



DOWNTOWN SPOKANE PARTNERSHIP

ADVOCATING FOR DOWNTOWN SPOKANE

The DOWNTOWN SPOKANE PARTNERSHIP (DSP) advocates for policies, regulations, and funding for the issues and infrastructure that ensure a dynamic, vibrant, livable and sustainable future for downtown Spokane. The following DSP Policy Platform establishes the principles and priorities that serve as a frame to guide advocacy work of the DSP Board of Directors, members, and staff when engaging in policy in city, county, state and federal levels. This platform supports the continued implementation of the most recent Downtown Plan Update and DSP's mission to create a dynamic, vibrant, livable, and sustainable downtown as the economic and cultural heart powering the entire region.

DSP POLICY PRINCIPLES

Cultivate economic 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 a welcoming and diverse place for everyone to experience. Policies should enhance and maintain the public space and rights-of-way, repair and maintain critical infrastructure, and address misuse and illegal obstruction with prioritization of Downtown's post-pandemic recovery.

Build and expand housing options of all types, for all incomes: The cost to develop and build new housing is especially high for urban infill and adaptive reuse projects Downtown. Providing tools that reduce the barriers and costs to build housing, streamline construction and attract capital investment are critical to support development. Policies should spur infill and high-density residential projects that will result in greater housing capacity at all levels.

Improve public safety; deter crime and negative behavior: A safe and secure Downtown is critical for everyone but concerns about public safety, property crime and aggressive behavior threaten this. Policies should tackle enforcement and regulation of drug sales and use, property crime, violence, and threats to personal safety with a focus on chronic offenders and the outsized impact they have in Downtown.

Support funding, facilities and services for people to get the help they need: The path out of homelessness, especially for individuals suffering from mental illness and substance use disorder, requires access to housing with wraparound services. Policies should focus on those in most need: those suffering mental health crises, are a danger to themselves or others, and/ or are unable to care for themselves. These services should be distributed across the region, as close as possible to where people are from.



2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Cultivate Economic Vitality

With vacancy rates for office space growing, incentivizing investment and job opportunities while leveraging new and adjacent areas of future growth will be important catalysts to strengthen Downtown as a powerful economic driver for the region. To foster a diverse mix of commercial tenants, industries and development:

- Support recruitment and retention efforts of new and established employers.
- Encourage supportive infrastructure for entrepreneurs and startups.
- Incentivize ground-floor retail occupancy.
- Encourage a fast, predictable, and user-friendly permitting process.
- Strengthen connections with local higher education and entrepreneurship programs to integrate students and underserved communities into Downtown's workforce.
- Encourage development in the West End and North Bank with enhanced connectivity to the University District in the East End.
- Leverage public-private partnerships and investment to reinvigorate blighted properties, preserve historic façades, enhance mobility and support growing industries.

2025 Priorities:

Local, State & Federal:

- Increase public sector employees working in their offices, more frequently.

Local:

- Streamline permitting for downtown tenant improvements to shorten review periods.

Enhance a Vibrant Downtown Destination

Focus support on efforts to improve, beautify and revitalize Downtown's accessibility, streetscape, entryways and the public realm. To support activity and vitality:

- Address declining street tree infrastructure, establish lighting standards, repair hazardous sidewalks, abate litter/graffiti, enhance cleaning and sanitation, and direct new capital investments needed to enhance the pedestrian experience.
- Administer code enforcement proactively with special abatement emphasis in hot-spot areas to address health and safety concerns on public and privately owned property.
- Invest in businesses and organizations that activate Downtown, foster art, place enhancement, and cultural programming and make it as easy as possible for people to create activity in public spaces, plazas, courtyards, alleys, gateways, under viaducts and private spaces.
- Encourage transportation enhancements and initiatives to improve mobility, access and connections with integrated public spaces that link people and neighborhoods to Downtown.
- Leverage investment in regional destination projects located in Downtown.

2025 Priorities:

State:

- Encourage state funding for the Cultural Trail connection and wayfinding through downtown Spokane.

Local:

- Enforce laws to address chronic nuisance properties and close facilities contributing to nuisance property violations.

- ❑ Leverage on-street parking revenue in the City's parking system fund and other grant programs to invest in public space maintenance and improvements.
- ❑ Emphasize reliable, accessible, safe and convenient transit service in Spokane Transit Authority's 10-year plan.

Build and Expand Housing

Expanding practical economic incentives and programs to target underdeveloped land and convert significantly underutilized commercial properties into housing is critical to foster development of housing supply that can meet local demands. To support development:

- Continue successful programs that spur high-density development with a focus on missing middle and workforce housing up to 115% AMI, like the multi-family tax exemption (MFTE), while reducing barriers and costs for housing construction in Downtown.
- Leverage and enhance federal, state and local economic incentives, including public-private partnerships, to support commercial-to-residential conversions, development of surface parking lots, and infrastructure improvements.
- Build incentives to create new housing at all levels of affordability and oppose state and local legislative efforts and regulations that would delay or harm the ability to do so.
- Create a tax shift or reimbursement fund to reimburse eligible development costs, similar to the federal Historic Tax Credit program.
- Emphasize support for construction of housing on under-utilized sites.

2025 Priorities:

Federal:

- ❑ Pass the Revitalizing Downtowns and Main Streets Act (H.R. 9002) to incentivize conversions of unused office and commercial space into housing.

State:

- ❑ Align sales and use tax and property tax deferral housing conversion programs with the Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program to establish:
 - A minimum of 20% of units set aside for affordable and workforce housing up to 115% AMI without requirements for annual recertification after initial qualification.
 - Allowance for applicants to submit up to the point of issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy.
- ❑ Entirely exempt buildings on the local and/or national historic registry from the Clean Buildings Performance Standard (CBPS).

