

Impacts of the Downtown Environment on the Tourism Industry and Visitor Perceptions



Introduction

As the marketing organization for the city, VISIT DENVER measures, records and reports hundreds of data points. The attached presentation highlights the safety trends and feedback we receive and closely track from convention and leisure visitors over the span of several years. VISIT DENVER realizes that homelessness is not a crime, and that it is just one component of the many issues having an impact on Denver and surrounding cities. However, it is important to note that visitors often do not recognize or distinguish the differences between panhandlers, travelers, homeless, and others but rather provide overall feedback based on personal safety and sense of security when visiting Denver.

There are several key takeaways from the information provided:

- The downtown environment is the #1 complaint from meeting planners, far surpassing any other categories. The severity of this issue has increased and as of 2014 nearly 50% of meeting planners negatively commented on homeless, youth, panhandling, safety, cleanliness, and drugs including public marijuana consumption.
- Denver ranks very high on walkability, affordability, facilities, and other factors. However, Denver as a “safe city” ranks significantly lower according to interviews with key convention planners conducted by an independent third-party.
- Denver is losing visitors and valuable convention business as a result of these overall safety (or perception of safety) issues. Unfortunately, word is beginning to spread among meeting planners about the safety challenges Denver is facing. As the marketing organization for the city, we fear not being able to brand Denver away from this growing reputation.

VISIT DENVER is committed to solutions that will improve our community for all who live, work and visit Denver. We are happy to share more information or answer any questions you may have.

Denver Tourism Overview

- Tourism supports nearly 54,000 jobs in metro Denver
- Denver welcomed 15.4 million visitors in 2014 who spent \$4.6 billion in our local economy
- VISIT DENVER has been a long-time business partner with homeless initiatives in the local community
 - At inception, key corporate fundraiser for Denver's Road Home
 - Awarded \$80K since 2007 to Denver's Road Home
 - PJ Party supporter
 - Fund one DDP Mall ambassador

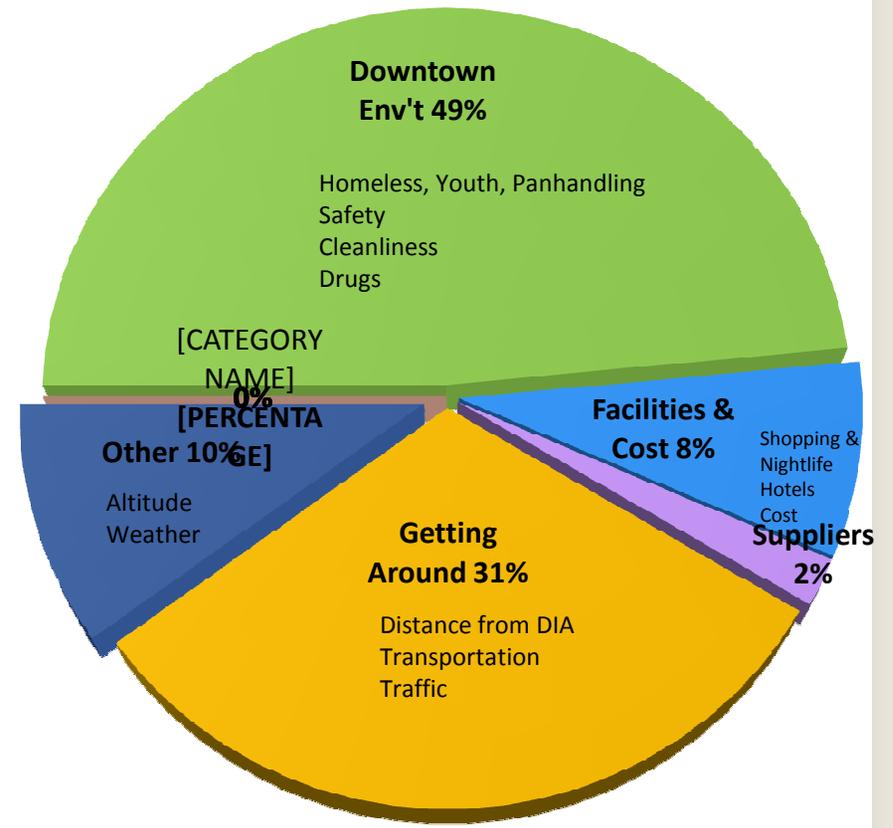
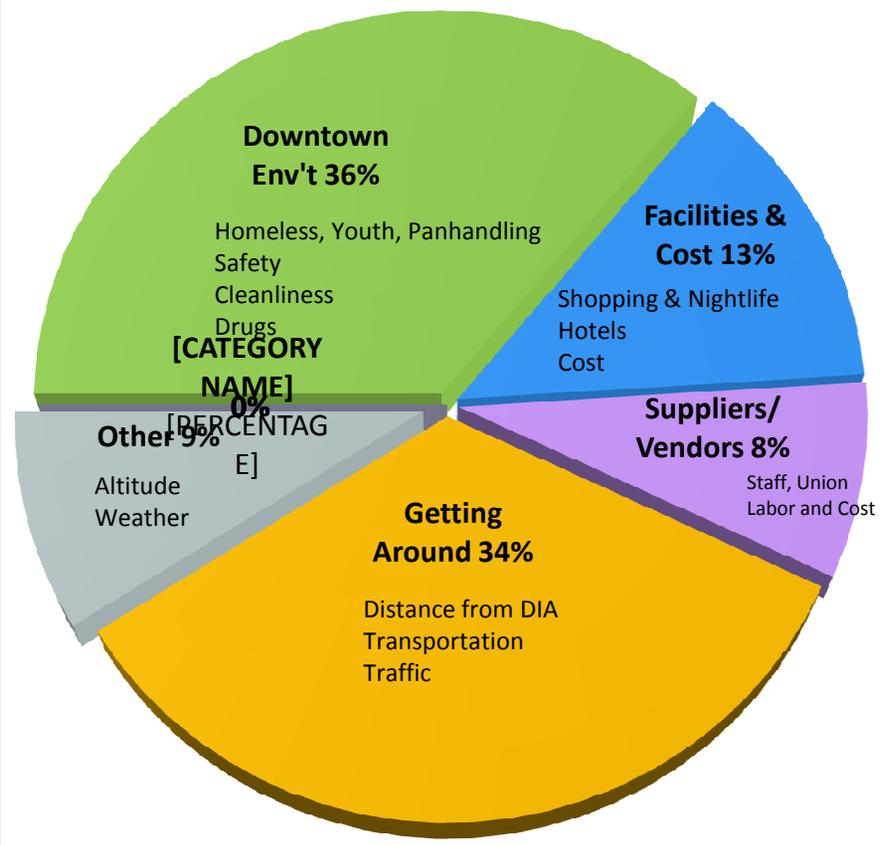




