



**TO:** Denver City Council  
**FROM:** David Gaspers, Principal City Planner  
**DATE:** December 2, 2024  
**RE:** Denver Downtown Development Authority Plan of Development Recommendation

## Summary and Recommendation

The City and County of Denver (City), in coordination with the Board of Directors (Board) of the Denver Downtown Development Authority (DDDA), recently launched a process to preserve and expand the DDA and to amend the DDA's Plan of Development. A Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a tool enabled by state statute (specifically, Sections 31-25-801, *et seq.*, C.R.S., as amended [DDA Statute]) that allows municipalities, like the City, to collect a portion of the incremental property and sales taxes generated within the City's central business district. Those funds can then be invested to support catalytic investments that help spur economic growth and revitalization in the heart of the City.

In conformance with the DDA Statute, an amended DDA Plan of Development shall be submitted to Denver Planning Board for review and recommendation prior to approval by Denver City Council. Notice for this public hearing was provided in accordance with State DDA statute. **Community Planning and Development staff finds that the proposed Downtown Denver Development Authority's Amended and Restated Plan of Development conforms to the DDA Statute. Planning Board took formal action at its September 4, 2024, meeting to recommend approval of the Amended and Restated Plan of Development to City Council.**

## DDDA Background

In 2008, the DDDA was created by the City and County of Denver. Concurrent to its creation, City Council also approved an original Plan of Development for the DDDA. The Original Plan was primarily focused upon the use of the tax increment financing (TIF) revenues generated by the DDDA to help redevelop the historic Denver Union Station site.

The City, along with its project partners including the Regional Transportation District, the DUS Metropolitan District Nos. 1-3, and the Denver Union Station Project Authority, used the TIF revenues generated by the DDDA in accordance with the Original Plan to help deliver over \$400 million in public transportation projects related to the redevelopment of Denver Union Station.

## Plan Overview

The Amended Plan of Development provides legal background, a summary of the planning process, details on the expanded DDDA and project selection process, and a high-level overview of the types of projects and improvements that can be funded by the DDDA. The Amended Plan is intended to supplement and expand upon the development projects described in the Original Plan and is organized into four sections:

## Background Analysis

The Amended Plan summarizes four key areas needed as background information including a review of past city plans impacting the area, an online survey designed to inform the categories of investment, and an economic study and public realm evaluation to identify whether there were findings of blight in conformance with the DDA Statute. This background analysis can be found the appendix of the Amended Plan of Development.

## Challenges and Conclusions

The Amended Plan identifies five key challenges:

- Downtown Denver’s post-pandemic economic recovery is lagging other parts of the city;
- Upper Downtown has been the hardest hit and slowest to recover;
- Downtown’s lack of land use mix is hindering its recovery;
- The public realm is as important as ever – and is in need of broad improvement;
- Without intervention and bold action, there is a risk of further market erosion downtown.

The Amended Plan concludes that strategic investment in Downtown Denver creates long-term economic growth and supports vital citywide services. A foundational goal is established in the Amended Plan to *Build a vibrant Downtown Denver through strategic and catalytic investments that promote economic growth and revitalization.*

## Proposed Categories of Investment

The Amended Plan has five proposed categories of investment:

**New development and adaptive reuse:** The transformation of underutilized, under-performing properties, lots, and structures into vibrant, functional spaces will contribute to a more mixed-use downtown Denver and rejuvenate properties that have outlived their original purpose.

**Livability, economic opportunity and jobs:** Downtown is an economic engine for the City and region. DDDA investments will bring new economic opportunity and jobs to downtown Denver by investing in initiatives that support new development, attract and retain employers, create workforce development opportunities, and revitalize the ground-floor economy.

**Parks and public space:** Quality public spaces serve as vital gathering spaces for social interaction, community events, and cultural expression, promoting a sense of belonging for all residents. Accessible and well-designed parks support environmental sustainability and contribute to both physical and mental health.

**Arts, culture and activation:** Downtown Denver is a hub for community gathering, helping to shape Denver’s identity and cultural fabric. The DDDA will be available for enhancing this asset, supporting the enrichment of arts and culture in downtown Denver by supporting projects that celebrate the City’s diversity, foster community pride, and stimulate economic revitalization.

**Connectivity and mobility:** Investments into connectivity and mobility can be catalysts for further economic growth and revitalization of downtown Denver. They also include wide reaching benefits like improved accessibility and inclusivity throughout downtown Denver.

### Plan Boundary

The current legal boundary of the DDDA, as illustrated in orange in Figure 1, consists of Denver Union Station area and Market Street Station. To provide the opportunity for non-adjacent downtown properties located within the study area of this Amended Plan to satisfy the adjacency requirement in the DDA Statute, the City will submit a petition for inclusion of a portion of its fee-owned right-of-way, as illustrated in red in Figure 1, in accordance with the DDA Statute.

