

Strategic Plan 2011



THE DENVER FOUNDATION

Approved by
The Denver Foundation Board of Trustees
on October 27, 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Strategic Context	7
Community Listening Campaign	7
External Trends.....	8
Organizational Strengths and Vulnerabilities	9
Core Ideology: Our Mission, Vision, and Values.....	10
Objectives and Key Strategies	12
The Denver Foundation Strategy Map.....	13
Community-Impact Objectives	14
Objective 1: Basic Human Needs	17
Objective 2: Economic Opportunity	19
Objective 3: Education.....	21
Partner Objectives.....	23
Objective 4: Donors	24
Objective 5: Nonprofit Organizations.....	26
Objective 6: Community Leaders.....	27
Internal Building Blocks	29
Foundation Leadership.....	30
Structure, Resource, Process Alignment	31
Learning Community	32
Range of Revenue Streams	33
Sustainable Operating Model	34
Our Way Forward.....	36
Appendices	
A. Strategic-Planning Task Force and Board Members.....	38
B. Executive Summary of the 2011 Listening Campaign.....	39
C. Significant External Trends.....	43

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What are the factors that contribute to people having opportunities for a high quality of life in our community? This question fuels the vision of The Denver Foundation and resides at the heart of our new strategic plan. While we provide answers in the form of ten-year objectives and strategies, we know that the most effective community foundations in the twenty-first century will continuously refine their strategies as the external landscape evolves and new lessons are learned. In this spirit, our strategic plan is intended to be a dynamic road map, defining a clear “destination” – where we want to be in 2021 – and encouraging flexibility and creativity throughout the journey over the coming decade.

This plan is intended to drive positive change within The Denver Foundation and the community while *also* embracing continuity. The plan provides a sharper focus to our work in the form of three community-impact objectives, driven by the community’s needs and priorities. It requires us to rethink how we organize our time and talent, and where we invest dollars. At the same time, the plan strongly reaffirms the Foundation’s historical commitment to helping our community’s most vulnerable residents have access to a high quality of life. The plan strengthens our commitment to donors, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders as essential drivers of innovation and positive changes in our community.

Listening to the Community: How We Established Our Strategic Priorities

The Denver Foundation’s 2011 Listening Campaign involved nearly 800 individuals, including members of the public, donors, and leaders from the nonprofit, business, and public sectors. We asked about the components that contribute to a high quality of life and community members responded with a wide range of answers. The three areas of highest concern were basic human needs, economic development, and education.

Based on these findings and furthered by other research on key national, state, and regional trends, six strategic objectives were developed. Three of these objectives relate to the impact the Foundation seeks to have in the community. The other three objectives relate to our key partners – donors, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders. These strategic objectives are graphically depicted in the Strategy Map on page 12.

Community-Impact Objectives: Focusing on the Needs of the Most Vulnerable

In keeping with the findings of the Listening Campaign, the Foundation will focus on three community-impact objectives in the coming decade. These objectives concentrate efforts and resources on the area’s most vulnerable residents.

Objective 1: Basic Human Needs: Help ensure shelter, basic medical care, access to nutritious food, and safety for the most vulnerable residents in Metro Denver.

Objective 2: Economic Opportunity: Help foster interconnected and culturally vibrant communities in which low-income residents have the tools and opportunities necessary for jobs and careers that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Objective 3: Education: Help increase P–12 student achievement and graduation rates in targeted low-income neighborhoods.

Partner Objectives: Deepening Collaboration to Make a Difference

Over the next ten years The Denver Foundation will focus on strengthening its working relationship with three key partner groups as a path to achieving the community-impact objectives.

Objective 4: Donors: Increase donors of all types who give more strategically to their own objectives and to The Denver Foundation’s objectives.

Objective 5: Nonprofit Organizations: Increase the impact of nonprofit organizations in Metro Denver, particularly those working in alignment with the Foundation’s community-impact objectives.

Objective 6: Community Leaders: Increase the ability of leaders from all sectors to serve the community through their connections with The Denver Foundation.

Internal Building Blocks: Building on Current Strengths

In order to achieve the six objectives described above, The Denver Foundation will strengthen its internal capabilities and resources. In the coming ten years, the Foundation will focus on the following areas:

Foundation Leadership: Increase the leadership roles that staff, board, volunteers, and donors play on key issues in Metro Denver, especially those identified as our community-impact objectives.

Structure, Process, and Resource Alignment: Align and integrate staff and committee structures, resources, and administrative processes in order to achieve the community-impact and partner objectives.

Learning Community: Foster a learning community in which Foundation staff, trustees, volunteers, and partners share insights across disciplines and sectors, and use that learning to assess impact and develop future strategies.

Range of Funding Streams: Increase and diversify the range of revenue streams to maximize our effectiveness in connection with the Foundation's community-impact objectives.

Sustainable Operating Model: Ensure that the Foundation’s operating model is sustainable as circumstances change.

Implications: What the New Focus Really Means

The strategic plan is a broad road map and there is still much to be determined relative to implementation. Over the coming months, The Denver Foundation will draw a wide range of partners, donors, volunteers, and staff into this conversation. Though many details have yet to be defined, here is some of what we *do* know:

- The community-impact objectives deal with issues that are complex and interrelated. Many of our partners are already working on strategies and solutions to address these issues. The Denver Foundation will work with these partners to find niches in which we can leverage our strengths to make a meaningful contribution in the areas of basic human needs, economic opportunity, and education.
- As The Denver Foundation focuses its resources on the three community-impact objectives, we will continue to honor the wishes of current donors and donors from past generations. Donor intent is paramount. We recognize that our ability to attract new donors and steward contributions from current donors has a major potential for us to increase our impact in basic human needs, economic development, and education.
- The Denver Foundation will continue to make grants to the community through its many programs. The focus of and guidelines for our community grants will be realigned around the three community-impact objectives after 2012. We do not yet know how community grantmaking will change at this point. We do know that the change will not be radical or abrupt and that we will continue providing general operating support. We also know that our grantmaking will not be “business as usual.”
- Arts funding will continue but with a sharper focus on arts in education and as a driver of economic opportunity. The Foundation remains committed to arts and culture as an essential contributor to a high quality of life.
- The work of The Denver Foundation’s Strengthening Neighborhoods Program and Inclusiveness Project will be embedded within all three community-impact objectives. The philosophies, strategies, activities, and expertise gained through these two programs will shape the Foundation’s approach to achieving all of our community impact and partner objectives.
- The Denver Foundation will devote its non-financial resources (including staff, board, other volunteers, relationships, reputation, advocacy, and creative partnerships) to play leadership roles in the impact areas of basic human needs, economic opportunity, and education.

As we implement this strategic plan, The Denver Foundation will work with local residents, donors, and leaders who will help us craft the tactics and activities that will best achieve our community-impact objectives.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this strategic plan is to articulate the long-range direction and priorities for The Denver Foundation. The objectives and strategies described in this document have been approved by our board of trustees and will guide the Foundation's efforts and investments over the coming ten years.