Negative Meeting Planner Perceptions

2013

2014



Source: VISIT DENVER Post-Convention Meeting Planner Surveys

Trends

- Homeless, Panhandling, Youth #1 complaint in 2014
- 13% increase in downtown environment complaints vs 2013
- Very specific comments regarding the 16th St. Mall and safety concerns

Comments received by VISIT DENVER from meeting planners

- Homeless issue and drugs...didn't feel safe
- Homeless and the cleanliness of 16th street mall
- 16th Street Mall and Civic Center Park - we are really seeing a decline in cleanliness and safety in this area
- The 16th Street Mall seems pretty seedy, especially with the homeless people. It made guests feel uncomfortable and gave a perception of not being safe.
- Vagrants on the 16th Street Mall and the grunge youth present
- Your youth homeless population is disheartening
- Homeless population and unsavory activity visible in main traffic areas. Also many comments about feeling uncomfortable with the street scene.



Interviews with Meeting Planners

- Independent third-party interviews several top convention meeting planners annually for detailed feedback about their experience
- Since 2010, selected city-wide customers representing \$377 million in economic impact, asked about Denver as a “Safe City” to draw out comments on all safety aspects: the 16th Street Mall, “Convention Corridor”, homelessness, panhandling, etc.

Year	Customers Grades				
2010	A	C	B-		
2011	A	C	B/C	B	B
2012	F	B			
2013	B	D	B	B-	
2014	B-	A-/B+	B-	A	
2015	C	C	C-/D+		

Question: How would you grade Denver as a “Safe City”



