

2022 SUSTAINABILITY ACTION REPORT



Introduction

Purpose of the Sustainability Plan & Action Reporting Process

At its core, sustainability occurs at the intersection between natural and social systems; its principles are concerned with the Earth’s natural systems and how human activities utilize and impact those systems for the benefit of our societies. Sustainability is also an intergenerational concept, looking at both the short-term and long-term effects of actions.

From the perspective of a community and local government, sustainability helps ensure that we are taking a holistic view toward decision making. It asks us to consider how we are utilizing limited resources and how our actions are impacting the water, air, climate, and non-human living things around us.

This sustainability plan and action reporting process is designed to guide action within the City of Durango municipality as well as the community as a whole. It organizes multi-layered and inter-related topics, focuses efforts on common objectives, and highlights the major environmental concerns for Durango. The processes and commitments laid out in the Sustainability Plan will ensure that sustainability principles and goals remain integrated into efforts throughout the city. The annual action reporting process helps maintain focus on key issues over multiple years while also allowing for flexibility and reprioritization as needed to stay relevant and effective.

Sustainability is not an end-goal that our community will reach one day, it is an ongoing commitment to principles that help protect our natural environment and ensure the quality of life for present and future generations.

Vision for a Sustainable Durango

Durango is a community committed to achieving carbon neutrality, preserving our natural environment, conserving resources, maintaining our unique character, and improving quality of life for the benefit of present and future generations of residents, visitors, and neighboring communities.

Overarching Priorities

- Reduce municipal and community-wide greenhouse gas emissions and increase renewable electricity generation in line with adopted goals.
- Prepare Durango’s social, economic, and environmental systems to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Secure the health and wellbeing benefits that are gained from reduced pollution and connection to healthy natural systems.
- Implement actions in a way that equitably distributes the costs and quality of life benefits.

Sectors

Sustainability Plan uses five sectors to categorize sustainability efforts throughout Durango:

- **Energy**
- **Transportation & Development Patterns**
- **Consumption & Waste**
- **Water**
- **Natural Systems & Ecology**

Indicators & Tracking

Indicators among various sectors will be the crucial measurements of community sustainability. A major focus of sustainability planning and reporting has been selecting indicators that will remain relevant and realistically measurable for years to come. Committing to a tracking and reporting process will provide key insights into the effectiveness of our collective sustainability actions.

The general goal for any indicator is understood to be continued progress in the direction of the specified target trend. A flat target trend for an indicator suggests that the desired trend could be offset by various beneficial efforts, or that we are already maintaining what is considered a sustainable level for that indicator. Specific goals on certain indicators may be adopted by City Council in the future, especially where citizens express strong concern.

LEED for Cities Status Update

Utilizing a third-party evaluation and certification framework is a well-established strategy for addressing complex challenges. The City of Durango has previously used the STAR Community Rating System which was developed by and for local governments across the US. In late 2018, this system was integrated into the LEED for Cities framework which is part of the suite of LEED rating systems, which are globally recognized for guiding sustainability in green buildings and community development.

As of March 2023, the City of Durango has not yet completed the LEED for Cities certification process due to the unforeseen level of staff time required. Direction from community members and City leadership is being sought to evaluate the priority LEED for Cities certification relative to other demands of staff time. Regardless of certification status, the framework still informs actions and indicator tracking in the overall context of the Sustainability Plan.

Additional Resources and Plans

The following resources and links provide a deeper dive into the information and data related to various aspects of sustainability issues in Durango and our region.

General Sustainability

Greenhouse Gas Emissions & Climate

- [2016 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory \(completed 2019\)](#)
- [Resilience Framework \(2019\)](#)

Energy

Transportation & Development Patterns

- [Multimodal Transportation Plan \(2016, currently being updated\)](#)
- [Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan \(2021\)](#)

Consumption & Waste

- [DurangoRecycles.com](#)
- [Southwest Colorado Waste Study \(2015\)](#)

Water

- [City of Durango Water System Master Plan \(2021\)](#)
- [Municipal Drought Management Plan \(2020\)](#)
- [Vulnerability, Consequences, & Adaptation Planning Scenarios \(VCAPS\) workshop \(2018\)](#)
- [Colorado Water Plan](#)
- [Southwest Basin Implementation Plan \(BIP\)](#)

Natural Systems & Ecology

- [Parks, Open Space, Trails, & Recreation \(POSTR\) Master Plan \(2020\)](#)

Community Engagement and Feedback Themes

The 2023 Community Sustainability Forum was held on March 15, 2023, and provided the opportunity Durango's community to engage with the City on issues related to sustainability and resilience. The forum was accompanied by a survey that allowed community members to provide feedback on their priorities and concerns related to sustainability.