Since our last strategic plan was created in 2007, the Foundation and our community have weathered the worst economic recession since the 1930s. In the face of this bad economy, the Foundation has maintained grant levels; collaborated with partners to create innovative programs to address emerging community needs; strengthened our governance and business processes; leveraged social media channels to increase the visibility of our work; and made it easier for individuals to establish donor-advised funds. Much of this was accomplished because we had a plan in place that enabled us to maintain our focus and to examine trade-offs even as the economic landscape shifted dramatically. Our new strategic plan will strengthen this cornerstone of agility, innovation, and resiliency.

We made the conscious decision to begin the strategic-planning process one year ahead of our five-year planning cycle. The primary reason for this decision was the dramatic change in the Foundation's strategic landscape, including the economic recession and its broad impact on community needs and philanthropy in the Denver Metro region.

In this plan, we present six compelling objectives to be achieved by 2021. Informing all of these objectives is The Denver Foundation's commitment to focus on serving those who are most vulnerable – those individuals and families who suffer most in our community and who lack the access to opportunities that create a basic quality of life.

The ten-year time horizon reflects our belief that the complex and interrelated social issues facing Metro Denver can only be addressed through a long-range effort and sustained commitment. At the same time, we recognize the need to pursue these objectives with alertness and adaptability to new challenges, opportunities, and lessons, as they emerge.

Community foundations must constantly balance current needs and future needs. We must do what we can to meet current needs while at the same time providing resources to help future generations meet unforeseen future needs. This plan aims to strike that balance. Sometimes, addressing problems today can prevent them from becoming bigger problems in the future.

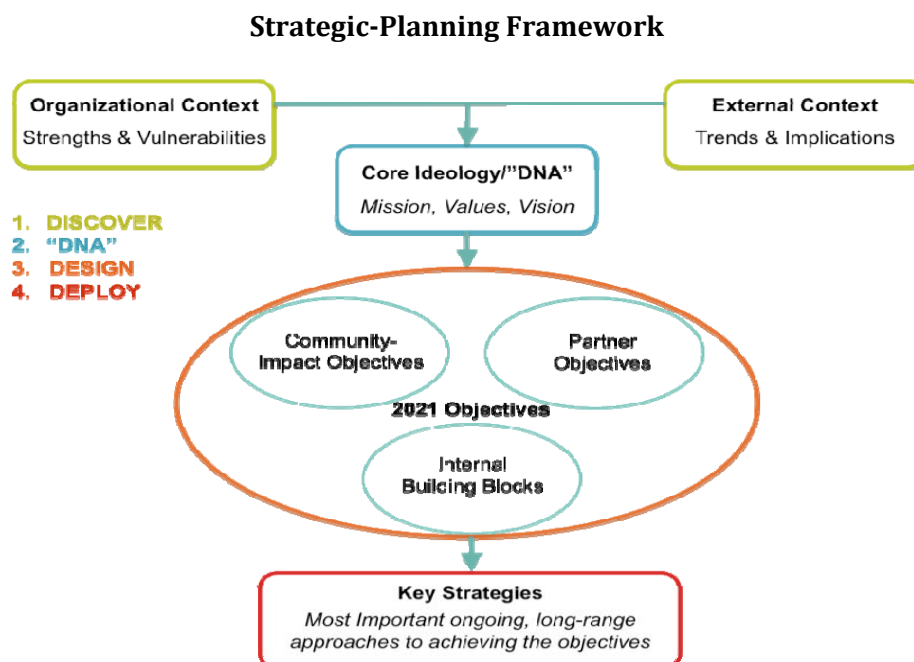
This plan is the product of a nine-month process led by a task force made up of 25 staff and board members of The Denver Foundation (See Appendix A). A central focus of the strategic-planning effort was to solicit and listen to the diverse voices of the Metro Denver community. This was achieved through a Listening Campaign that involved nearly 800 individuals, including members of the public, donors, and leaders from the nonprofit, business, and public sectors. For a copy of the full Listening Campaign report, go to www.denverfoundation.org/listening.

Like most strategic plans, this one does not address implementation, budgeting, and detailed tactics. In the months immediately following board approval of this plan, our staff, working closely with our board of trustees and community partners, will develop an aligned implementation road map and budget for the Foundation.

The remainder of this document is organized into the following sections:

- **Strategic Context:** In listening to a broad range of input from the community, what are the most important factors that contribute to people having opportunities for a high quality of life in our community? What issues and trends, both internal and external to The Denver Foundation, shaped our thinking about the future?
- **Core Ideology:** What are the enduring commitments that enable The Denver Foundation to act with clarity of purpose and integrity?
- **Objectives and Key Strategies:** What are the highest priority outcomes we aspire to achieve over the next ten years and why do they matter? For each objective, what are the long-range approaches we will pursue?
- **Our Way Forward:** What have we learned and how do these lessons inform our leadership activities as we move toward the future?

These sections follow the stages of the strategic-planning process that guided the development of this plan. The image below provides a graphic depiction of the stages of the strategic-planning process.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The strategic context for this plan was derived from examining both the internal and external landscape in which The Denver Foundation does its work.

In order to understand the strategic landscape, The Denver Foundation conducted extensive research among Metro Denver residents regarding community needs and aspirations, emerging trends, and organizational strengths and vulnerabilities. The thinking that went into this strategic plan was significantly shaped by what we learned through this research.

Community Listening Campaign

In listening to a broad range of input from the community, what are the factors that contribute to people having opportunities for a high quality of life in our community?

The Foundation's 2011 Listening Campaign shed light on community strengths, challenges, and aspirations. The Foundation surveyed nearly 800 community members including recipients of nonprofit services, business leaders, policy makers, neighborhood residents, and philanthropists. Our questions were informed by the Foundation's vision – *A community where all residents in Metro Denver have the opportunity for a high quality of life.* When asked about the components that contribute to a high quality of life, community members responded with a wide range of answers. Three of the strongest areas of concern were *basic human needs, economic development, and education*, but these and several other components are intertwined. For example, education is often described as a pathway out of poverty, but without a job at the other end, meeting basic needs will still be a problem.

The Listening Campaign surfaced a number of shared aspirations regarding how the “opportunities for a high quality of life” in Metro Denver might become visible in the future. Among these shared aspirations were:

- An educational system that produces high achievement regardless of income, race, or gender.
- Human services that meet basic needs so that all Metro Denver residents can experience the community's richness.
- A diverse economy of large and small businesses that provide abundant employment opportunities.

Finally, the Listening Campaign inquired about the roles that philanthropic organizations should play in addressing challenges faced by the Metro Denver community and in providing opportunities for a high quality of life to residents:

- Fill gaps in basic needs and human services that government is unable to fill.
- Identify community issues and provide funding to address those issues.
- Advocate for community needs and particular population segments.
- Act as conveners of different community groups and partners to encourage collaboration.
- Take risks to support innovative solutions to community problems.

Many more strengths, needs, and aspirations were identified in the Listening Campaign. Highlights of the Listening Campaign can be found in Appendix B. The full report is available at www.denverfoundation.org/listening.

External Trends

What issues and trends, external to The Denver Foundation, shaped our thinking about the future?

The Denver Foundation operates in a complex and dynamic environment in which current and emerging trends present potential opportunities as well as challenges to our ability to carry out our mission. The task force generated extensive research culled from national and regional studies, journals, and conversations with policy makers and other experts.

