

# DENVER ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



**DENVER**  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
ANNUAL REPORT 2012

# Letter from the Manager

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The Department of Environmental Health is dedicated to advancing Denver's environmental and public health goals by conducting education, community engagement, outreach and enforcement to ensure healthy people, places, and pets, as well as environmental quality and global sustainability.

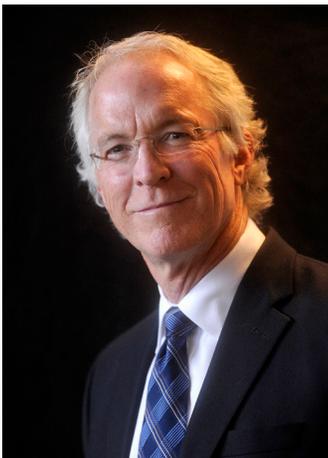
DEH helps make Denver a world-class city by building healthy communities.

DEH produced many significant accomplishments in 2012. This includes launching Be Healthy Denver, a comprehensive effort to create a five-year public year public health improvement plan, continued work revising the city's food inspection program to ensure a balanced approach to protecting public health, and refocusing the Animal Care & Control Division to be more customer-friendly and community-oriented.

DEH's Environmental Quality Division helped thousands of homeowners and businesses save energy and other resources, helping our city to achieve our Climate Action Plan goals. We also responded to hundreds of calls regarding environmental hazards throughout the city and worked with other departments to retain our national designation for environmental management systems.

Our Office of the Medical Examiner reduced the time required for autopsy reports and maintained its accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners. The Community Health Division began regulation of the City's needle exchange program, and worked with other community stakeholders to create a Fresh Food Financing Fund to help bring healthy foods to underserved communities.

We are proud of what we have accomplished during the past year and greatly appreciate the contribution of all the employees and community partners who helped make our work a success. We look forward to taking Denver to new heights in the coming years.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Linkhart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doug Linkhart, Manager



# Healthy People



## **Community Health**– *Promoting healthy lifestyles & reducing health disparities.*

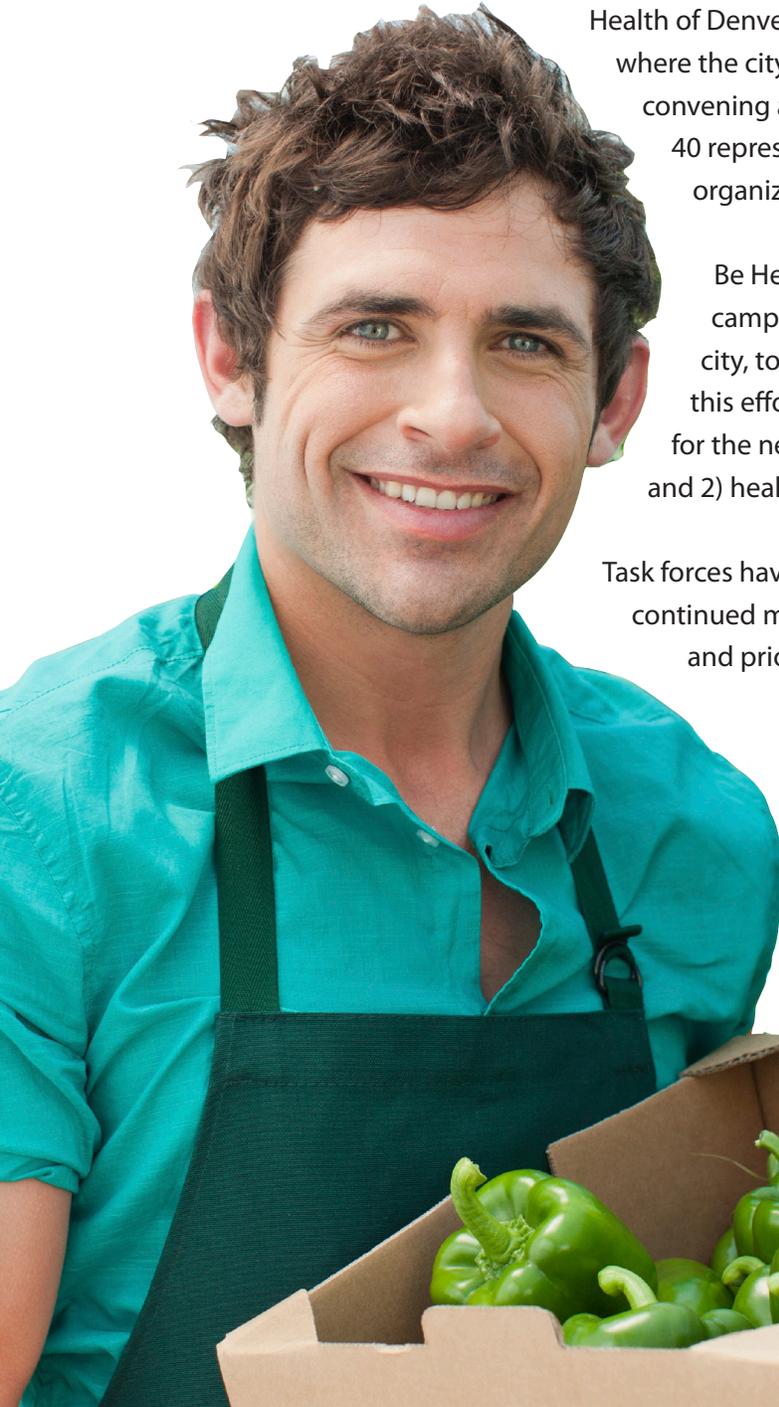
As the City and County of Denver’s public health department, DEH is responsible for helping to ensure those that call our city home have the opportunity to be healthy.

