Museum and the City and County Building, represents opportunities to create year-round programming that showcases Denver's outdoor lifestyle and cultural vibrancy. These spaces, combined with the emerging River Mile development, a 190-acre mixed-use project along the South Platte River, will serve as stages for events and activities that bring the city to life throughout the seasons. Imagine outdoor concerts, festivals, and art installations animating these spaces, drawing both residents and visitors to experience Denver's unique urban environment.

Central to this strategy is the celebration of Denver's multicultural heritage through experiences, events, and marketplaces that honor and showcase the city's diverse communities. Major events such as the Cinco de Mayo festival celebrating Mexican heritage, the Dragon Boat Festival showcasing Asian culture, and the Dia de los Muertos events honoring Hispanic/Latino traditions, must be more accessible and visible to visitors. By accomplishing that, Denver enhances its destination appeal, strengthens community bonds, and expands cultural understanding and exchange.

The visitor experience will be further enhanced through comprehensive multilingual support services, including wayfinding signage in multiple languages, readily available information resources, and practical amenities like foreign currency exchange. Digital neighborhood guides and interactive maps will empower visitors to explore confidently, discovering the authentic experiences that make Denver unique.

These initiatives working in concert will create a more dynamic and accessible destination that appeals to a broad spectrum of visitors while maintaining Denver's distinctive character. By executing this vision, Denver will establish itself as a must-visit destination that offers world-class attractions alongside authentic local experiences, thereby driving increased visitation and economic impact while enhancing quality of life for residents.



#### STRATEGIC GOAL

## 03 Actionable Initiatives

### Create World Class Attractions & Services

- a. Stadium redevelopment: a retractable or permanent roof to host year-round, high-profile events.
- b. A centralized music district (e.g., 6th St., Austin; Beale St., Memphis; Broadway St., Nashville).
- c. Major new tourist attraction (e.g., Magnicity, URWRLD, urban gondola).
- d. Diverse neighborhoods and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are "visitor ready" (e.g., Five Points, South Broadway).
- e. Year-round events and attractions in key public and private spaces (e.g. Platte River, Confluence Park, and Civic Center Park "For the Future", Ball Arena/River Mile).
- f. New venues, event parks and sporting arenas accommodate large sporting and non-sporting events (e.g. Park Hill Golf Course, National Western Center, Fox Park).
- g. Multicultural experiences, events and marketplaces that represent traditions and celebrations from Denver's diverse communities.
- h. International multilingual visitor information, wayfinding, menus and foreign currency exchange.
- i. Neighborhood guides, maps and digital resources.



# Enhance Connectivity and Mobility



In today's competitive tourism landscape, a destination's success is increasingly defined by how efficiently and enjoyably visitors can move throughout the region. Denver's future as a premier destination hinges on creating seamless connectivity from the moment travelers land at Denver International Airport (DEN) to their final departure, encompassing every journey in between.

Denver International Airport's ambitious Vision 100 and Operation 2045 strategic initiatives represent transformative opportunities to strengthen Denver's global accessibility and first impressions. As one of the world's leading airports, DEN serves as the gateway to international markets and positions Denver as a key connecting hub for domestic and international travelers. Flying into DEN, and seamlessly transferring to the A Line commuter rail, is a major visitor benefit that whisks passengers directly to Union Station in the heart of downtown in 40 minutes.

However, that impressive mobility solution must be coupled with efficient multimodal ground transportation in the city, because that is fundamental to Denver's growth and competitiveness.

Within the urban core, the development of a downtown mobility loop anchored by the resurrected 16th Street Mall promises to revolutionize how visitors experience Denver. Imagine strolling or cycling along the proposed 5280 Trail, a vibrant pedestrian and bike path that seamlessly connects popular destinations like the Colorado Convention Center, the Denver Art Museum, and Coors Field. This intuitive pathway will offer visitors a compelling way to explore the city while supporting Denver's sustainability goals. This signature infrastructure project will not only enhance mobility but become an attraction in itself, showcasing Denver's commitment to innovative urban planning.

