

Dear 2023 Denver Municipal Candidates,

Thank you for your leadership, engagement, and courage to continue to improve the City and County of Denver.

Much has been done over the past few decades to position Denver to be a leader in creating an equitable, sustainable, and resilient city for all, for generations to come. The next Mayor of Denver and other elected officials will have an outsized opportunity to build on that foundation and determine how the City addresses the climate crisis and the environmental injustices that exacerbate many other issues we currently face. The next eight years coincide with a window in time scientists have flagged as critical to ensure we avoid climate catastrophe. In this urgent time of action, the City has been a beacon of hope as others have fallen short of intervention. Over the past few years, the residents of Denver have overwhelmingly supported ballot initiatives that prioritize investment in climate action, parks and open spaces, and environmental justice, and will be looking for a Mayor with the same aspirations. As the next Mayor addresses the City's concerns of housing affordability, the plight of the unhoused, and public safety, they must simultaneously prioritize environmental justice and invest in opportunities to make the city more sustainable and resilient.

The following pages include a suite of baseline goals, commitments, and principles we believe all candidates who have the privilege of representing and leading the citizens of Denver should embrace and publicly support. While these foundational commitments are a good start, within each of these sectors are opportunities to take even bolder action than noted below. As a coalition of signatories and individual organizations with specific sectoral knowledge and experience, we are eager to engage with any and all of the candidates interested in achieving more aspirational outcomes for Denver.

Thank you for taking the time to engage with our organizations and to learn more about what you can do over the coming years to support a greener, healthier future for all who live in and pass through our great city.

350 Colorado	Eco-Cycle
BirdSeed Collective	Green Spaces
Canada Geese Protection Colorado	Indivisible Ambassadors
Climate Reality Project, Denver Chapter	Indivisible Colorado
Colorado Hydrogen Network	National Wildlife Federation
Colorado Jewish Climate Action	NRDC Action Fund
Colorado Trout Unlimited	People & Pollinators Action Network
Conservation Colorado	Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute
Denver Audubon	SmogFree Denver
Denver Field Ornithologists	The Greenway Foundation
Denver Mountain Parks Foundation	The Nature Conservancy
Denver Park Trust	The Park People
Denver Streets Partnership	The Trust for Public Land
Denver Trout Unlimited	Unite North Metro Denver
Denver Urban Gardens	Wind & Solar Denver
First Unitarian Society of Denver	

Make a Deep Commitment to Equity and Environmental Justice

More important than any standalone issue, we believe that while the next administration must be committed to serving all residents of Denver, many residents have long suffered environmental injustices and disproportionately low investment from the City and the benefits nature provides – especially those in our [Neighborhood & Equity Stabilization \(NEST\) communities](#); other neighborhoods not receiving adequate investment and services; and black, indigenous, people of color, people with disabilities, the elderly, and people with other marginalized identities. We expect the next administration to make bold commitments to equity and environmental justice, such as:

- Work with state and federal partners to address and repair historic environmental injustices including those from existing Superfund sites, power plants, refineries, and other industrial facilities.
- Ensure all people have safe and equal protection from environmental hazards and access to clean air and water.
- Ensure all people have equal access to and transparency into decision making processes.
- Work with a range of partners to ensure all people have access to the benefits of nature.
- Ensure that the lived experience of residents, especially of lower income and communities of color, is respected and recognized as expertise.

Air Quality

- Measurably improve air quality by reducing concentrations of key pollutants – like fine particulates – in all neighborhoods of Denver, prioritizing disproportionately impacted communities.
- Prioritize reducing Denver’s contributions to regional ozone pollution and lead the way on achieving attainment of EPA ozone standards.
- Address contribution from Denver’s operations and facilities to air quality issues (e.g., City vehicles, facilities, Denver International Airport, and others).

Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

- Achieve Denver's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 65% by 2030 and 100% by 2040.
- Explore, support, and fully fund the recommendations of the [Climate Action Task Force \(2020\)](#), including many that go beyond existing City commitments.
- Create and implement climate resilience strategies that prioritize investments in adaptation to increased heat.
- Create and implement strategies in the near-term to ensure all neighborhoods in Denver are on path to equitable and climate-resilient tree canopies by 2050.
- Partner with Denver Public Schools (DPS) to change the narrative for our youth from climate crisis to one of bold action, innovation, and accountability. Recognizing that DPS represents the second largest entity in the City and County of Denver (by square footage), collaboration will be essential for Denver and DPS to achieve our collective climate action goals.