Over the past two years DEH’s Community Health Division has been working with Denver Health to create a five-year public health improvement plan. In 2012, DEH launched Be Healthy Denver, following the release of the 2011 Health of Denver Report. The effort was intended to gather input to identify where the city should focus its public health resources. This included convening a steering committee and stakeholder group of more than 40 representatives from socially, economically and ethnically diverse organizations to help guide and move the process forward.

Be Healthy Denver also included an extensive public outreach campaign promoting a series of public events held throughout the city, to ensure community and public stakeholder input. Through this effort, the group selected two issues as public health priorities for the next five years: 1) access to care, including behavioral health, and 2) healthy eating and active living.

Task forces have since been formed in each of these areas to ensure continued momentum and progress. These task forces will develop goals and prioritize strategies to implement through 2018.

While Be Healthy Denver is intended to guide the city’s efforts in these two priority areas for the next five years, Denver’s commitment to all aspects of public and community health is part of the department and the city’s overarching mission—to ensure a healthy city with an emphasis on protecting Denver’s most vulnerable.



# Healthy People

**Office of the Medical Examiner**— *Promoting the health and safety of Denver by providing timely and accurate medicolegal death certification and fatality data, monitoring vital records death information, and providing forensic expertise to the community.*



Death investigation is an often overlooked activity that plays a crucial role in evaluating, protecting and ensuring the overall health of a community.

Information derived from death certification drives many public health and policy decisions—from helping to determine judicial courses of action, influencing product safety recalls, to affecting how money is allocated for research and prevention programs at the state, local, and national level.

Denver's Office of the Medical Examiner (OME) investigates deaths that are required to be reported by Colorado statute. This includes deaths that occur suddenly and unexpectedly, by any unnatural or traumatic means, or under suspicious circumstances.



In 2012, OME completed almost 4,300 death investigations and certifications. The information learned from these investigations not only helps guide public health policy, but also assists nonprofits and other advocacy organizations in raising awareness of societal issues that affect Denver.

For example, OME has been working with the Colorado Homeless Coalition (CHC) for more than a decade to release statistics on homeless deaths.



Additionally, OME gathers data on suicide, which according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), is the 8th leading cause of death in Colorado. OME uses this research to help public health organizations develop and guide mental health decisions on a local and national level. OME also works with local schools in hopes of preventing future deaths of unnatural causes.