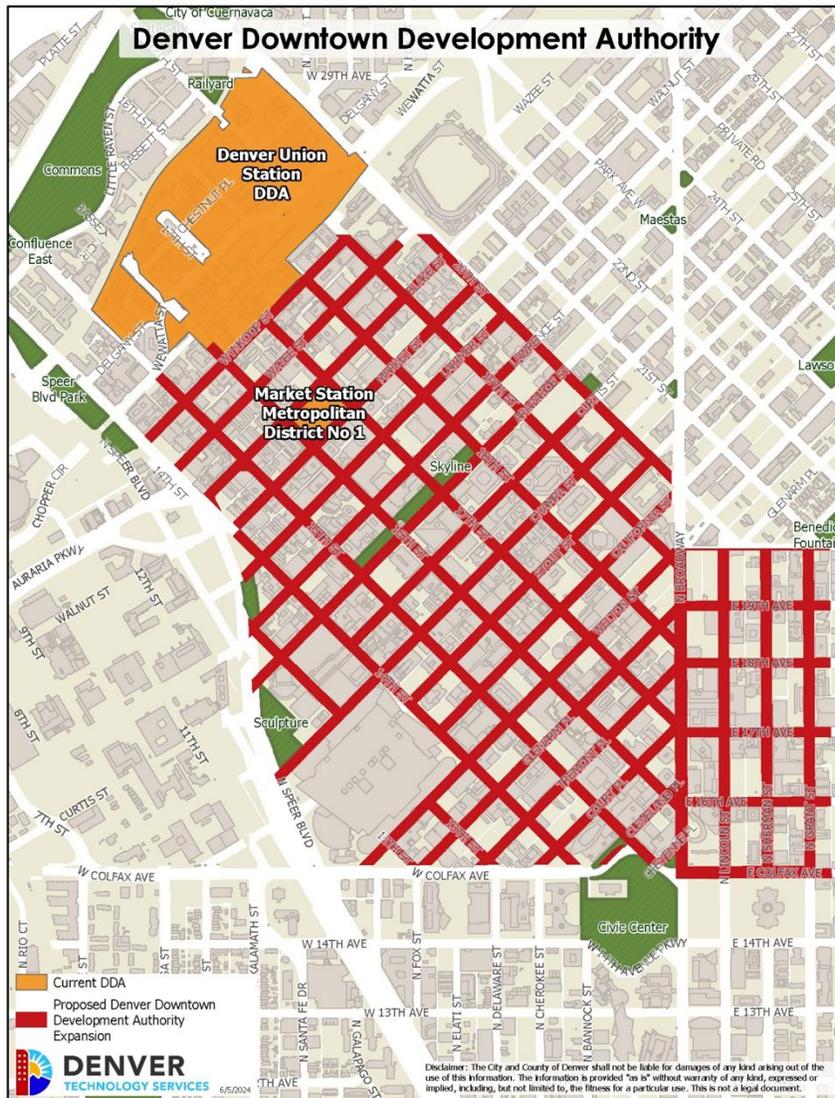


Figure 1: Amended Plan Boundary

## Summary of Engagement

Strategic outreach to members of the Downtown community was essential to the Denver Downtown Development Authority (DDDA) expansion process and to refine the revised Plan of Development for the DDDA. The scope of engagement was focused on meetings with key stakeholder groups within the city’s central business district. Stakeholders engaged in the DDDA expansion process included:

Group or Activity	Date	Responses/Attendees
Online Survey	May – June	1,700
Online Comments	May – to date	50
Lower Downtown Neighborhood Association (LoDoNA) Meeting	May 20	30
Upper Downtown Neighborhood Association (UpDoNA) Meeting	June 13	60
Delgany Bridge Task Force	June 14	6
LoDo District Meeting	June 19	15
Bike to Work Day	June 26	25
Downtown Denver Partnership (DDP) committees	June 27, July 11	38
Colorado Women’s Chamber of Commerce	July 12	18
DDP Member Assembly	July 18	80
District 10 Affordable Denver community conversation	July 18	20
LoDoNA DDDA Special Meeting	July 22	60
District 10 Vibrant Denver community conversation	August 1	70
LaDoNA HOA Presidents	August 7	15
Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce	August 15	7
Planning Board	August 21, Sept. 4	8
<b>TOTAL To Date</b>		<b>2,244</b>
Downtown Area Plan ( <i>ongoing through 2025</i> )	September 25 Launch	~300

## Summary of Public Comment

The draft Amended Plan was available for public review from July 16-31. The city received 22 written comments from Denver residents, property owners, neighborhood organizations, agencies and businesses. Respondents provided a variety of insights and suggestions to further bolster the Amended Plan. Previous engagement included over 1,700 responses to a public survey, which helped inform the broad categories of investment detailed in the draft Amended Plan.

Comments can generally be grouped into the following 7 categories:

1. Project Ideas
2. Values
3. Map/DDA Boundaries
4. Governance Structure & Board of Advisors
5. Implementation
6. Miscellaneous Areas of Opportunity
7. Additional Resources/Planning Documents

## Planning Board

At the September 4 Planning Board meeting, City staff presented the Amended and Restated Plan of Development. Planning Board recommended approval of the plan to City Council with the following additional recommendations:

*Planning Board makes the following additional recommendations about the DDDA Amended and Restated Plan of Development (“Amended Plan”), whether for immediate incorporation or future amendment so long as these recommendations do not jeopardize the approval of the DDDA Amended Plan.*

- 1. The Project Selection General Parameters section on pages 21-22 should be amended to remove specific language concerning who (i.e. City’s Manager of Finance and Executive Director of Denver Economic Development) will undertake project evaluation and selection.*
- 2. The Amended Plan should state that DDDA funds be leveraged to ensure that there are adequate resources, including staff capacity and subject matter expertise, to manage a program of this size and breadth and to help accelerate the deployment of project funds.*
- 3. The Amended Plan should clarify that city projects are subject to the same selection criteria and processes as private projects.*

#### **DDDA Board**

DDDA Board approved the initial Amended and Restated Plan of Development on August 29 reflecting updates from public input. The DDDA Board approved a revised Amended Plan on November 7 reflecting updated language in alignment with Planning Board and City Council guidance.

More details, including staff responses to these comment groups can be found in the Summary of Public Comment document attached to this staff report.

#### **CPD Staff Recommendation**

Community Planning and Development staff finds that the proposed Denver Downtown Development Authority’s amended Plan of Development conforms to the DDA Statute and recommends that City Council approve the Amended and Restated Plan of Development.

#### **Attachments**

1. Amended and Restated Plan of Development
2. Presentation
3. Summary of Public Comment