One of the most notable themes that emerged from the research is related to *disparities and divisions*. Disparities in health, education, criminal justice, and income based on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disabilities are generally on the rise among Colorado's residents. At the same time, there is increased political, racial, and economic polarization combined with diminished civility in public discourse. The task force identified this as both a challenge as well as an opportunity for the Foundation to work across traditional dividing lines, devising comprehensive strategies that promote opportunity for all of Metro Denver's residents.

A second important theme is related to the *emerging generation of donors and community leaders* who have a different worldview than the current generation. The emerging generation often places a higher value on direct involvement, innovation, and impact. Overall, this generation is less trusting of traditional institutions and more open to nontraditional models of social change, including social investment and entrepreneurship. In addition, for this younger generation, technology touches every aspect of social, economic, and philanthropic life. Because, as a community foundation, The Denver Foundation strongly relies on its relationships with its donors to make change in Metro

Denver, the task force recognized that the way it engages the next generation of community leaders and donors will need to take these preferences into account.

A third theme is related to *competition*. Increasingly, the financial services sector and social-investing organizations compete with community foundations for donor investments. In addition, there is a constant stream of new technology platforms that connect donors directly, instantaneously, and visually with organizations and causes. The Denver Foundation believes that all forms of philanthropic investments are commendable and valuable, while at the same time we strive to remain relevant and helpful to the donors and communities we serve.

Finally, throughout the research the task force encountered *wildcard factors* – important drivers of change that are potentially high-impact but impossible to predict. These include the state of the economy; international events, such as war and terrorism; natural disasters; climate change; election outcomes; and technological breakthroughs. It was acknowledged that the successful community foundation of the future will need to be alert and nimble to thrive in a world where uncertainty and complexity are the norm.

A more comprehensive list of key external trends can be found in Appendix C of this report.

Organizational Strengths and Vulnerabilities

What are the key strengths and vulnerabilities within The Denver Foundation that influence our ability to achieve our strategic mission and vision?

As the Strategic-Planning Task Force researched the Foundation’s internal landscape, several noteworthy strengths and vulnerabilities were identified. Among the Foundation’s greatest strengths are its talented and committed staff, its generous donors and fundholders, an outstanding public reputation, strong executive leadership, a committed corps of volunteers and trustees, and extensive relationships in every sector of the community. Notable among its many strengths is a robust and intentionally cultivated organizational culture that emphasizes caring, inclusivity, accountability, and excellence.

Like any organization, The Denver Foundation has vulnerabilities – issues that could become barriers to achieving its strategic objectives. When staff and trustees were polled, the primary vulnerabilities identified included inadequate staff capacity relative to the workload; the inevitability of senior management succession; concerns about the effectiveness of administrative processes and information systems; and tension between the desire to give grants broadly and having a deeper impact on issues.

CORE IDEOLOGY: MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

What are the enduring commitments that enable The Denver Foundation to act with clarity of purpose and integrity?

The 2011 strategic-planning process reaffirmed the mission, vision, and values developed and approved by the Foundation in 2007. The Denver Foundation's *Core Ideology* consists of our mission, vision, and core values. Our mission describes why we exist. Our vision describes our aspiration for what the Metro Denver community will become when we succeed in carrying out our mission. Our core values articulate the enduring principles that guide our decisions and actions at every level of the organization.

Our Mission (*Why do we exist?*)

We inspire people and mobilize resources to strengthen our community.

Our Vision (*What is the future we seek to bring about?*)

We envision a community where all residents in Metro Denver have the opportunity for a high quality of life, including but not limited to:

- Education
- Employment
- Food, clothing, and shelter
- Health
- Rich cultural offerings
- Safety
- The ability to give of themselves and connect with their community

Our Values (*What core ideals guide our decisions and actions?*)

Leadership: We listen to and learn from our community. We address the root causes of community problems and mobilize resources for the common good.

Equity: We strive for equity and we focus primarily, but not exclusively, on people who are vulnerable.

Inclusiveness: We practice and champion inclusiveness in our community. We honor diverse strengths, needs, voices, and backgrounds of all members of our community.

Accountability: We serve as stewards for our community investments and honor the charitable intentions of our donors to meet current and future community needs. We

hold ourselves to the highest standards of ethics, integrity, service, and fiduciary responsibility.

This strategic plan is constructed to advance, uphold, and strengthen our mission, vision, and core values. It translates our enduring ideals into tangible outcomes and pragmatic strategies.

OBJECTIVES AND KEY STRATEGIES

To the extent that a strategic plan is a “road map,” our objectives describe the desired “destination” – *where we want to be in 2021*. Our strategic objectives translate our long-range vision into a more focused, actionable set of outcomes. As shown in the Strategy Map on the following page, our long-range aspirations are organized into three broad themes:

- **Community-Impact Objectives:** What is the impact we intend to have in and on our community?
- **Partner Objectives:** What do we aspire to achieve regarding our most direct stakeholders?

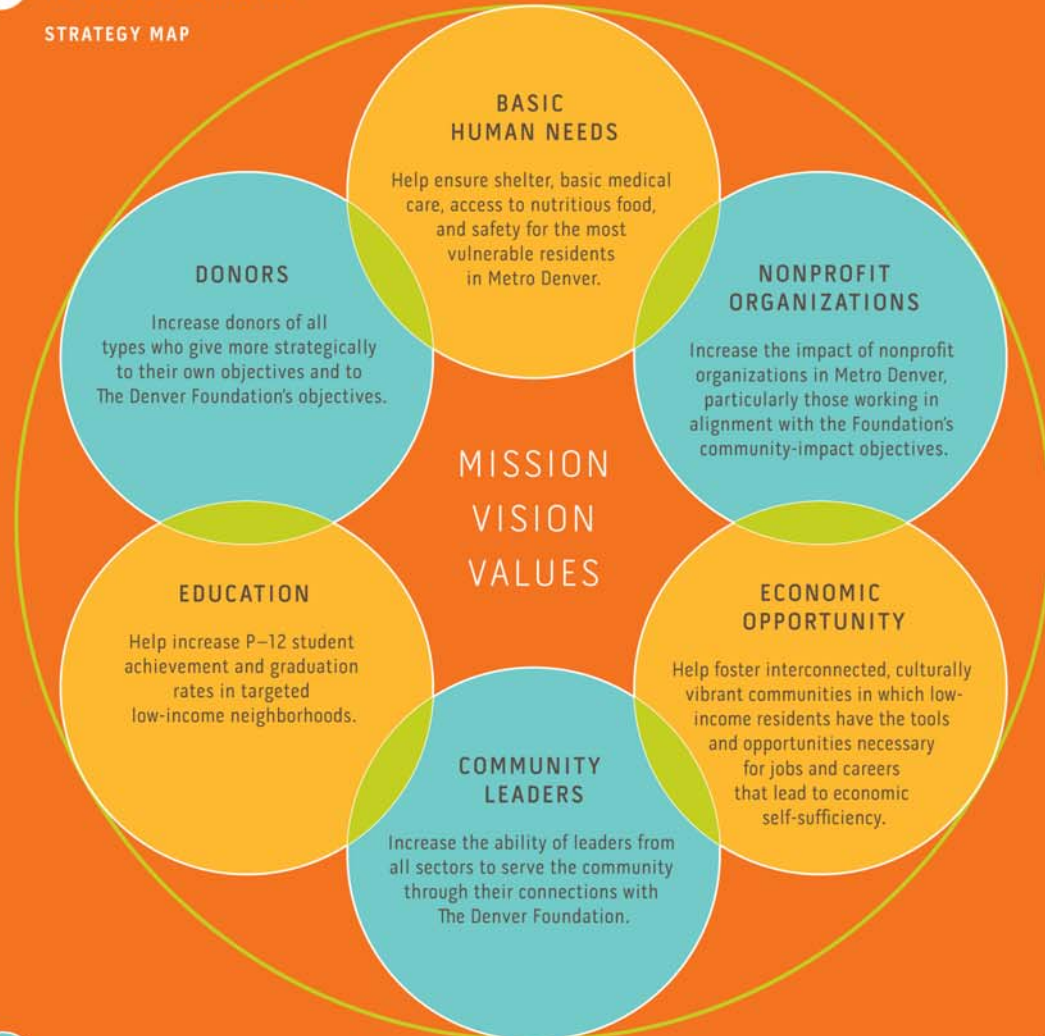
In addition to the strategic objectives, this section presents five internally-oriented objectives known as internal building blocks.