The top overall concerns related to sustainability (both from a global and local perspective) are by far climate change and greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), including mitigating the effects of climate change by reducing emission and also preparing for the pending effects of climate change. Related issues include:

- Rapidly reducing fossil fuel consumption through building energy efficiency and increase local renewable energy (mainly solar).
- Preparing for the pending impacts of climate change by addressing our specific local vulnerability issues - wildfire mitigation and preparedness, drought response, and wildfire smoke response via "clean air shelters".

On a local level, other areas of high concern beyond climate change, energy, and GHGs centered mostly around water, rivers, transportation, and development:

- Addressing land and river habitat loss by protecting ecosystems and slowing land conversion/development.
- Managing water resources to be resilient to annual fluctuations through conservation and storage.
- Sustainable community/city design and development (buildings & the built environment, community planning & design, access to quality public spaces, etc.).
- Reducing reliance on single-use vehicles and reducing parking strain by continually improving our transit services and variety of mobility options (bike/e-bike, walk, car share, micro-transit, micro-mobility devices, etc.).
- Interestingly, e-bikes appear to be somewhat polarizing. Some people see them as a incredible opportunity for non-vehicle mobility independence, reducing emissions, and alleviating traffic and parking strain. Others see e-bikes as degrading Durango's pedestrian and bike spaces with "fast and lazy" devices.

The forum and survey allowed citizens to connect with the City of Durango, ask questions, and express concerns. It also allowed the City to share information about local government initiatives and ways citizens can be informed and active in shaping local policy. As a result, the City of Durango can promote a more sustainable community by engaging with citizens and working together to address these essential themes.

Sustainability Action Report and Highlights by Sector

General & Overall

2022 Highlights & Progress

- City Council adopted Durango’s Sustainability Plan, the most comprehensive update to sustainability framing and planning since 2015.
- The Green Business Certification program launched in partnership with the Four Corners Office of Resource Efficiency (4CORE).
- The Green Durango Grants program launched, providing grants up to \$5,000 to community organizations with projects that address the Sustainability Plan’s sector objectives.

Current & Upcoming Efforts

- Expanding the Green Business Certification program with over 12 businesses signed up heading into 2023.
- Sustainability staff will work with Community Development to prepare sustainability guidelines and one-page explainers for building permits and developers.
- Sustainability insights are being incorporating into the Destination Management Plan, utilizing staff expertise from both the City of Durango and Visit Durango

Energy

Objectives

Energy Supply

Reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions associated with Durango’s energy supply in an equitable manner while maintaining reliability and resilience to disruption.

Energy Use

Increase the efficiency of energy use and promote energy conservation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy cost burdens.

2022 Highlights & Progress

- The City’s energy performance contract (EPC) was re-evaluated and approved to proceed. The project is slated to reduce energy consumption in associated buildings by 10-30% and install over 660 kW of solar, increasing the total amount of solar installed within city limits by 18% through a single, coordinated effort.
- Durango’s membership in Colorado Communities for Climate Action (CC4CA) highlights the value of engaging in effective collective advocacy to higher levels of government.
- In early 2022, Durango adopted 2018 building codes, including the energy conservation code, which require new buildings to be more energy and water efficient than the previous 2015 code.
- Durango adopted more aggressive greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and renewable energy goals: 50% reduction in GHG and 50% of electricity coming from renewables by 2023, and 100% reduction and 100% electricity from renewables by 2050.

- Santa Rita Water Reclamation Facility (SRWRF) continues to utilize and refine the cogeneration turbines, generating approximately 248 MWh of energy in 2022, the equivalent of powering about 14 homes for the year.

