

Downtown Spokane Partnership 2023 Policy Platform

The Downtown Spokane Partnership (DSP) 2023 Policy Platform establishes the principles and policy priorities of the DSP Board of Directors, members, and staff to engage in policy at the city, county and state levels. This platform supports the continued implementation of the [2021 Downtown Plan Update](#), and the DSP’s mission to “create a dynamic, safe, vital, livable, and sustainable downtown as the basis of an economically healthy region.”

Policy Principles:

- Cultivate commercial activity in downtown Spokane: Downtown’s public spaces, transportation systems, private properties, and amenities strengthen Spokane’s identity. Policies should support active transportation initiatives, invest in beautification and civic amenities, support development and incentivize job creation.
- Enhance a vibrant downtown experience: Downtown is the community’s living room and should be welcoming to everyone. Policies should enhance and maintain the public space and rights-of-way, repair and maintain critical infrastructure, and address misuse and illegal obstruction.
- Build and expand housing options of all types, for all incomes: Providing tools that reduce the barriers and costs to build housing, streamline construction and attract capital investment supports development. Policies should expand infill and high-density development in Downtown with more residential options.
- Improve public safety, deter crime and negative behavior: Addiction is a driving force of increasing property crime and violence in Downtown. Policies should allow for enforcement and regulation of drug sales and use, violence, and threats to personal safety.
- Support funding, facilities and services for people to get the help they need: The path out of homelessness, in particular for individuals suffering from mental illness and substance use disorder, requires access to housing and services. Policies should focus on those in most need: suffering mental health crises, are a danger to themselves or others, and are unable to care for themselves – with distribution of these services across the region.

Policy Priorities

DSP's Policy Principles serve as a framework to guide its advocacy. Initiatives are implemented through five priority areas: Economic Development, Destination Enhancement, Housing, Public Safety, and Homelessness and Social Services.

1. Economic Development:

- a) Incentivize investment and job opportunities. Foster a healthy, sustainable, diverse and prosperous economy.
 - Maintain a diverse mix of commercial tenants, industries and development.
 - Support recruitment and retention efforts of new and established employers.
 - Incentivize connections with local higher education and entrepreneurship programs to integrate students and underserved communities into the downtown workforce.
- b) Leverage new and adjacent areas of future growth and economic influence. With vacancy rates for office space growing, new development and attractions can be catalysts for Downtown.
 - Spur development in West Downtown and North Bank with enhanced connectivity to the U District.
 - Leverage public-private partnerships and investment to reinvigorate blighted properties, preserve historic façades, enhance mobility and support growing industries.
 - Invest in regional amenities the Downtown Stadium and other unique destinations.

2. Destination Enhancement:

- a) Support ongoing efforts to beautify and revitalize key areas of Downtown. Entryways and connections into Downtown merit improvements. These areas should feel safe and be welcoming and distinct gateways.
 - Leverage on-street parking revenue from the City [parking system fund](#), American Rescue Plan Act funds, and other grant programs to invest in public space maintenance and improvements.
 - Address declining street tree infrastructure, lighting standardization, sidewalk replacement, litter/graffiti abatement, cleaning, transit stops and new capital investments needed to enhance the pedestrian experience.
 - Foster art, placemaking, and cultural programming in public spaces, plazas, courtyards, alleys, and under viaducts.
- b) Support transportation enhancements and initiatives to improve mobility. Improve access and connections into Downtown.
 - Leverage the Spokane Transit Authority's 10-year plan to minimize transit congestion and expand service coverage. Energize streets for pedestrians, cyclists,

and other forms of micro-mobility with integrated, managed public spaces along high-density retail corridors.

- Improve parking management through on-street/off-street shared inter-modal wayfinding to leverage existing resources.

3. Housing:

- a) Reduce barriers and costs while streamlining housing construction in Downtown. Demand for rental housing has outstripped supply resulting in near zero vacancy rates.
 - Support the continuation of successful programs like the multi-family tax exemption to spur high-density development with an emphasis on under-utilized sites.
 - Leverage and enhance federal, state and local economic incentives to support commercial-to-residential conversions, development of surface parking lots, infrastructure improvements and the use of the renewed Projects of City-Wide Significance program.
 - Support condominium development reform, removes [regulations](#) which impose 10-year statutory warranty requirements that do not apply to apartment construction.
 - Oppose state and local legislative efforts and regulations which would delay or harm the ability to create new housing at all levels of affordability.
 - Emphasize support for construction of more workforce and “missing middle” housing.