The vision for comprehensive citywide transportation extends beyond downtown, recognizing that visitors increasingly seek authentic experiences throughout Denver's diverse neighborhoods. A proposed Cultural Circulator connecting downtown to City Park, with its picturesque Ferril Lake and the Denver Zoo, and Civic Center, home to the Denver Public Library and the State Capitol, combined with the Denver Metro Bus Rapid Transit Project, will create vital arteries linking key tourist areas. The integration of last-mile solutions— from e-bikes and scooters, readily available through Denver's B-cycle program, to pedicabs—ensures that visitors can easily access their desired destinations while experiencing Denver's outdoor lifestyle.



Looking to the future, the development of high-speed rail along the Front Range presents an extraordinary opportunity to connect Denver with neighboring communities, including Boulder, Fort Collins and Colorado Springs. That will expand the visitor catchment area while also reducing environmental impact. This regional connectivity, combined with continued improvements to I-70 mountain corridor traffic flow, such as the Peak Period Shoulder Lane project, will enhance access to Colorado’s world-renowned mountain destinations and strengthen Denver’s position as a basecamp for Rocky Mountain adventures.

Central to this strategy is the creation of a public transportation system that is not just functional but exceptional—one that is clean, safe, reliable, and intuitive for visitors to navigate. By balancing the needs of vehicles and non-vehicles, while ensuring adequate and affordable parking options, including convenient park-and-rides at RTD stations, Denver can create a transportation ecosystem that serves both visitors and residents effectively.

Success in this arena requires careful coordination among multiple stakeholders, including RTD, CDOT and the City of Denver, and a long-term commitment to infrastructure investment. However, the rewards are substantial—a more accessible, sustainable and enjoyable destination that allows visitors to focus on experiences rather than logistics. By executing this comprehensive mobility strategy, Denver will remove barriers to visitation while enhancing its reputation as a forward-thinking city that prioritizes connectivity and accessibility for all.



#### STRATEGIC GOAL

## 04 Actionable Initiatives

### Enhance Connectivity and Mobility

- a. Denver is connected to the world (Denver International Airport’s Vision 100 and Operation 2045).
- b. Public transportation that is easy to use, clean, safe, accessible, reliable and affordable.
- c. A mobility loop around downtown that links 16th Street Mall to nearby neighborhoods, sports stadiums and cultural attractions (e.g., 5280 Trail).
- d. Citywide transportation infrastructure and mobility options:
  - i. Connections between downtown and key tourist areas (e.g., City Park, Civic Center “Cultural Circulator”, Cherry Creek and Red Rocks).
  - ii. Denver Metro Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project
  - iii. Last-mile connectivity (e.g., RTD services, scooters, e-bikes, pedicabs, etc.)
  - iv. Pedestrian and bicycle accessibility that is safe and connected.
  - v. Balance between vehicle/non-vehicle infrastructure and accessibility for local and visitors.
  - vi. Adequate and affordable parking options.
- e. High-speed passenger rail along the Front Range.
- f. I-70 traffic flow continues to improve, with exploration of alternative ideas to reduce mountain congestion.





# Improve Downtown Visitor Experiences



A vibrant downtown core serves as the beating heart of any great destination, and Denver’s future success depends on transforming its center city into a dynamic, welcoming space that captivates visitors while fostering community pride. As cities across the nation compete for visitors and talent, the reimagining of downtown Denver represents a critical investment in the destination’s future.

The iconic 16th Street Mall stands ready for its next evolution as a world-class attraction that authentically connects people from all walks of life. Imagine the Mall revitalized with wider sidewalks, lush landscaping and interactive art installations. Picture a signature cultural monument, perhaps a shimmering sculpture inspired by the nearby Rocky Mountains, drawing visitors to the heart of the Mall, much like Chicago’s “Cloud Gate” or “The Bean”. Enhanced visitor information services, including interactive kiosks and multilingual guides, will create a more welcoming and informative experience. These improvements, coupled with the redevelopment of Civic Center Park, with its Greek amphitheater and sprawling lawns, and Skyline Park, featuring the historic Daniels & Fisher Tower, will establish a network of engaging public spaces that encourage longer stays and deeper destination engagement.