## **Additional DEH accomplishments that helped ensure healthy people include:**

- *Facilitating the development of an \$8 million healthy food financing fund under the Healthy Food Access Initiative through the Colorado Housing and Financing Authority.*
- *Conducting more than 660 inspections of Denver's regulated childcare facilities to ensure the health and safety of Denver's Youth.*
- *Investigating approximately 393 food safety complaints in regulated food establishments.*
- *Initiating 4,246 death investigations, including 662 autopsies in the Medical Examiner's Office.*



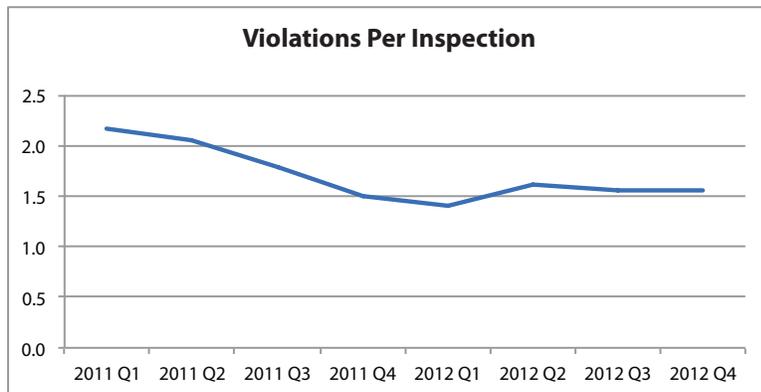
# Healthy Places



**Public Health Inspections**– *Protecting the health of Denver residents by providing education, technical assistance and effective regulation of homes, licensed food service establishments, child care facilities, community pools, and regulated businesses.*

DEH's Public Health Inspections (PHI) food inspection program is responsible for conducting more than 7,000 inspections of regulated food establishments each year. This includes everything from full service restaurants and grocery stores, to school cafeterias, non-profit organizations and special events.

In 2012, the division continued its work refining the newly implemented process for assessing fines to regulated food facilities found with repeat critical violations. This included creating new mechanisms for outreach and education for both the regulated community and public, as well as implementing new opportunities to allow recently inspected facilities to provide feedback immediately following inspections.



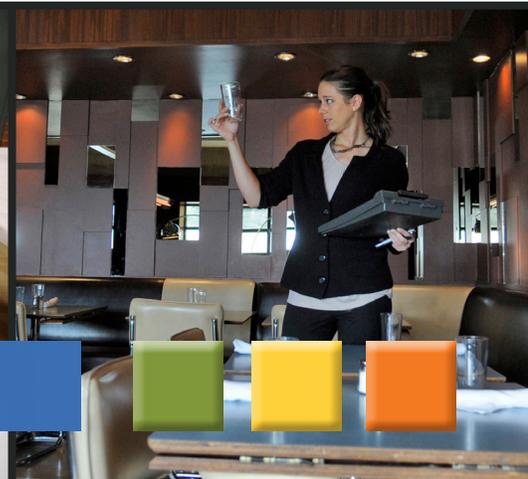
As a result of these efforts, critical violations (those that have the highest potential to cause illness) per inspection, fell almost 30 percent.

The division's commitment to transparency and public health is evident as PHI's online food inspection database is one of the most visited sites in city, serving as a critical online resource for both the public and those in the regulated industry.

PHI continues to evaluate and assess the needs of its stakeholders, and ensure a progressive, yet balanced approach to protecting public health.

## Additional DEH accomplishments that helped ensure healthy places include:

- Investigating approximately 318 noise complaints to protect quality of life.
- Completing 146 environmental site assessments and screens to protect the environment and public health.
- Completing 92 asbestos assessments and 41 abatements to ensure the health and safety of city facilities.



# Healthy Pets



**Animal Care & Control**— Working with the community, other animal welfare organizations and Denver residents to protect the health and safety of people and their pets.

Denver's Animal Care & Control Division looks very different than it did just a few years ago.

While the physical changes of the newly constructed 36,000 square foot facility may be the most visible, the division has also been undergoing an internal reorganization to ensure Denver is, and remains to be, one of the most pet-friendly cities in the nation.

Among many changes in 2012, the shelter expanded its public hours of operation to improve customer service. The shelter also added new pet vaccination and license clinics and expanded the hours of existing clinics. New classes were introduced to help existing pet owners address behavior problems that often lead to animal surrender. The division also implemented a new process for returning lost pets in the field to reduce pet and owner stress, reduce costs, and improve customer service.

As a result of these changes and others, the division achieved an 84 percent all time high live release rate (number of animals that leave the shelter alive) of adoptable animals.

Throughout 2013, the division continues to increase education, outreach and enforcement of the city's pet-related ordinances to ensure the new look aligns with the department's mission—to protect the health and safety of Denver's people and pets.