4. Public Safety:

- a) Support clarification of laws and regulations to address sale and use of illegal drugs. SB 5476 led to the proliferation of destructive drugs which are taking a tremendous toll on the community and driving property crime.
 - Restore criminal penalties for drug possession, including the potential for felony conviction.
 - Stop excessive warnings and utilize the structure of the state’s [Driving Under the Influence](#) law to establish felony penalties in the event of a third or subsequent citation for drug possession.
 - Strengthen law enforcement’s ability to address criminal networks distributing fentanyl and other drugs as part of efforts to combat rapidly rising drug overdose deaths.
 - Oppose further drug legalization initiatives.
- b) Support legislation and judicial policies that can deter crime, drug use and violence. Every opportunity should be taken to hold offenders accountable, provide treatment and rehabilitation for return to the community, and when possible, restore impacts to victim and/or property.

- Support laws and regulations aimed at addressing pedestrian interference, sit-lie, illegal camping, aggressive panhandling and property and chronic nuisance crimes, including law enforcement’s ability to enforce these policies.
 - Correctly interpret and apply the *Martin v. City of Boise* decision by defining time, place and manner limitations in camping ordinances and eliminate shelter requirements in the sit-lie ordinance since there is no correlation to the decision.
 - Restore law enforcement’s ability to engage in vehicle pursuits with reasonable suspicion.
 - Support initiatives and funding that encourage proactive/neighborhood policing strategies by Downtown Precinct officers, including regular foot and bike patrols, emphasis patrols, and investments that deter crime.
 - Establish tools to manage areas with captive audiences, including adoption of fare zones at transit stops and “pass-through” policies at the STA Plaza.
 - Incentivize treatment-focused diversion opportunities for addiction and drug use crimes, including removal of felony convictions should a person complete an addiction treatment program and not re-offend during a specified timeframe.
 - Protect downtown retailers by supporting [initiatives](#) and [laws](#) which counter organized retail theft.
- c) Expand jail capacity, supervised mental illness and addiction treatment. Downtown serves as the hub for public safety and emergency services with a super-concentration of services and subsidized housing for eastern Washington, creating a ready-made market for predators to prey upon the most vulnerable in our society.
- Ensure there is jail capacity to hold offenders accountable and strengthen procedures leading to release to ensure individuals can connect to community support systems.
 - Advocate for improved outcomes in jail diversion programs, including use of Community Court, Therapeutic Drug Court, and Mental Health Court for people suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders, while maintaining legal accountability if diversion programs are not utilized.
 - Oppose elimination of criminal justice processes such as no-cash bail or expansion of the graduated re-entry [program](#) to prevent prematurely exposing the community to harm.

5. Homelessness & Social Services:

- a) Support partnerships and resources to confront mental illness, addiction and homelessness. Spokane’s fractured approach to homelessness and behavioral health needs enhanced accountability.
- Encourage initiatives and funding to align and strengthen mental health and addiction services regionally.
 - Streamline services, coordinate communication, and maximize joint investments among local governments, service providers and the private sector.

- Develop new public-private partnerships that assist in accessing affordable housing, mental and physical health services, and address homelessness.
 - Launch and maintain a region wide HMIS intake and reporting tool.
 - b) Expand programs that assist homeless in accessing a range of shelter and housing options and services. Insufficient shelter for Spokane’s growing number of people experiencing homelessness results in hazardous urban camping on sidewalks, viaducts and alleyways.
 - Support and expand emergency shelter options.
 - Preserve and increase funding from federal, state and local sources that support permanent supportive housing with services.
 - Ensure availability of detoxification facilities in Spokane County accepting referrals from law enforcement, fire departments, service providers and DSP Ambassadors.
 - c) Ensure equitable distribution of additional emergency shelters, low-barrier housing, intake/navigation centers, and public restrooms across the region. Concentrated co-location of these facilities in Downtown is making the area unsafe, including for the people these facilities are intended to serve.
 - Require transparency in the development of social service and public facilities through public notification processes, including public postings, neighborhood notifications and conditional use permitting.
 - Ensure placement of shelters, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing minimizes over-concentration in any one neighborhood and require 24/7 management and staffing with enforceable “good neighbor” agreements in place prior to opening.
 - Oppose additional emergency shelters, low-barrier housing, and new public restrooms in Downtown.
 - d) Expand conservatorship and assisted outpatient treatment to get help for those that do not have the capacity to accept or understand their need. Mechanisms for helping people with severe mental illness can help them transition from the streets to residential psychiatric treatment.
 - Utilize the Involuntary Treatment [Act](#) and similar policies like for those who do not have the capacity to care for themselves and/or pose a significant risk to themselves and others.
 - Advocate for expanded behavioral health funding and services, including designated funds for additional treatment identified in SB 5476, opioid settlements and behavioral health programs to keep those suffering from entering or continuing in homelessness.
-