- **Internal Building Blocks:** What are the organizational capabilities we must build in order to achieve our community-impact and partner objectives? What financial outcomes must we achieve in order to ensure that the foregoing objectives are accomplished?

The Strategy Map is followed by a description of each objective and internal building block, an explanation of its strategic importance, and a summary of key strategies that will be employed to achieve the outcome.



STRATEGY MAP



PARTNER OBJECTIVES

COMMUNITY-IMPACT OBJECTIVES

INTERNAL BUILDING BLOCKS

<p>Foundation Leadership</p> <p>Increase the leadership roles that staff, board, volunteers, and donors play on key issues in Metro Denver, especially those identified as our community-impact objectives.</p>	<p>Structure, Process, and Resource Alignment</p> <p>Align and integrate staff and committee structures, resources, and administrative processes in order to achieve the community-impact and partner objectives.</p>	<p>Learning Community</p> <p>Foster a learning community in which Foundation staff, trustees, volunteers, and partners share insights across disciplines and sectors, and use that learning to assess impact and develop future strategies.</p>	<p>Range of Revenue Streams</p> <p>Increase and diversify the range of revenue streams to maximize our effectiveness in connection with the Foundation's community-impact objectives.</p>	<p>Sustainable Operating Model</p> <p>Ensure that the Foundation's operating model is sustainable as circumstances change.</p>
--	--	--	--	---

Community-Impact Objectives

What impact do we seek to have in and on our community if we are living out our vision and mission fully?



The Denver Foundation has translated its vision – *a community in which all residents have the opportunity for a high quality of life* – into three community-impact objectives. These objectives describe the positive change we seek to advance in the Metro Denver region over the coming ten years. This adjustment in focus is based on the needs that the community clearly expressed through the Listening Campaign and our research-based determination of how the Foundation can best address those needs.

The following criteria were taken into account as we developed the three community-impact objectives for The Denver Foundation. Each objective must:

- Embrace and advance The Denver Foundation’s mission, vision, and core values.
- Address needs identified by the community as a “high priority.”
- Maximize impact on the seven-county Metro Denver area.
- Take on issues that are broadly resonant with our partners including donors, community leaders, and staff.
- Provide a realistic opportunity to make meaningful progress on the issue over a ten-year time horizon.
- Focus on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents in the community.

- Provide opportunities for multiple points of engagement and partnering, particularly with nonprofit organizations, community leaders, donors, and fundholders.
- Address systemic issues and root causes whether based on local, regional, or national trends.
- Be achievable within the constraints of The Denver Foundation's resources.
- Align well with the Foundation's current strengths, staff expertise, donor interests, and relationships.

Based on these criteria, we developed three community-impact objectives:

- ***Basic Human Needs:*** Help ensure shelter, basic medical care, access to nutritious food, and safety for the most vulnerable residents in Metro Denver.
- ***Economic Opportunity:*** Help foster interconnected and culturally vibrant communities in which low-income residents have the tools and opportunities necessary for jobs and careers that lead to economic self-sufficiency.
- ***Education:*** Help increased P-12 student achievement and graduation rates in targeted low-income neighborhoods.

These objectives are inextricably linked to the conclusions we drew from the Listening Campaign and will serve as the lens through which we view our work over the coming years. In addition, these objectives reflect the Denver Foundation's core values of *equity* and *inclusiveness*, and our enduring commitment to focus primarily on people who are most vulnerable. By "most vulnerable" we mean residents of the Metro Denver community who are most susceptible to not having their basic needs met without formal or informal assistance, and least likely to have the ability, access, or power to pursue a high quality of life. People who are most vulnerable tend to be part of communities where disparities in economic stability and educational outcomes are greatest, most often low-income communities and communities of color.

The choice to pursue three community-impact objectives – basic human needs, economic opportunity, and education – has several implications. First, as the plan is implemented, the Foundation, in collaboration with experts, our donors and fundholders, and the community, will identify the niches and leverage points within each of these three objectives where we will be able to make the biggest difference. We are clear that the Foundation is going to make this difference not by becoming a direct service organization but rather, whenever

possible, by supporting, connecting, and highlighting the work of partner nonprofit organizations, and inviting interested donors to join us in this work.

Second, the focus of and guidelines for our community grants will be realigned around these three community-impact objectives after 2012. How specifically will the focus on three community-impact objectives change grantmaking at The Denver Foundation? We cannot say at this point. What we do know is that the change will not be radical or abrupt and that we will continue providing general operating support. We also know our grantmaking will not be “business as usual.” Some past recipients will not receive funding in the future. However, many nonprofit organizations that have received grants in the past will continue to receive funding, and new grantees will likely emerge.

Third, we envision that the Foundation’s core programs will evolve, thrive, and be highly influential in the context of the strategic priorities. The work of Strengthening Neighborhoods and the Inclusiveness Project will be incorporated within all community-impact objectives. The philosophies, strategies, activities, and expertise embedded in these two programs will play a significant role in shaping the Foundation’s approach to achieving all of our community-impact and partner objectives.

Fourth, The Denver Foundation will continue to make community grants through its many different programs (Community Grants, Technical Assistance, Strengthening Neighborhoods, etc.), work with donor-advised funds and the donors who establish them, and collaborate closely with community leaders to influence issues that matter. However, these activities will become much more deeply integrated between 2012 and 2021, in service to achieving our three strategic community-impact objectives.

Fifth, this plan will provide the basis for us to connect fundholders with community needs in *both* their areas of interest and The Denver Foundation’s three community-impact objectives. We remain committed to preserving the freedom of Denver Foundation fundholders to support their own philanthropic passions.

Finally, the plan will guide The Denver Foundation to devote more of its non-financial resources (staff, board, other volunteers, relationships, reputation, advocacy, creative partnership, and other resources) to play leadership roles in the impact areas of basic human needs, economic opportunity, and education.