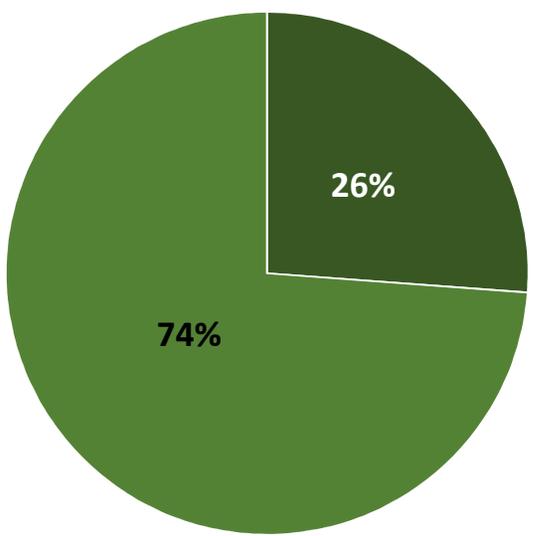
2013 Intercept Study

Independent third-party questioned 700+ visitors

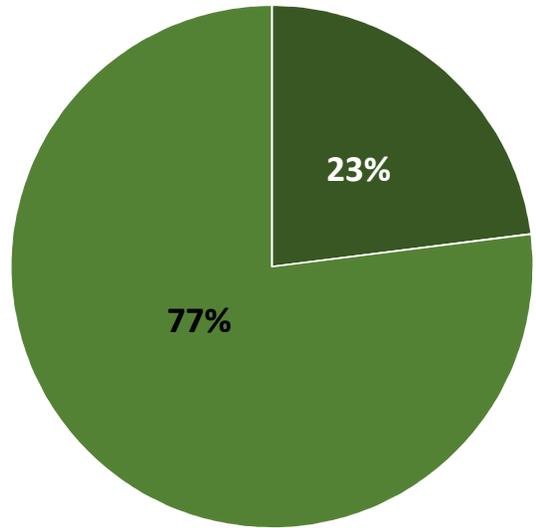
Loitering or panhandling is seen by most Convention Attendees (74%) and Leisure Visitors (77%)

Experience with Loitering or Panhandling

■ No, Did Not See ■ Yes, Saw



Convention Attendees



Leisure Visitors

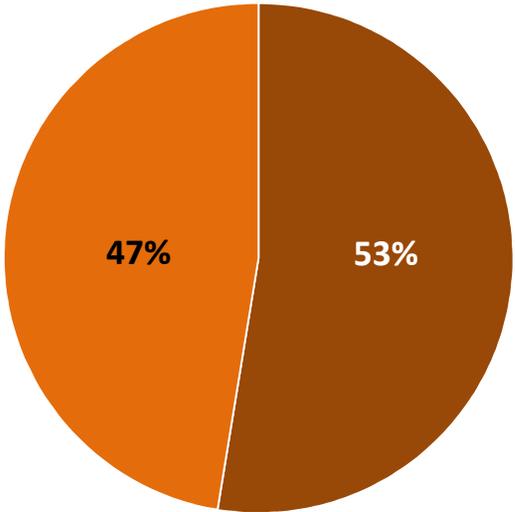


2013 Intercept Study

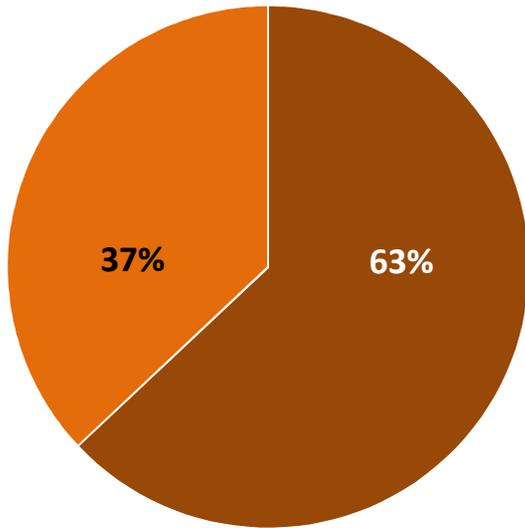
Among all responses, 47% of Convention Attendees and 37% of Leisure Visitors indicate improving safety, loitering, panhandling, cleanliness, etc. would improve perceptions in Denver

What Would Improve Perceptions of Denver (% of Responses)

- Activities, transportation, etc.
- Safety, loitering, panhandling, clean, etc.



Convention Attendees



Leisure Visitors



Losing Business

From: Clayton [<mailto:clayton@XXXX.com>]
Sent: Friday, August 14, 2015 2:24 PM
Subject: midyear meeting in Denver

Greetings,

We wanted to pass along some comments based on a national meeting we hosted for our industry in Denver in July.

It was held with delegates arriving as early as July 11 and continued thru July 15. This is a meeting of industry executives and business owners from around the entire country. The meeting was headquartered at the Sheraton downtown.