Current & Upcoming Efforts

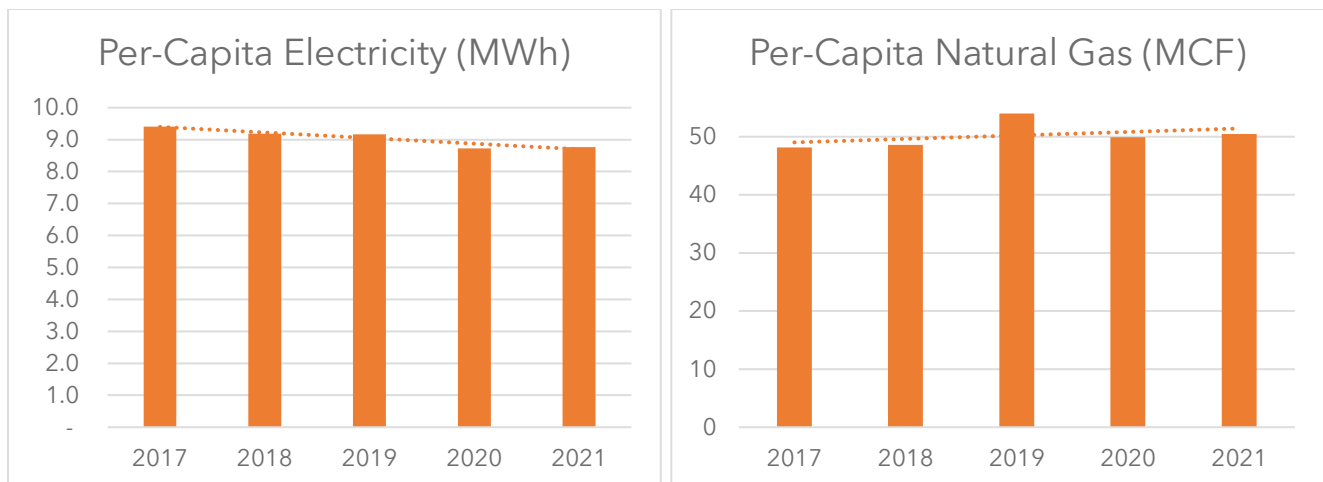
- The energy performance contract implementation and construction will begin and continue through 2024. Improved data collection will show the effectiveness of the project.
- LPEA continues to make substantial progress on pursuing options to increase the renewable energy coming from the grid. Regulatory rulings will dictate the path forward on this effort, but LPEA is optimistic that substantial increases in renewable energy supply to the grid are on the near horizon.