As we implement this strategic plan, The Denver Foundation looks forward to continuing our connection with local residents, donors, and leaders who can help us craft the tactics and activities that will best achieve our community-impact objectives.

Objective 1: Basic Human Needs

Help ensure shelter, basic medical care, access to nutritious food, and safety for the most vulnerable residents in Metro Denver.

Rationale

- Meeting basic human needs is a fundamental prerequisite for building a high quality of life.
- Over the coming decade, basic and safety-net services are likely to lose federal, state, and local government funding. Acknowledging this trend, Listening Campaign respondents stated that one of the roles philanthropic organizations should play is to fill gaps in basic needs and human services that government is unable to fill. (Given the enormity of these complex issues, community foundations have an important though limited role to play.)
- Listening Campaign respondents consistently identified key indicators that certain basic needs are not being met for many Metro Denver residents. These include childhood hunger, poverty-stricken neighborhoods, relatively high rate of homelessness, and lack of affordable housing options.
- Colorado ranks near the bottom in safety-net programs and next to the top in rate of poverty growth.
- This objective leverages The Denver Foundation's expertise, current activities, the interests of its donors and fundholders, and network of relationships in areas such as hunger and homelessness.

Key Strategies

Overall Strategies

- Work at both systemic and frontline levels to address basic human needs of the most vulnerable residents in Metro Denver, as determined by the Colorado Self-Sufficiency Standard.¹
- Engage in ongoing learning and research related to the basic needs of those most vulnerable.
- Embed resident-centric and inclusive practices in our work related to basic human needs.
- Leverage and align interests of current and future donors with the needs identified.

Issue-specific Strategies

- Increase access to benefits for nutritious food.
- Ensure a strong emergency delivery system for nutritious food.
- Increase the availability of emergency shelter.
- Support comprehensive, integrated plans to prevent and end homelessness in the Denver Metro region, including affordable housing.
- Support frontline health care organizations as they provide basic medical care and preventive services to the most vulnerable residents, including mental health and dental care.
- Support programs and organizations that provide assistance to those who suffer from or are at risk of violence, abuse, or neglect.

¹ The Self-Sufficiency Standard defines the amount of income necessary to meet basic needs (including taxes) without public subsidies (e.g., public housing, food stamps, Medicaid or child care) and without private/informal assistance (e.g., food provided by churches or local food banks, or shared housing). The Self-Sufficiency Standard is based on major budget items faced by working adults, such as housing, childcare, food, health care, transportation, taxes, and miscellaneous costs. Today, the Standard is updated every three years and can be found in 37 states and the District of Columbia. For more information about the Self-Sufficiency Standard, please see www.selfsufficiencystandard.org and for Colorado's Self-Sufficiency Standard, please see www.cclponline.org.

Objective 2: Economic Opportunity

Help foster interconnected and culturally vibrant communities in which low-income residents have the tools and opportunities necessary for jobs and careers that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Rationale

- Listening Campaign respondents identified economic opportunity and employment as important factors to improving access to quality of life. Almost half (45 percent of survey respondents) indicated that the job market is one of the objectives in which there is most room for improvement in Metro Denver.
- Community members identified several challenges related to economic opportunity and employment in Metro Denver, including disparities in economic opportunity based on socioeconomic status, disabilities, race/ethnicity, growing gaps between rich and poor, relatively high unemployment rates, and a workforce that is educated but largely imported from outside the state.
- Poverty is shifting to the inner suburbs where there is less access to jobs and affordable services that impact employment (e.g., transportation and childcare).
- This objective has the potential to build on The Denver Foundation's work with Strengthening Neighborhoods, the Inclusiveness Project, and donor-directed scholarship programs, while also playing to our strengths as conveners.

Key Strategies

- Focus our resources on a small number of communities in which the most vulnerable populations live.
- Ensure that residents from the most vulnerable populations play a central role in determining how The Denver Foundation deploys its resources in their communities.
- Strengthen organizations to advance their work in key areas, such as job training, micro-business development, and transit access.

- Support use of the arts to create more economic opportunities.
- Focus on connecting people not only with initial jobs but with career paths, career development, and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Support ways to increase access to jobs and essential services that support one's ability to achieve self-sufficiency.
- Connect existing Denver Foundation scholarship programs and interested current and future donors with this work.

Objective 3: Education

Help increase P–12 student achievement and graduation rates in targeted low-income neighborhoods.

Rationale

- Listening Campaign respondents most commonly identified education as an important component for providing a high quality of life. They related education to other outcomes such as income, economic growth, and community development.
- Nearly half of the Listening Campaign survey respondents (44 percent) identified Metro Denver’s K–12 education system as a key barrier to Metro Denver residents having a high quality of life. Specific challenges included disparities in access to high-quality education, drop-out rates based on income and race/ethnicity, inability to retain good teachers, low funding for Metro Denver’s education system, and lack of emphasis on early childhood education.
- There is compelling research demonstrating that arts education is essential to student achievement.
- Research points to significant disparities in educational achievement based on socioeconomic status, disabilities, and race/ethnicity. In particular, Metro school systems have failed to educate African American and Latino males.
- A large portion of the donors who have funds with The Denver Foundation already invest grant dollars in the area of education and could be important partners in addressing this issue.
- Our community’s success or failure in educating the next generation has direct implications for economic vitality, health, crime rates, and other factors determining quality of life in Metro Denver.

Key Strategies

- Define the role/s The Denver Foundation can play in impacting P–12 education, particularly in communities where significant disparities exist.
- Support and raise awareness about promising programs and research that advance this objective.

- Support schools and programs that improve student achievement.
- Strengthen and encourage arts education programs that improve student achievement.
- Bring together people with a stake in education in ways that include previously marginalized voices, facilitate the search for common-ground solutions, and activate collaborative efforts that advance this objective.
- Connect existing Denver Foundation scholarship programs and interested current and future donors with this work.

Partner Objectives

What do we seek to achieve with our most direct partners in order to realize our vision and community impact?

The Denver Foundation considers donors and fundholders, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders to be the three broad categories of partners on whom successful realization of our strategic vision relies. Our strategic objectives related to each of these groups are:



Objective 4: Donors

Increase donors of all types who give more strategically to their own objectives and to The Denver Foundation's objectives.

Rationale

- Research shows that a more inclusive donor base strengthens nonprofit organizations and helps to reduce racial and economic disparities.
- Research suggests that donors increasingly desire more control over their giving and expect more specific outcomes and impacts.
- As a community foundation, what sets The Denver Foundation apart from other institutional funders is our growing and vibrant cadre of donors and fundholders. These individuals, businesses, organizations, and families seek to pursue their own charitable interests and to invest in the community in partnership with the Foundation.
- We value increasing donor knowledge, engagement, and empowerment to make a difference in issues they care about.
- We believe that increased donor engagement will attract more resources to support The Denver Foundation's vision and community-impact objectives.

Key Strategies

- Substantially increase the number of people who establish funds at The Denver Foundation.
- Substantially increase contributions from fundholders to their funds at The Denver Foundation.
- Substantially increase contributions from Denver Foundation fundholders and new donors to programs that further The Denver Foundation's three community-impact objectives.
- Grow The Denver Foundation's community endowment with support from current fundholders, annual donors, and new donors.