Energy

- Develop and implement a strategy to achieve Denver's goal of 100% renewable electricity community-wide by 2030 including the use of distributed and community solar, batteries, and energy reduction methods.
- Work with landlords, homeowners, and commercial building owners to accelerate electrification of heating and cooling systems to improve energy performance and human health.
- As Denver's contract (franchise agreement) with Xcel expires in 2026, engage in the process to update the agreement and use it as an opportunity to accelerate the transition to renewable energy; ensure equitable compensation for non-utility energy generation; and protect Denver residents from environmental injustices.

Food

- Commit leadership, action, and funding to achieve the goals articulated in [Denver's Food Vision](#) and the [Denver Food Action Plan](#), including but not limited to opportunities such as investing in building community-driven complete neighborhood food environments; expanding and preserving remaining regional food system assets and infrastructure promoting environmentally regenerative and climate smart food systems; increasing the number of community and school gardens; and reducing the amount of food going to waste.

Land Use and Transit

- Prioritize transit-oriented development that provides more accessible and affordable housing and connection to schools, employment, nature, and vital services while preventing gentrification and displacement.
- Honor, implement, and fund the equity-focused and climate-smart [Denverright](#) plans that have already been formally adopted including Comprehensive Plan 2040, Blueprint Land Use and Transportation, Game Plan for a Healthy City, Denver Moves Transit, Denver Moves Pedestrians and Trails, and Denver Moves Bikes.
- Commit to the [platform put forward by the Denver Streets Partnership](#) including prioritizing more sustainable, multimodal transportation for all and recommitting Denver to the Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by the year 2030.

Parks, Open Space, and Biodiversity

- Ensure all residents of Denver have no farther than a safe, 10-minute walk or roll to a welcoming, safe, high-quality, and accessible park.
- Protect and connect a network of habitat and habitat corridors that enable wildlife to move and thrive through the city and its mountain parks and increases biodiversity and climate resilience in the region.
- Minimize sprawl and development in natural lands without existing infrastructure.
- Explore and prioritize opportunities to make our denser, urban spaces greener and more climate resilient to support Denver's human and ecological communities.
- Invest in, steward, and champion our treasured and unique Denver Mountain Parks in support of watershed health, wildfire risk mitigation, conservation, education, preservation, and recreation.

Waste

- Support a successful implementation of the Expanded Waste Services policy that guarantees recycling and composting services at no additional charge for every home, passed by Denver City Council, and the Waste No More Denver ordinance (Ballot Initiative 306) that guarantees Denver residents and visitors have access to recycling and composting at all businesses – including apartment buildings, condos, and permitted events, passed by Denver voters.
- Commit leadership, action, and funding to achieve the goals articulated in Denver's [Sustainable Resource Management Plan \(2022\)](#) including but not limited to revising the Equal Space Ordinance; assessing regional composting, and construction and demolition waste processing capacity; and increasing waste diversion at City facilities.
- Achieve the City's goals to divert 50% of all solid waste away from the landfill and to recycling or composting by 2027, and to increase that rate to 70% by 2032; and reduce tons of residential food waste collected by the City by 57%.

Water

- Support and champion the vision and goals of the [Denver One Water Plan \(2021\)](#) especially those related to implementing integrated water management solutions, increasing resilience and climate change preparedness, and interagency and organization collaboration.
- Reduce water demand in City-managed properties and work with water providers and other partners to reduce water demand across the city by taking steps such as reducing irrigation of and replacing non-essential turf grass, and increasing use of recycled water in appropriate applications.
- Achieve fishable, swimmable status in Denver's waters and champion the [Waterway Resiliency Program](#) by committing and delivering the \$350 million matching funds.
- Support and invest in stormwater management that provides multiple benefits to the city and prioritizes nature-based solutions big (e.g., stretches of the High Line Canal) and small (e.g., rain gardens along Brighton Blvd.).