Looking forward, there is a lot to be optimistic about. The Downtown Development Authority’s \$500 million in public funding is a transformative event in Denver’s history, catalyzing private investment to accelerate downtown’s renaissance. This unprecedented commitment provides the resources needed to address current challenges while creating new opportunities for growth and innovation. The comprehensive approach to increasing downtown vibrancy encompasses critical elements from security to retail strategy, recognizing that successful destinations must feel safe and offer diverse experiences throughout the day and evening. Imagine a vibrant mix of local boutiques, art galleries and chef-driven restaurants lining the streets, creating a unique and enticing shopping and dining experience.

A dedicated downtown security workforce, combining increased police presence with ambassador programs, trained to provide directions and assistance to visitors, and expanded social services, will create an environment where visitors feel secure and supported. Meanwhile, creative approaches to activating underutilized spaces—from pop-up retail featuring local artisans and makers to startup incubators fostering innovation and entrepreneurship—will inject new energy into the downtown ecosystem.

The development of an Office of Nighttime Economy represents a forward-thinking approach to extending downtown’s vitality beyond traditional business hours, perhaps with late-night art walks, live music performances



in Larimer Square, or extended hours for museums and galleries, creating a more dynamic urban environment that appeals to a wide variety of visitor segments.

The role of the Downtown Denver Business Improvement Districts in funding ongoing advocacy and beautification efforts ensures sustainable investment in downtown's appearance and appeal. The value of that in today's visitor economy cannot be over exaggerated. Public art initiatives, featuring murals by local artists and interactive installations that encourage exploration and engagement, will enhance the downtown aesthetic while celebrating Denver's creative spirit. These efforts, combined with strategic promotional campaigns highlighting downtown's unique offerings and hidden gems, will help reshape public perception of downtown, particularly among metro-area residents who influence visitor impressions and experiences.

Practical considerations like increased parking availability, including expanded parking garages and clear signage, user-friendly wayfinding systems with multilingual options, and balanced transportation infrastructure that prioritizes pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users, are equally crucial to downtown's success. By ensuring these foundational elements are thoughtfully addressed, Denver creates an environment where visitors can focus more on enjoying the city versus trying to figure out how to get around.

The vision for downtown Denver extends beyond physical improvements to create a place that resonates with visitors and locals alike. Through careful attention to both major initiatives and daily operations, Denver will establish downtown as a must-visit destination that showcases the best of the city's culture, creativity and community spirit.

#### STRATEGIC GOAL

## 05 Actionable Initiatives

### Improve Downtown Visitor Experiences

- a. 16th Street Mall is a clean, safe world-class attraction that connects locals and visitors of all backgrounds.
  - i. An iconic downtown cultural monument (e.g., Chicago's "Bean").
  - ii. Tourism information center on 16th Street Mall and enhance Denver Union Station TIC.
- b. Civic Center and Skyline Park are redeveloped.
- c. Downtown Development Authority (DDA) \$500M of public funding spurs private investment to create a vibrant downtown.
- d. Initiatives increase downtown vibrancy:
  - i. A dedicated downtown security workforce with police, ambassadors, social services, etc.
  - ii. Redevelopment/repurposing efforts of low occupancy and unused buildings/locations.
  - iii. Downtown retail strategy and improved retail offerings support a variety of retail types, including local businesses, minority-owned businesses, national retailers, pop-ups, experiential, etc.
  - iv. New businesses (e.g., startups and small businesses) lease unused space and increase foot traffic; consider incentives.
  - v. Festivals and street activations.
- e. BID funding allows DDP to create an on-going downtown advocacy and beautification program.
  - i. The public perception of downtown is safe and attractive, especially among metro-area residents, via promotional campaigns and public relations.
  - ii. Investments in public art projects, including local art/artists, art walks, etc.
- f. Office of Nighttime Economy, like Dallas, NYC and other big cities, creates foot traffic and supports restaurants/bars/other businesses outside of M-F, 8-5 hours, enhancing safety and vibrancy.
- g. Adequate and affordable downtown parking options.
- h. Clear signage and wayfinding downtown, including along 16th Street Mall and convention corridor.
- i. Balance between vehicle/non-vehicle infrastructure and accessibility for local and visitors.