- Work to improve the diversity – especially racial and ethnic diversity – of Denver Foundation donors, and work to attract younger donors through Social Venture Partners and other vehicles.

Objective 5: Nonprofit Organizations

Increase the impact of nonprofit organizations in Metro Denver, particularly those working in alignment with the Foundation's community-impact objectives.

Rationale

- Nonprofits are a primary community partner in achieving high quality of life for Metro Denver residents.
- Our reputation, expertise, and established relationships position The Denver Foundation to advance and achieve this objective.
- Aligning our organizational partnerships around the community-impact objectives will be essential to addressing priority issues identified in both the 2007 and 2011 Listening Campaigns.

Key Strategies

- Award grants that best achieve the three community-impact objectives.
- Coordinate multiple tactics, such as technical assistance grants, inclusiveness grants, internships, and staff expertise, to build the capacity of key nonprofits to help make a difference in the three community-impact objectives.
- Establish and maintain effective, flexible relationships with nonprofits so that we can work together to achieve our goals, as community needs change and evolve over time.
- Help local nonprofit organizations become more inclusive in order to improve their effectiveness.
- Offer clear points of entry that allow nonprofit organizations access to the knowledge, talents, and resources of the Foundation.
- Build meaningful connections among Denver Foundation grantees, community partners, and Foundation fundholders.
- Pursue high-impact, long-term investment opportunities that align with community-impact objectives by establishing processes and resources that are flexible and adaptive.

Objective 6: Community Leaders

Increase the ability of leaders from all sectors to serve the community through their connections with The Denver Foundation.

Rationale

- We are a *community* foundation. Working with community leaders, just as working with donors and nonprofits, is a reflection of our design.
- In order to achieve our strategic objectives, it will be essential to strengthen the capacity and enlist the partnership of current and emerging leaders throughout Metro Denver.
- The task force's research suggests increasing polarization along a wide variety of dimensions, including political beliefs, race/ethnicity, and organizational interest. The Foundation is uniquely positioned to convene, connect, learn from, and educate, the sometimes-disparate leaders from throughout the community. Indeed, the Listening Campaign results demonstrate a community request for the Foundation to do so.
- The Foundation has had increasing success in supporting community leaders, including the Emerging Leaders in Development Program, Strengthening Neighborhoods Leadership Development Program, Technical Assistance Program, Nonprofit Internship Program, and the Inclusiveness Project. We can build on successes by escalating these activities into a more strategic objective.

Key Strategies

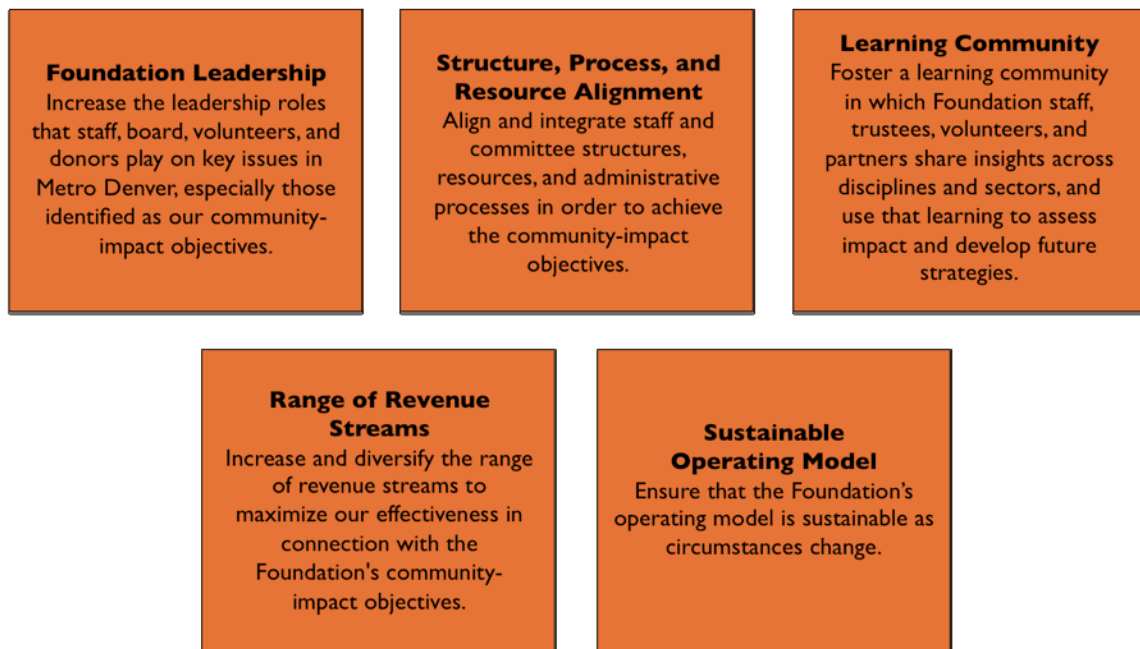
- Identify, develop, and support emerging community leaders.
- Engage established leaders in addressing community issues.
- Connect emerging and established leaders to reflect and act on key issues, primarily in alignment with the community-impact objectives.
- Incorporate the perspectives of community leaders in the work of the Foundation.

- Work to improve the diversity – especially racial and ethnic diversity – of community leaders through the Inclusiveness Project, Strengthening Neighborhoods, Nonprofit Internship Program, and other vehicles.

Internal Building Blocks

What are the organizational capabilities we must build in order to achieve our community-impact and partner objectives? What financial outcomes must we achieve in order to ensure that our strategic objectives are accomplished?

In order to achieve the strategic objectives described in the previous section, The Denver Foundation must build upon its current internal strengths and capabilities. The internal building blocks are the essential organizational capacities that the foundation will develop over the coming decade. They are intended to address issues related to organizational infrastructure, resources, and culture.



Foundation Leadership

Increase the leadership roles that staff, trustees, volunteers, and donors play on key issues in Metro Denver, especially those identified as our community-impact objectives.

Rationale

- We recognize that grants alone do not solve social problems and that achieving our community-impact objectives and partner objectives will require a multi-faceted approach that leverages all of the resources, talents, and relationships of the Foundation.
- To address systemic issues, such as education and economic opportunity, we will need to engage in leadership strategies that go beyond our traditional grant strategy. These might include alternative forms of grants, convening, program-related investments, technical assistance, program development, advocacy, and research.

Key Strategies

- Build, nurture, and leverage strategic relationships with leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and in the community.
- Develop a deep understanding of issues, policies, and community trends that affect the community-impact objectives and use this knowledge to shape appropriate strategies and actions.
- Become more effective leaders by studying leadership models, extracting and employing those that work best for The Denver Foundation, and adjusting and stepping beyond the models when innovation is required.
- Enhance the Foundation's strength in leadership by coordinating the efforts and leadership roles of staff, trustees, volunteers, donors, and community members.
- Maximize the role of donor leadership, knowledge, and skills in partnership with the Foundation.

Structure, Process, and Resource Alignment

Align and integrate staff and committee structures, resources, and administrative processes in order to achieve the community-impact objectives.