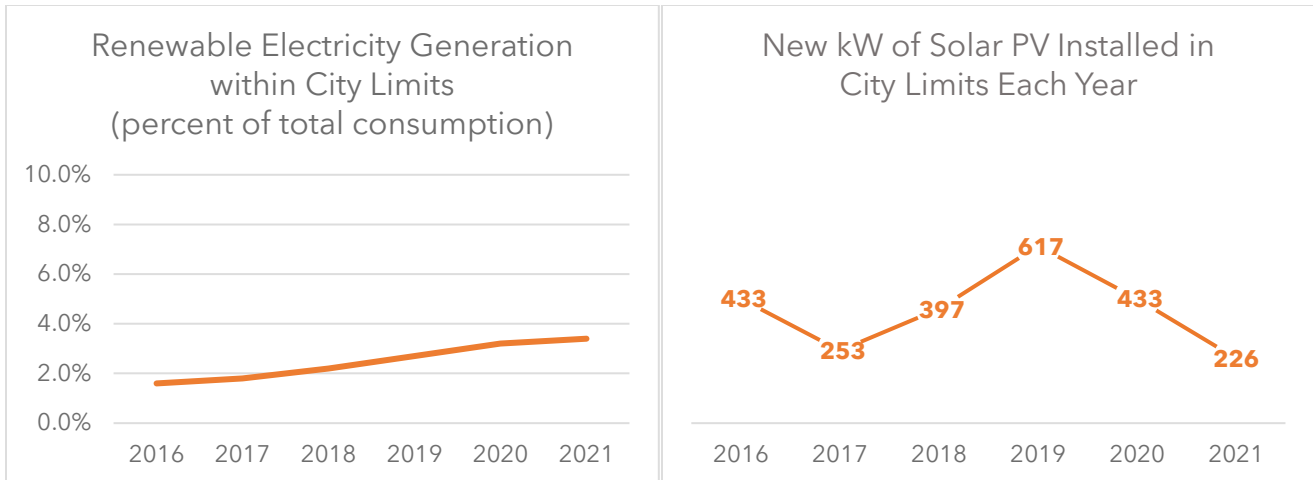
Long-Range Vision & Considerations

- Durango can continue to capitalize on state and federal funding in support of renewable energy and rooftop solar PV.
- Heat pumps and electrification will continue to be major trends in residential and commercial energy consumption.
- Energy benchmarking for buildings offers an opportunity to identify unnecessarily high energy consumption. This will be addressed internally at the City through the energy performance contract, but there are also opportunities to track and require buildings throughout our community to hit certain energy consumption standards during triggering events such as point of sale.

Indicator Data Trends to Highlight

- LPEA is currently reporting about 37% renewable energy on the electricity grid, not including the estimated 3-4% net-metered solar generation. This means Durango can reasonably approximate its share of renewable electricity at about 40%.





Transportation & Development Patterns

Objectives

Multimodal Transportation

Create a fully connected transportation network that provides for safe, convenient, and enjoyable transportation that is affordable and accessible to all Durango residents and visitors.

Vehicle Emissions & Electrification

Reduce emissions associated with vehicular travel by preparing for and accelerating a shift to electric and zero-emissions vehicles and reducing wasteful behaviors.

Community Design

Structure city code and policies to encourage dense, mixed-use development that minimizes greenhouse gas emissions and supports equitable and sustainable options to get around and experience Durango

2022 Highlights & Progress

- Durango has achieved bronze level Walk Friendly Community designation.
- Durango Transit expanded/reinstated a route to Highway 160 west serving several low-income and transit dependent residences.
- Sunday transit service was resumed.
- Transportation Director Sarah Hill won 2022 Colorado Transit Champion of the Year from the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies (CASTA).
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) quick-win grant for 28 bicycle racks was awarded and racks were installed throughout Durango.
- The Comprehensive Parking Management Plan was completed and adopted.
- Downtown's Next Step project garnered extensive public engagement, and the design phase has now begun.
- The West Park Ave traffic calming pilot project was implemented.
- The MidTown traffic study was completed.

- City departments test drove EVs for future fleet planning.
- The City was awarded a ChargeAhead Colorado grant to install four level-2 (medium speed) electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at the Library. Construction is slated to be completed in summer 2023.