# Strengthen Destination Branding



In an increasingly noisy tourism landscape, a destination's success hinges on its ability to craft and communicate a compelling brand narrative that resonates with target audiences and authentically reflects local character. Denver's unique position as a sophisticated urban center with immediate access to outdoor adventure presents an extraordinary opportunity to differentiate itself in the global tourism marketplace.

The alignment of Denver's brand messaging across government, community and industry stakeholders represents a crucial foundation for its marketing success. This unified approach ensures that the destination story is consistently and powerfully conveyed across all channels and touchpoints, amplifying its impact and strengthening its market position. By speaking with one voice, Denver public and private sector stakeholders can more effectively communicate its distinctive attributes and experiences to potential visitors.

Central to Denver's brand story is its identity as an Outdoor City that truly offers the "best of both worlds." This positioning capitalizes on its exceptional location and lifestyle, where world-class urban amenities seamlessly blend with accessible outdoor adventures. From the iconic Red Rocks Amphitheatre, where concerts echo against the majestic red rock formations, to the Cherry Creek Bike Path, winding through the city and offering stunning views of the skyline, Denver delivers authentic outdoor experiences that appeal to visitors of all abilities and interests. Imagine showcasing Denver's commitment to inclusivity with adaptive recreation opportunities at the Denver Botanic Gardens or promoting accessible hiking trails in the nearby foothills.

Denver's culinary scene has emerged as a powerful brand pillar. Recognition from prestigious organizations like the Michelin Guide and James Beard Foundation has validated its status as a serious food destination. Highlighting acclaimed restaurants like Frasca Food and Wine, Rioja and Safta showcases Denver's globally diverse culinary offerings and attracts food enthusiasts worldwide. This gastronomic excellence, combined with the renowned craft beverage scene, and signature food events like the Denver Burger Battle and the Great American Beer Festival, creates compelling reasons for culinary-motivated travel while enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Denver's cultural richness is exemplified by its tier-1 cultural organizations including the Denver Art Museum, the Clyfford Still Museum, and the Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative

Art; diverse art districts like RiNo and Santa Fe; and vibrant performing arts scene at the Denver Performing Arts Complex. That cultural vibrancy and the creative community that fuels it adds depth and sophistication to Denver’s destination appeal, and it creates and diversifies year-round opportunities to strengthen Denver’s position as a complete destination.

The compact nature of Downtown Denver, where museums, attractions, stadiums and public art exist within an easily navigable area, represents a significant competitive advantage nationally. Imagine promoting the walkability of downtown, highlighting the ease with which visitors can explore iconic landmarks like Union Station, the State Capitol and the 16th Street Mall. This accessibility, combined with family-friendly offerings like the Denver Zoo, the Children’s Museum of Denver at Marsico Campus, and the Downtown Aquarium, makes Denver an attractive choice for almost every imaginable visitor segment.

Denver’s diverse neighborhoods, each with its own character and attractions, provide authentic experiences that modern travelers increasingly seek. Imagine developing branded tours and trails that showcase the unique personality of each neighborhood, from the historic charm of Five Points to the trendy vibes of LoHi. The development of themed itineraries focusing on culture, beer and heritage creates structured ways for visitors to explore these distinct areas while supporting local businesses and communities.

Denver International Airport’s role as a global gateway strengthens the city’s brand position for both leisure and business travelers while supporting its reputation as a major convention and meeting destination.