Rationale

- Greater focus on three community-impact objectives offers the Foundation the opportunity to align its financial resources, people, core business processes, and infrastructure in ways that ensure greater effectiveness and accountability.
- Alignment and simplification of the volunteer structure is intended to provide more meaningful ways for donors and others to become involved in the Foundation and engage in the issues that matter most to them.

Key Strategies

- Foster internal systems within the Foundation that promote collaboration, agility, and efficiency within and among departments.
- Develop and implement a technology strategy to achieve the objectives of the strategic plan.
- Ensure that the staff of the Foundation has the capacity, knowledge, skills, and tools to achieve the objectives of the strategic plan.
- Integrate the work of staff, trustees, committee members, and volunteers through governance structures that achieve the objectives of the strategic plan.

Learning Community

Foster a learning community in which Foundation staff, trustees, volunteers, and partners share learning across disciplines and sectors, and use that learning to assess impact and develop future strategies.

Rationale

- The Denver Foundation believes that meeting the community objectives will require dynamic learning in collaboration with partners. Deeper impact will require building a culture that supports mutual reflection, sharing of insights, and collective action.
- The Denver Foundation can add unique value by becoming a regional hub for nonprofits and leaders to share best practices and strategies across organizations and projects.
- Research strongly suggests that new technology and increased access to information does not guarantee that new insights and higher impact will follow. Successful twenty-first-century organizations will only be successful if their culture and systems enable them to interpret new knowledge and adapt quickly as new trends emerge.
- Our ability to meet the unique needs and preferences of donors and to engage them at a new level requires that we become more sophisticated in understanding what matters to them.

Key Strategies

- Engage in shared learning and decision making to advance community-impact objectives.
- Increase the Foundation's qualitative and quantitative research and learning-centered evaluation capability.
- Develop and sustain a system for assessing the impact of the Foundation's strategies and activities.
- Create and maintain feedback loops that allow us to listen to the community, work with partners to interpret what we hear, and take action on the resulting insights.

Range of Funding Streams

Increase and diversify the range of revenue streams to maximize our effectiveness in connection with the Foundation's community-impact objectives.

Rationale

- In order to achieve the objectives and carry out the specific strategies described in this plan, The Denver Foundation will seek to increase the unrestricted dollars available to grantmaking. We currently have about five million dollars per year in unrestricted grant dollars and want to significantly increase this.
- While some of The Denver Foundation's generous fundholders give to the Foundation's programs or make provisions for supporting the Foundation, our Community Endowment, our programs, and the community through their estate plans, this stream of funding could be expanded.
- The Denver Foundation encourages all grant applicants to have diverse sources of funding and it behooves the Foundation to do the same. There are many potential avenues worth exploring to broaden the sources of revenue that support the work of The Denver Foundation.
- In today's rapidly changing world, we should experiment with a wide variety of revenue ideas to determine which have potential to increase funding for the future.

Key Strategies

- Diversify revenue streams beyond fee income (this might include partnerships with local funders, corporate support, grants from national funders, product development, investments, settlements, and earned income).
- As we develop closer relationships with donors, maximize opportunities for working together to leverage and steward resources to address community-impact objectives.

Sustainable Operating Model

Ensure that the Foundation's operating model is sustainable as circumstances change.

Rationale

- Our current operating model, in line with much of the community-foundation field, is predicated on the continued viability and growth of donor-advised funds. The Foundation currently supports its operations by assessing a fee (which averages 1 percent per year) on the funds it administers. Changes in tax regulations, increased competition for donor-advised funds, or unforeseen factors could render this assumption less valid with limited advance notice.
- Presently, The Denver Foundation's operating capital is substantially dependent on a single source of income (i.e., fees from donor-advised funds, tied to the Foundation's operating model).
- Ingenuity from outside the community-foundation sector may supersede this philanthropic model. In order to ensure The Denver Foundation's long-term success, we must continually assess our basic business assumptions, vigilantly monitor leading-edge ideas, and proactively reshape our operating model to anticipate changes rather than react to them.

Key Strategies

- Monitor the following areas and identify how they will affect the Foundation's operating model:
 - the changing landscape of tax and policy;
 - other sectors and their ideas, trends, and actions; and
 - current and future giving trends and demographic changes.
- Ensure that the knowledge of trustees, donors, committee members, and volunteers is fully employed to contribute to the sustainability of the operating model.
- Engage in deep analysis and projection of our current operating model, modifying as needed.

- Foster a culture – both internally and with our partners – that embraces listening, creativity and experimentation, that promotes sharing across areas of focus, and that acts on innovative ideas in order to achieve the strategic objectives.

OUR WAY FORWARD

For over 86 years, generations of Metro Denver residents have entrusted The Denver Foundation to be a responsive and agile servant to the community. This strategic plan embodies our continuing commitment to listen to the diverse voices of the community, deepen our partnerships in every sector, and share the lessons and benefits that emerge from our work.

As we look to the future, accelerating change, increasing complexity, and continued uncertainty define the strategic landscape. In the midst of these challenges, our intent is clear: The Denver Foundation will continue to learn and adapt in order to improve life in Metro Denver. This plan sets us on a trajectory for deepening our impact and improving every aspect of our operation. As we carry out this plan, we anticipate seeing a number of important benefits.

Specific and Targeted Community Impact: The community-impact objectives, focused on basic human needs, economic opportunity, and education, are a more concise way to express our enduring vision of *a community where all residents in Metro Denver have the opportunity for a high quality of life*. These objectives surfaced directly from the 2011 Listening Campaign and reflect our conviction to help address social and economic disparities, relieve suffering, and meet the basic needs of those in our community who are most vulnerable.

Grantmaking that is Both Broad and Deep: In order to maximize our impact in the community, The Denver Foundation's unrestricted grant dollars will be spent in ways that are both broad and deep. Broad grants will continue to support all types of local nonprofit organizations in alignment with our community-impact objectives. Deep grantmaking will be strategic, proactive, consistent with community priorities, and focused on demonstrating impact.

Extensive Connections of Fundholders and Community Priorities: The Foundation will be better able to meaningfully connect fundholders with community needs. We anticipate that more and more fundholders will look to The Denver Foundation for advice in their grantmaking, and more donors will look to The Denver Foundation to help them make a greater impact with their charitable dollars.

Maximum Integration of Effort and Resources: Increasingly, The Denver Foundation's work will maximize our diverse resources and strategies in an integrated and collective way. We will benefit from joining the wide variety perspectives, disciplines, and skills of our staff, board, and other volunteers in service of helping to create a community where all residents in Metro Denver have the opportunity for a high quality of life.

Financially Sustainable Operating Model: The Denver Foundation will become more nimble and able to respond quickly and effectively to changes that might affect the growth of donor-advised funds and philanthropy. Our funding streams will become more diversified as will our network of donors.

We see this plan as a dynamic road map – one that describes *where we want to be* in ten years, but also will continue to evolve as the landscape changes. As we develop the specific tactics and actions in the coming months to implement this strategic plan, we will invite input from our grantees, staff, donors, and other key partners in ways that significantly shape what implementation looks like. Additionally, as we encounter the challenges and paradoxes inherent in philanthropy and social change, we are committed to remaining connected to our mission and core values – those enduring ideals that serve as a compass for our staff and trustees as we navigate our way into the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Strategic-Planning Task Force and Board Members

Appendix B: Executive Summary of the 2011 Listening Campaign

Appendix C: Significant External Trends

Appendix A
STRATEGIC-PLANNING TASK FORCE AND BOARD MEMBERS

To the members of the 2010-2011 Strategic-Planning Task Force who generously gave of their time, energy, and wisdom, thank you.