Current & Upcoming Efforts

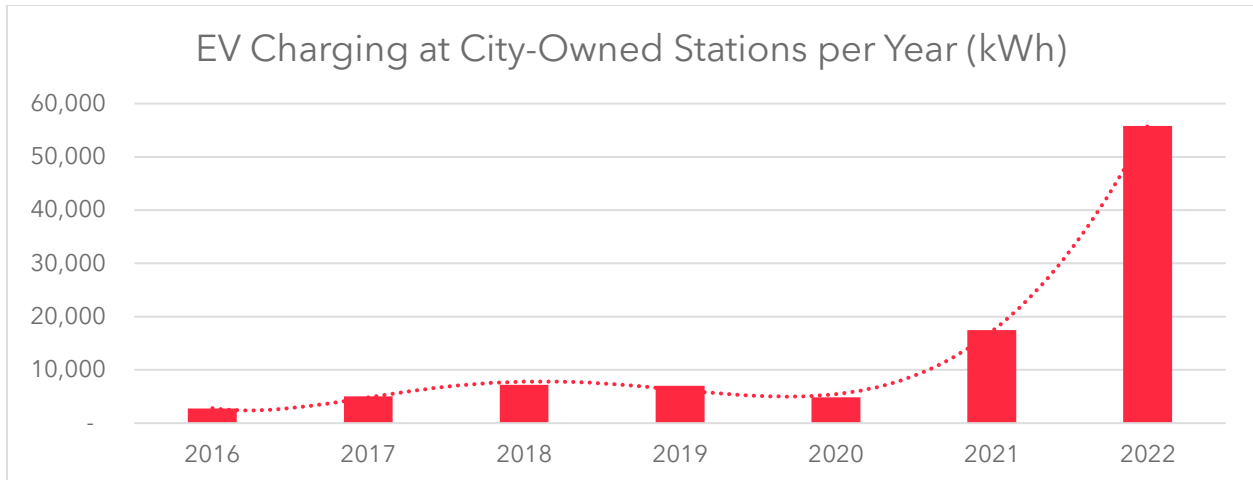
- The City is launching its first e-bike rebate program. The program is funded through the City Council Lodger's Tax discretionary fund and a 50-50 matching grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Office of Innovative Mobility.
- Through the same CDOT grant above, the City will also be re-vamping its mobile transportation app and service, the Way to Go! Club.
- Durango will retain its gold level Bicycle Friendly Community designation
- Durango Transit has been awarded a Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) 5311 grant to develop expanded micro-transit service in 2023.
- The City will pursue EV fast-charger grants through the state that could bring several more high-speed chargers to the Transit Center - capable of re-charging a car in less than 30 minutes.
- Fare Free Summer will be offered for transit June through August 2023.
- The Zero Emission Vehicle Transition Plan for Transit is underway.
- City of Durango/Archuleta County EV bus route project is being established.
- The City's multimodal division expanded with the addition of a full-time staff member.
- The multimodal division is working to reinstate the safe-routes to school program.
- The Multimodal Transportation Plan Update outreach was completed, and a consultant was contracted to assist with completing the update.
- The City is moving forward with analysis and updates to the parking code, including updating EV parking code requirements.
- The airport has installed long-term EV charging stations designed to slow-charge EVs while the owners are away on their trip.

Long-Range Vision & Considerations

- The City will have continued opportunities on state and federal funding to expand EV charging infrastructure.
- The City can continue with analysis and implementation for expanding City of Durango EV fleets across departments.

Indicator Data Trends to Highlight

- Transit ridership increased by 27% over the previous year.
- Parking code reductions in multi-family units are projected to reduce the need for over 800 spaces which is approximately 6.7 acres of land within City limits that is able to be devoted to other uses. Total land area devoted to parking will continue to be analyzed to inform trends.



Consumption & Waste

Objectives

Sustainable Consumption & Source Reduction

Encourage conscious purchase and use of materials and products to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce single-use disposability, and support Durango’s local economy.

Waste Reduction & Diversion

Reduce the amount of material going to landfill and decrease the greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste disposal by increasing waste diversion rates and expanding productive end-use options for regional waste.

Food Systems

Support an interconnected food system that is healthy, inclusive, equitable, and resilient to change.

2022 Highlights & Progress

- Durango was recognized for having one of the highest waste diversion rates in Colorado based on 2022 State of Recycling & Composting in Colorado Report.
- The City of Durango and La Plata County hosted a successful household hazardous waste (HHW) event serving 737 residents and collecting over 53,000 pounds of waste.
- The City initiated several communication and education efforts for trash & recycling including a review of the City’s recycling webpages as well as designing and disseminating updated flyers and informational materials.
- The City’s public-private partnership with Table to Farm Compost has increased composting service available throughout our community.
- City staff engaged in in-person targeted outreach to over 50 local businesses affected by the State of Colorado newly imposed plastic pollution reduction act (PPRA) also known as the bag fee.
- The City established partnership with SOIL lab, an exciting community garden and educational center being implemented by 9R.