Success in strengthening Denver’s destination brand requires consistent investment in marketing and promotional efforts that highlight these diverse attributes while maintaining authentic connections to the community’s values and character. By executing this comprehensive branding strategy, Denver will establish itself as a must-visit destination on par with America’s most well-known cities.



#### STRATEGIC GOAL

## 06 Actionable Initiatives

### Strengthen Destination Branding

- a. Denver’s brand and related pillars are aligned with government, business and industry stakeholders.
- b. Promotional pillars include:
  - i. Denver as an Outdoor City and “best of both worlds” destination (e.g. day trips, Red Rocks).
  - ii. City and mountain outdoor activities and accessible adventure (e.g., light adventure and activities that can be enjoyed by those with disabilities).
  - iii. High-quality, diverse dining scene (e.g., Michelin Guide; James Beard Foundation award winners/nominees, beverage scene, food events).
  - iv. Diverse arts and culture (e.g., visual & performing arts, art districts, Tier 1 cultural organizations).
  - v. Professional, collegiate and amateur sports.
  - vi. A family friendly destination (e.g., the 16th St. Mall, attractions, outdoor activities).
  - vii. A vibrant, compact downtown (e.g., nearby museums, attractions, stadiums and public art).
  - viii. Denver’s vibrant, diverse neighborhoods.
  - ix. Branded tours and trails (e.g., culture, beer and history/heritage)
  - x. Denver’s domestic and global connectivity via continued partnership with DEN.



# Foster Industry Advocacy and Community Engagement



The long-term success of Denver’s tourism industry hinges on more than just visitor numbers and economic impact. It requires a deep commitment to community engagement, workforce development and sustainable practices that benefit both visitors and residents. As destinations worldwide attempt to steward the balance between sustainable tourism growth and equitable community development, Denver has the opportunity to establish a model for responsible destination management that prioritizes both economic vitality and quality of life.

The foundation of this approach lies in fostering meaningful collaboration between local organizations like VISIT DENVER, the Downtown Denver Partnership, and the City of Denver, regional entities like the Colorado Tourism Office, public agencies like RTD and Denver Parks and Recreation, and private businesses including hotels, restaurants and attractions to support comprehensive community development. By breaking down traditional silos and creating platforms for shared vision and action, such as the Denver Tourism Improvement District, Denver can better align tourism development with broader community goals and aspirations. This collaborative framework ensures that tourism growth supports, rather than conflicts with, resident interests.

Understanding and responding to resident perspectives is crucial for successful tourism development today. Through regular sentiment surveys, community meetings in neighborhoods like Five Points, Capitol Hill and Globeville, and online platforms for dialogue, Denver can better gauge local attitudes toward tourism and adapt its strategies to address concerns. The establishment of an annual Tourism Summit will create a vital forum for industry stakeholders, workforce representatives, and community partners to share insights, align priorities, and develop solutions to emerging challenges.

The tourism industry’s role as a major employer demands innovative approaches to workforce development and support. This includes not only traditional training and career advancement programs, like those offered by the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and Emily Griffith Technical College, but also creative solutions to fundamental challenges like affordable housing initiatives specifically for tourism workers and partnerships with childcare providers to offer subsidized options. These initiatives recognize that a thriving tourism workforce is essential to delivering exceptional visitor experiences while supporting community stability.





Environmental sustainability and destination stewardship represent critical priorities that align with both visitor expectations and community values. By implementing and promoting sustainable practices, such as encouraging the use of public transportation, supporting businesses with green certifications, and reducing waste and water consumption throughout the tourism ecosystem, Denver demonstrates leadership in environmental responsibility while preserving the natural and cultural assets that make it unique. Imagine promoting eco-friendly tours and activities like bike tours, hikes in Red Rocks Amphitheatre and visits to the Denver Botanic Gardens to further emphasize this commitment.

Denver's commitment to social inclusion must permeate all aspects of tourism development, from partnering with minority-owned businesses to developing promotional materials that represent the diversity of the community and ensuring visitor experiences are accessible to all. This comprehensive approach ensures that Denver's tourism industry reflects and celebrates the rich diversity of its community while creating opportunities for historically underrepresented groups.