Strategic-Planning Task Force

Trustees

Pamela Kenney Basey, Chair
Ginny Bayless
Mark Berzins
Sarah Bock
Linda Campbell
Barbara Grogan
María Guajardo
Kenzo Kawanabe
Jesse King
Bill Ryan
Sandra Shreve
George Sparks

Staff

Rebecca Arno
Barbara Berv
Lauren Casteel
Lisa Fasalo Frishman
Sarah Harrison
Jeff Hirota
Patrick Horvath
Dan Lee
Adrienne Mansanares
David Miller
David Portillo
Christiano Sosa
Oz Spies

Board of Trustees

Kenzo Kawanabe, Chair
Luella Chavez-D'Angelo, Vice Chair
Jim Kelley, Treasurer
Rico Munn, Secretary
Ginny Bayless
Pamela Kenney Basey
Mark Berzins
Sarah Bock
Linda Campbell
Jack Fox
Barbara Grogan
María Guajardo
John Ikard
Jesse King
Diana Lee
Michael Martinez
Bill Ryan
Sandra Shreve
George Sparks
Chris Urbina
Maria Zubia

Appendix B

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE 2011 LISTENING CAMPAIGN

Overview

To further its connection to the community and to drive its new strategic plan, The Denver Foundation recently engaged in a four-month Listening Campaign throughout the Denver Metro area. The purpose of the Listening Campaign was to gather insights from community leaders and partners about the community's vision for what contributes to a high quality of life.

As part of the 2011 Listening Campaign, the study team from BBC Research and Consulting used interviews, focus groups, public forums, and surveys to engage nearly 800 community leaders and partners – including business and civic leaders, community residents, current and former Foundation volunteers, nonprofit professionals, Denver Foundation fund holders, and the general public.

At every stage of the Listening Campaign, BBC asked participants to set aside their personal and organizational interests and think about the needs of the entire metropolitan community. Consensus emerged regarding the future for which Metro Denver should strive:

- An **educational system** that produces high achievement regardless of income, race, disability, or gender.
- A **diverse economy** of large and small businesses that provides abundant employment opportunities.
- Human services that meet **basic needs** so that all Metro Denver residents can experience the community's richness.
- Access to high-quality, **affordable health care** that takes a preventative, holistic approach.
- **Housing development** that is sensitive to new and existing residents and that promotes diverse communities.
- Thriving **familial networks** that support intact and broken family structures.
- **Transportation** that is accessible and affordable to all Metro Denver residents.
- **Civic engagement**, supported by strong, effective leaders, to address difficult community issues.
- A community that is **welcoming** to newcomers and immigrants in which nobody lives in the shadows.
- A **collaborative philanthropic community** that works to identify and attempt to fill gaps that government cannot fill.

Key Issue Areas

Respondents noted specific concerns regarding each key area. **These areas are deeply intertwined and the outcomes in each affect the other.**

Education: Forty-four percent of survey respondents most commonly identified “lack of high-quality K-12 education” as the number one barrier to a high quality of life for all Metro residents. Among the challenges they identified in this area:

- Disparities in access to high-quality education, based on income and race/ethnicity
- High drop-out rate
- Relatively low funding for Metro Denver’s educational system
- Lack of emphasis on early childhood and after-school programs

Basic Needs: A large proportion of Listening Campaign respondents noted that Metro Denver residents have difficulty meeting basic human needs. Respondents noted a number of barriers to a high quality of life in this area, including access to health care (identified as a key barrier by 36.3 percent of respondents), lack of affordable housing (34.5 percent), and hunger (16.6 percent). These indicators were cited as the signs of that need:

- Poverty-stricken neighborhoods
- Childhood hunger
- High rate of homelessness
- Lack of affordable housing

Economic Opportunity: Respondents also identified economic opportunity and employment as a major barrier to a high quality of life. Fully one-third of respondents (33.2 percent) noted that lack of high-quality jobs is an area of concern. Challenges related to economic opportunity in Metro Denver include:

- High unemployment
- Disparities in economic opportunity based on socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity
- Growing financial gaps between rich and poor
- Inability to attract new industries and large companies to relocate in Metro Denver
- A workforce that is educated, but largely imported rather than homegrown

Other Key Areas of Concern: Community members also identified a number of other, related areas of concern, closely linked to those described above.

- Transportation
- Family Support
- Immigration
- Gentrification and Segregation

How Philanthropy Can Make a Difference: The survey asked members of the community to consider how the philanthropic sector – foundations, nonprofit organizations, corporations, and other donors who give to help meet community needs – could best take action. Among their suggestions:

- Work to fill gaps in basic needs and human services that government is unable to fill.
- Identify community issues and provide funding to address those issues.
- Advocate for community needs and particular population segments.
- Act as conveners of different community groups to encourage collaboration.
- Take risks to support innovative solutions to community problems.

For more information: Please visit the website www.denverfoundation.org/listening to view the full results of the Listening Campaign. The Denver Foundation also invites ongoing feedback at listening@denverfoundation.org or through Facebook or Twitter.

Appendix C

SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL TRENDS

Regional Demographics

- Members of minority racial and ethnic groups will account for a larger percentage of population in the coming decade.
- Growth of suburban poor populations will create more demand for affordable and accessible transportation and support services, as most services are concentrated in the urban center.
- Increasing number of number of people with mental and physical disabilities.
- Immigrants and their children will make up a growing percentage of the Colorado population, electorate, and workforce.
- Aging of baby boomers will lead to significant growth in the senior population over the next ten to fifteen years, impacting regional health care, employment, transportation, and housing.

Disparities

- Growing disparities in income, education, health, and incarceration rates. These disparities are largely correlated to race, disabilities, culture, and geographic location.
- Increasing numbers of people living at or below poverty levels in Colorado.
- Increasing P-20 education gap for minorities and poor.

Government and Public Policy

- Decreases in all levels of government funding for basic services and safety net programs.
- Disintegration of the social contract; erosion of trust in public institutions and officials.
- Increased political, racial, and economic polarization combined with a lack of “leadership from the middle” and diminished civility in public discourse.
- Policy makers and citizens focused on immediate and urgent priorities rather than planning for the generation not yet born.

Economic Development

- New policies are projected to lead to increased demand for transit-oriented development (TOD); higher-density, mixed use development within walking distance of transit stations.

Philanthropy

- Younger donors are increasingly interested in engaging in their own, high-impact philanthropy, investing in innovative approaches, and tracking the results.
- Broad impact of technology on how issues and opportunities for giving are communicated, how giving is conducted, and how stories are shared.

Competition

- Increased competition for donor investments from financial services sector and social-investing alternatives.
- Increased competition from technology platforms that connect donors directly and instantaneously with organizations and causes.

Environmental

- Climate change and possible shortages of water and energy to meet the future needs.