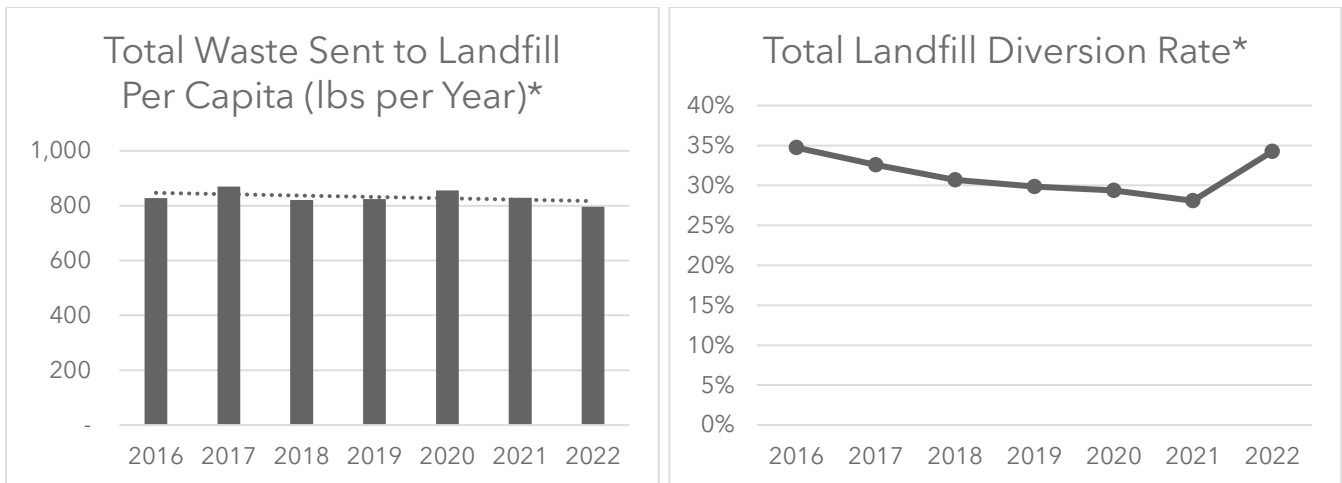
Current & Upcoming Efforts

- A five-year outlook is being developed to determine the best use of Santa Rita Water Reclamation Facility (SRWRF) biosolid waste. If implemented, nearly 3,000 tons of biosolids will be diverted from the landfill.
- The City will offer continued management and coordination of PRPA bag fee.
- The City will be deploying over 400 bear-proof cans in partnership with Bear Smart Durango and funded in part by a grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW).
- The City will continue to support the expansion of curbside composting services through its partnership with Table to Farm Compost.
- The City will be improving waste management and recycling services at events that go through the City's permitting process.
- The City has seen over 300 responses on the community feedback survey related to Spring and Fall Cleanup. Staff will evaluate responses and use them to guide future action.

Long-Range Vision & Considerations

- The City has an opportunity to re-engage in regional waste system assessment & planning including organic waste management.
- Pay-as-you-throw and other trash & recycle rate structure options can be explored in order to further incentivize waste diversion.

Indicator Data Trends to Highlight



*Based on City services and partnerships. Does not include commercial hauling, construction & demolition waste, or specialty waste/recycling streams.

Water

Objectives

Water Supply & Use

Manage Durango’s water sources and consumption through conservation and efficiency so our community and surrounding riparian ecosystems are resilient to the projected impacts of climate change.

Water Quality

Maintain water quality levels, or improve where needed, in both supplied water and throughout the Animas River watershed.

2022 Highlights & Progress

- The Fats Oils and Grease (FOG) program was deployed to reduce water collection contamination.
- Durango water supply and reclaimed water discharge continue to operate at extremely high levels of daily compliance, at 100% and 99.7% compliance, respectively.