The "Go the Extra Mile" hospitality training program represents a strategic investment in service excellence, equipping frontline employees with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver exceptional visitor experiences. This initiative recognizes that every interaction between visitors and local tourism workers shapes perceptions of Denver. Imagine expanding this program to include cultural sensitivity training and language resources to further enhance visitor interactions.

Practical considerations like streamlined permitting processes at City Hall, with online portals and dedicated resources for tourism businesses, play a crucial role in supporting tourism business development and innovation. Meanwhile, the thoughtful integration of artificial intelligence for strategic planning, such as analyzing visitor data to identify trends and preferences, and business development, like using AI-powered chatbots to answer visitor questions, positions the industry to leverage emerging technologies while maintaining its focus on authentic human connections.

Success in this arena requires sustained commitment to meaningful engagement, innovative problem-solving, and genuine partnership between the tourism industry and the broader community. By executing these initiatives with intention and accountability, Denver can create a tourism ecosystem that generates substantial economic benefits while enriching community life and preserving what makes the city special for future generations.

#### STRATEGIC GOAL

## 07 Actionable Initiatives

### Foster Industry Advocacy and Community Engagement

- a. Local/regional and public/private organizations collaborate to foster greater community development.
- b. Advocacy efforts to promote value of tourism and positive impacts on residents' quality of life.
  - i. Resident sentiment survey explores resident perspectives and needs to have alignment and support for tourism.
  - ii. A Tourism Summit for industry, workforce, and community partners.
- c. Industry workforce development efforts and initiatives.
- d. Innovative approaches to support affordable housing and daycare options.
- e. Initiatives and programs that advance environmental sustainability/destination stewardship.
- f. Efforts related to diversity, equity and inclusion, including hiring, partners, promotion, etc.
- g. The "Go the Extra Mile" hospitality training program for frontline employees.
- h. City Hall streamlines permitting process for large and small businesses.
- i. Industry partners embrace AI for strategic planning and business development.



# Implementation Strategy

## A Plan is Only as Good as the Execution Behind It

The Denver Tourism Roadmap outlines and prioritizes the collective aspirations of community and industry stakeholders for the next decade. However, translating its actionable initiatives into reality is a complex endeavor that demands intentional collaboration across public, private, and civic sectors.

Implementing this long-term destination master plan will require ambitious, thoughtful, and collaborative leaders from all sectors to champion and drive the initiatives proposed in the strategic framework. Success depends on individuals passionate about Denver's future who are committed to advancing investments and sustaining focus on optimizing both the visitor economy and residents' quality of life.

Sustained engagement from the Steering Committee on strategic priorities, coupled with the efforts of effective working groups, will ensure consistent progress, accountability, and measurable success in executing the initiatives.

To advance this process, the project team will develop detailed implementation work plans to organize and operationalize the action items outlined in the document. These work plans will function as dynamic flowcharts, mapping out key strategic goals and corresponding initiatives. Designed for regular updates, they will prioritize near-term actions, identify the coalition of organizations responsible for execution, and track accomplishments to maintain momentum.

The successful realization of this vision will require adequate funding. As the plan progresses, a comprehensive needs assessment should be conducted to identify funding opportunities, technological requirements, and the infrastructure necessary to meet community and industry objectives.

The implementation strategy will define short-, medium-, and long-term timelines for each initiative, outline intended outcomes, and establish relevant key performance indicators. This chronological structure is crucial for identifying high-impact, short-term opportunities with strong returns on investment that require minimal resources. It will also detail the timeframes and coalition-building efforts needed for longer-term, more complex, and capital-intensive projects.

By providing a living, transparent document that remains relevant and adaptable, the implementation work plans will ensure that the Denver Tourism Roadmap evolves alongside developments within the city and the global tourism market.



**VISIT DENVER**

[www.denver.org](http://www.denver.org)

(800) 233-6837 | (303) 892-1112