**Additional DEH accomplishments that helped ensure healthy pets include:**

- Increasing volunteers to 188, an all-time high for the volunteer program.
- Utilizing almost 10,000 volunteer hours, a 49 percent increase over 2011.
- Returning 21 percent more lost dogs to their owners over 2011 thanks to a new program that returns pet in the field.
- Adopting 1,193 Dogs, 333 Cats and 84 other animals into new homes.
- Participating in 31 outside adoption, vaccination, or other events around the city.



# Healthy Environment

## **Environmental Quality**– *Making our environment sustainable, through protecting air, land and water.*

A healthy environment is the foundation for a healthy community. DEH's Environmental Quality Division (EQ) has been working to improve Denver's air, land and water quality long before the city had established a formal commitment to environmental sustainability.

Those who lived in Denver in the 1970s and 80s may remember Denver's "Brown cloud," when the city's air quality was ranked one of the worst nationally. More than 30 years later, Denver's air quality has improved greatly, thanks to a collaborative effort and the implementation of clean air regulations, including wood burning restrictions, vehicle emissions controls and testing, and new lower emission requirements on industrial facilities and power plants.

Over the past decade, the city has adopted laws to limit idling, prohibit smoking vehicles, and launched programs aimed at improving air quality. As a result, Denver is seeing nearly double the number of good visibility days compared to 1998.

Similarly, EQ's Water Quality Program has been working to ensure the health of Denver's rivers, lakes and streams. This includes collaborating with city and community partners to identify and address the major contributors to poor water quality in the South Platte River. The effort is part of a larger strategy to help promote and protect the South Platte, one of Denver's greatest natural amenities.

As a result of these and other efforts, the city has seen a gradual improvement in E.coli levels in the South Platte, and more importantly, a collaborative effort on improving water quality.



### **Additional DEH accomplishments that helped ensure a healthy environment include:**

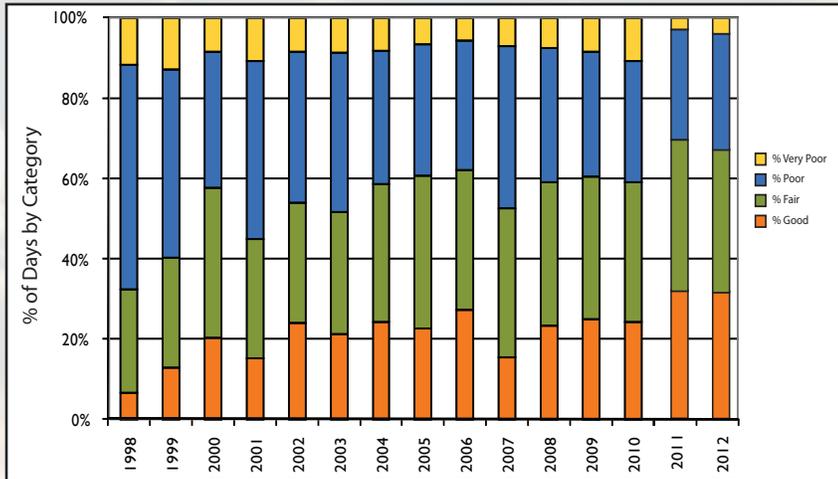
- *Responding to 760 resident complaints concerning air quality, water quality, solid and hazardous waste, mosquitoes, and others.*
- *Meeting and exceeding Climate Action Plan 2012 goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *Saving more than 20 million kilowatt hours, reducing 17,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions through the Denver Energy Challenge.*
- *Conducting outreach and education to reduce unnecessary vehicle idling through Denver's Engines Off! Program.*
- *Collaborating with Denver Public Library to reduce energy use at the Eugene Fields Library by more than 13%.*