Current & Upcoming Efforts

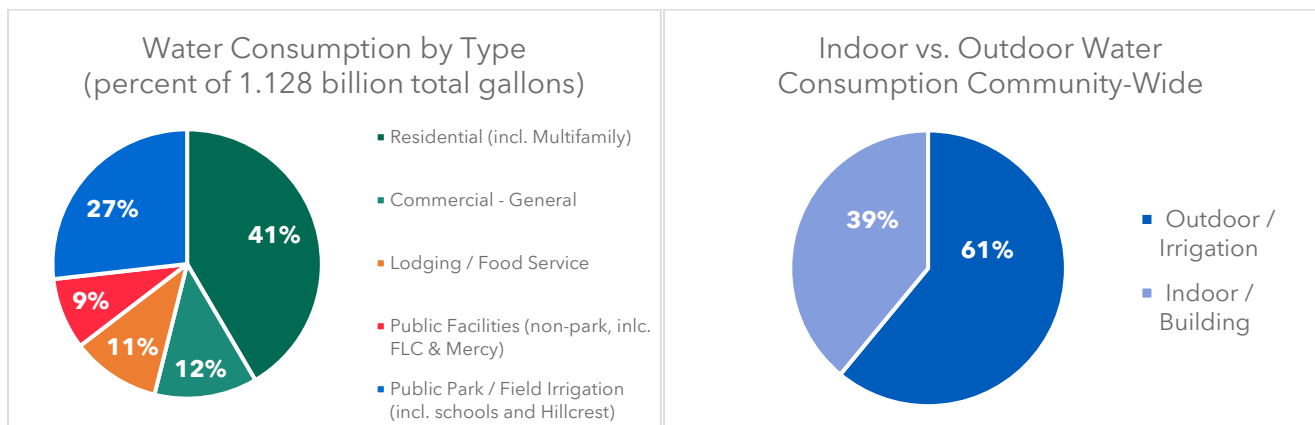
- The City can utilize the findings of the recent rate study alongside recently completed water consumption analysis to continue to investigate opportunities for improved water conservation.
- Stormwater capture will be completed at Schnieder park development.

Long-Range Vision & Considerations

- The City can consider and evaluate the opportunity for incentives on water-efficient landscaping and water fixtures.

Indicator Data Trends to Highlight

- 10 new stormwater management facilities were installed in 2022
- The percent of Durango’s withdrawals on the Florida River’s total flows are typically in the 30-50% during winter months, and 5-10% during summer months when Lemon is releasing higher flows. However, during a small window in the late winter and early spring (March-April), Durango’s withdrawals can rise to 60-70% of flows and even hit 90% or more during a few weeks.



Natural Systems & Ecology

Objectives

Ecosystems & Open Space

Manage Durango's natural spaces in a way that supports the health and resilience of both human and non-human life in the face of a changing climate.

Wildlife

Manage and prevent conflicts with wildlife in a way that protects the health, safety, and wellbeing of people, domestic animals, and wildlife.

Trees & Forests

Maintain and expand Durango's urban forest in order to provide health, wellbeing, and carbon sequestration benefits. Manage Durango's wildland-urban interface (WUI) to mitigate the risk and potential impacts of wildfire.

Environmental Health Benefits

Monitor and respond to the impacts of environmental systems on human health and wellbeing.

2022 Highlights & Progress

- The City continues its wildfire mitigation and trail stewardship efforts through the Parks and Recreation department.

Current & Upcoming Efforts

- The City will be deploying over 400 bear-proof cans in partnership with Bear Smart Durango and funded in part by a grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW).
- The City will be initiating its forestry plan and inventory update.
- The Lake Nighthorse decontamination station will be implemented.

Long-Range Vision & Considerations

- The City has the opportunity to engage in assessment of future needs for open-space lands, starting with assessment of Horse Gulch.

Indicator Data Trends to Highlight

- 52.2 acres of fire mitigation was completed across 10 treatment units immediately adjacent to 176 homes.
- 15.5 miles of trail stewardship were completed including 2 miles of total new-build/re-route.

Sustainability Grant & External Funding Summary 2022

City Division Lead Applicant(s)	Funding Agency, Grant Title	Amount Secured	Anticipated Funding Spent By
Sustainability + Trash & Recycle	CDPHE, RREO Recycling Rebate	\$ 37,442	Q3 2022
Sustainability + Trash & Recycle (in partnership with Bear Smart Durango)	CPW, Human-Bear Conflict Reduction	\$ 60,000	Q2 2023
Sustainability	CEO, Charge Ahead Colorado	\$18,000	Q2 2023
Sustainability + Multimodal	CDOT, OIM Strategic TDM Innovation	\$38,400	Q3 2023
Sustainability	DOLA, Energy & Mineral Impact Assistance - EIAF	\$1,000,000	Q3/4 2023 pending council approval of EPC
TOTAL		\$1,150,242	