Local:

- ❑ Remove the DTC-100 height-restricted zone along Spokane Falls Blvd to encourage new development on surface parking lots across from Riverfront Park.
- ❑ Implement recommendations of the Downtown Housing Study.

Improve Safety Downtown

Reducing crime and improving public safety and cleanliness through strategic funding and enforcement of adopted laws with a focus on reducing recidivism supports a welcoming Downtown. To keep Downtown safe:

- Encourage proactive/neighborhood policing strategies by Downtown Precinct SPD officers, including regular foot and bike patrols, emphasis patrols, and investments that deter crime.
- Consistently enforce laws and regulations that address threats to personal safety and property, including the sale and use of illegal drugs in public, vandalism, theft, illegal camping, pedestrian interference, aggressive panhandling, sit-lie and chronic nuisance properties.

- Address rapidly rising drug overdose deaths and strengthen law enforcement's ability to address criminal networks distributing fentanyl and other drugs, including maintaining criminal penalties for drug possession and use as well as the potential for felony conviction. Oppose further drug legalization initiatives.
- Establish policies to deter and address nuisance behavior at locations with captive audiences, including hospitality amenities, financial services, and transit facilities and stops.
- Establish citywide equitable penalties for illegal camping to mirror protections for the city's undeveloped natural areas.
- Encourage participation in treatment-focused jail diversion programs, including Community Court, Therapeutic Drug Court, and Mental Health Court, and remove convictions for successful completion of treatment-focused diversion programs.
- Disrupt chronic, high-impact offenders breaking the law with arrest and incarceration requirements modeled on the joint City of Seattle and King County "High Utilizer Initiative."
- Expand jail capacity, electronic home monitoring where feasible, and supervised mental illness services and substance use treatment.
- Prevent exposing the community to harm by opposing the establishment of no-cash bail or exemption of the graduated re-entry program.
- Strengthen jail release procedures to prevent overnight discharge and ensure individuals can connect to community support systems, including transportation access to return to their community of origin.
- Encourage planning, design and development standards that incorporate and incentivize crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).

2025 Priorities:

Federal:

- Pass the HALT Fentanyl Act (HR 467) to permanently classify fentanyl-related substances under schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act.

State:

- Increase funding for recruiting, hiring and training to significantly increase the number of commissioned law enforcement officers in Downtown to support proactive neighborhood policing activities.
- Fund capacity in jail and behavioral health treatment facilities needed to address public safety and health in Spokane County.
- Combat organized retail crime (ORC) through enhanced penalties for theft and leverage the state's ORC Task Force.

Local:

- Reinstate Spokane's Alcohol Impact Area ordinance for the Downtown area.
- Remove any requirements for availability of shelter space in the SMC that make enforcement of public space management laws contingent on sufficient space.
- Implement a chronic offender directive that collaboratively identifies that ensures immediate incarceration, faster review of cases and charging decisions and coordination with treatment providers, when appropriate, for individuals responsible for repeat misdemeanor crimes in Downtown.
- Utilize Real Time Crime Center to enhance public safety.

Prioritize Getting People the Help They Need

Downtown is a hub for public safety and emergency response systems with a super-concentration of social services for Eastern Washington. Accessing shelter and housing options with wraparound services is critical to prevent hazardous urban camping on public rights-of-ways and conditions where criminals prey upon the most vulnerable in our community. Focusing on solution-oriented approaches:

- Support partnerships and resources that encourage initiatives, governance and funding around homelessness and behavioral health to align regionally with enhanced coordination, collaboration and accountability.
- Preserve and increase funding from federal, state and local sources that support permanent supportive housing with services.
- Expand shelter options with equitable distribution of emergency and transitional shelters across all Council Districts in accordance with requirements in the City of Spokane's Comprehensive Plan and oppose siting additional low-barrier housing, intake/navigation centers, and/or new stand-alone public restrooms Downtown to address further over-concentration.
- Require transparency in the development of social service and public facilities through public notification processes, including public postings, neighborhood notifications and conditional use permitting.
- Expand behavioral health funding and services, including designated funds for additional treatment identified in SB ESSB 5536, opioid settlements, and behavioral health programs, to keep those suffering from substance use disorders from entering or continuing in homelessness.
- Expand conservatorship and assisted outpatient treatment utilizing Ricky's Law, Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) and similar policies for those who do not have the capacity to care for themselves and/or pose a significant risk to themselves and others.

2025 Priorities:

Federal:

- Pass the Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMD) CARE Act (HR 4531) to remove the IMD exclusion under Medicaid and ensure coverage availability to address mental illness and substance use disorders.

State:

- Continue and expand the state's Right-of-Way Encampment Resolution Program (ROW ERP) funding to support moving individuals off the streets into supportive housing and treatment programs.
- Utilize involuntary withdrawal management and stabilization treatment for individuals in crisis suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders to protect them and the community.

Local:

- Maintain a regionwide Community Management Information System (CMIS) intake and reporting tool to support data-informed decision making.
- Ensure placement of shelters, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing minimizes overconcentration in any one neighborhood and require 24/7 management and staffing with enforceable "good neighbor" agreements in place prior to opening.

- Expand emergency stabilization centers for individuals experiencing mental health crises and ensure availability of detox facilities in Spokane County accepting referrals from law enforcement, fire departments, service providers and DSP Ambassadors.
- Increase funding allocations from Spokane County for mental illness and substance use disorder treatment.