The chairman commented **“We will most likely not return to Denver based on the current situation with all of the street people”**. This was followed up by comments from the President who echoed these comments about a reluctance to return to Denver based on the condition of the City and the abundance of homeless people walking the mall and in and about the downtown area. .

The attendees were also less than complimentary with Denver and in particular the downtown area. Some of the comments received from attendee in survey after the conference were:

“Denver seems less safe now that pot is legalized.”

“Don’t have a meeting in downtown Denver...what a depressing downtown area.”

“The neighborhood had way too many vagrants. I don’t remember Denver being that bad.”

“Poor area, lots of crime as we sat outside on a patio on the 16th Street mall on Sunday evening having a beer, I turned my head to look at a television, when I turned back a street person was drinking my beer. I am sure this is not an image Denver wants portrayed around the country”

“I did a meeting in Denver years ago and it did seem to be much cleaner and nicer. It’s a shame because the 16th Street Mall area is so nice but it’s also a small area so it makes it look like the homeless population is worse than it probably really is.”



Losing Business to Competitors

From: C. Moore [<mailto:cmoore@XXXX.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, July 21, 2015 7:43 AM

Subject: RE: RFP Assigned

Hello Amanda!

This client chose to contract with the Hyatt Regency San Antonio. I would like to share with you why Denver dropped off his list. This client does a lot of business in Denver and was disappointed to see, in his opinion, how things have changed in the city since marijuana was legalized. He says he sees lots of people walking around looking “out of it” and does not want to expose his attendees to this. I hope you don’t mind the honesty but I wanted you to know exactly “why”.

Thank you,

C Moore



Visitor Feedback Feeling Unsafe

From: Tamela <tamela@XXXX.com>

Date: August 1, 2015 at 8:27:52 AM MDT

Subject: Denver conventions increasingly unsafe

I'm sorry but I would never consider putting attendees in danger by holding a convention in your city. We are staying at Embassy Suites downtown on 16th, and last night witnessed a group of about 30 teenagers attack a man walking along 16th street. I am told this is not an unusual occurrence. The homeless situation is very sad, and public streets reek of weed. The Denver police should be more alert to large groups of minors congregating on city streets attacking tourists. My feedback from this meeting will be to never locate here again; I have felt much safer in downtown NYC, Philly, Seattle, and Chicago.

Denver Resident Disappointment

VISITOR FEEDBACK FORM

DATE: 11-10-15

REASON FOR VISIT TO DENVER:

- Vacation
- Work/Business Trip
- Meeting or Convention
- Visiting Family or Friends
- Other

COMMENTS: I am a 5th generation Colorado native. I am downtown for a national convention and within 10 minutes of walking to The Convention Center I was so disheartened: I didn't feel safe and it was 2:00 in the afternoon. I passed drunks, disheveled people, smelled weed being smoked in the open. It was disgusting and I thought so this is where the current government is taking us. I use to be so proud of Denver and Colorado; today, I was heart sick and embarrassed, knowing I'd be apologizing to colleagues coming from other states that didn't have Sanctuary cities, legalized

Place of Residence: 80122 U.S. Zipcode

International Visitors: _____ Country

You may submit your comments via email to: VISITORINFO@VISITDENVER.COM

pot etc., Mayor Hancock, you need to rethink what you're doing before the Denver that was beautiful and safe is gone.



Losing Business Downtown

From: XXX, Ellen [<mailto:ellen.XXXX@Assn.org>]

Sent: Thursday, November 12, 2015 3:41 PM

To: CSAE_professionals@csaenet.org

Subject: Recommendations for hotel and meeting space in cherry creek / dtc

Although I live in the Denver area, I've only planned a meeting in Denver one time, so I need some help. My little association is scheduled to have our Spring meeting in the Denver area in March/April 2016. We only have 15-18 sleeping rooms for 2 nights but also need meeting space for two days.

The Exec. Dir. rarely gives a strong opinion on meetings but is firmly against a downtown property – during a recent visit he found the downtown area to be dirty, smelly, and was really put off by the number of dirty young adults that hang around and panhandle in the parks and the general 16th Street area and I agree with him. (He has lived in NYC and D.C. for his entire life so he is used to city life).

....Would appreciate your suggestions for properties that meet our criteria. Thanks in advance!

Regards,
Ellen, Associate Executive Director
Washington, DC 20045