# Healthy Environment

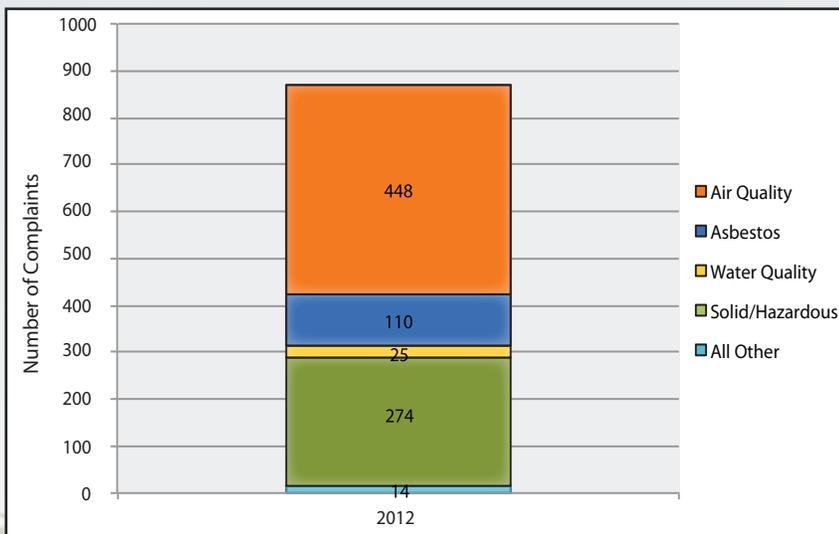


## Visibility Trends in Denver 1998-2012



The Visibility Trends Graph shows Denver has seen a steady increase in the number of fair or good visibility days and a decrease in poor visibility days since 1998. This is the result of local and state policies, technological improvements, and voluntary efforts. Thanks to these and other efforts, Denver is seeing nearly double the number of good visibility days as compared to just 15 years ago.

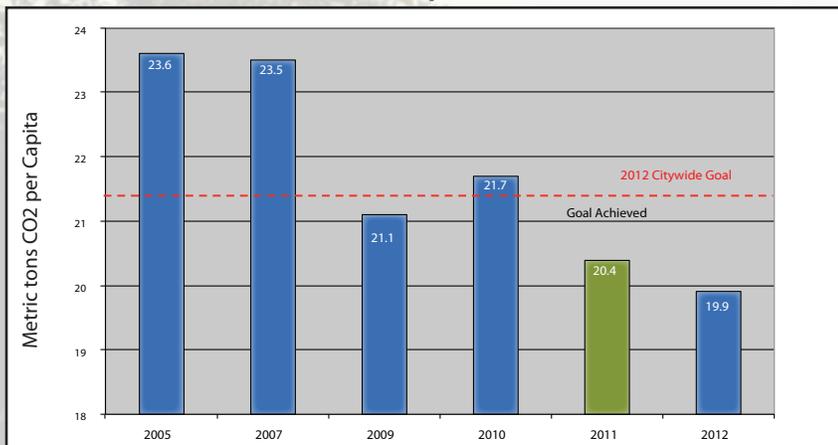
## 2012 Environmental Quality Complaints



Environmental Quality responds to hundreds of environmental complaints each year related to air, water quality, odors, asbestos, and abandoned waste.

Complaint response plays an integral role in helping to ensure good customer service, and continued compliance with the city's environmental and public health regulations.

## 2005-2011 Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Per Capita)



In 2011, Denver exceeded its 2012 climate goal to reduce per capita emissions by 10 percent over the 2005 baseline.

This achievement is attributed to new policies and regulation promoting clean energy alternatives and overall energy efficiency efforts.



# Healthy Planet

**Healthy Planet**— *Providing sustainable environmental stewardship of Denver's resources and managing and reducing the City's environmental risk and liability.*

There's little debate that Climate Change has become one of the most defining global concerns of the 21st Century.

For more than a decade, DEH's Environmental Quality (EQ) Division has been at the forefront of identifying, monitoring and creating programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.

In 2007, Denver released the Climate Action Plan, which identified the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)--transportation, materials production, commercial and home energy use. Based on this data, the plan identified 10 priority strategies to reduce Denver's per capita GHG footprint by more than 10 percent relative to 2005 levels, by 2012.

Since then, EQ has been working collaboratively to offer programs and initiatives designed to achieve the plan's short- and long term goals for a healthier planet. A few of the more notable programs include:

- **Citywide EMS Certification**— Denver was the first city to implement an Environmental Management System (EMS) to ensure a comprehensive and long-term approach to reducing city and related environmental operations impacts across all departments.
- **The Denver Energy Challenge and Certifiably Green Denver**— The Denver Energy Challenge (DEC) and Certifiably Green Denver (CGD), offer residential and commercial energy programs to help residents and businesses reduce energy use and GHG emissions.
- **Climate Adaptation Planning**— Denver's Climate Adaptation Planning is helping agencies identify how to prepare for climate change. This effort, combined with an updated Climate Mitigation Plan, will lead to a comprehensive plan for addressing citywide impacts from climate change, and to ensure a continued focus on the city's 2020 sustainability goals.

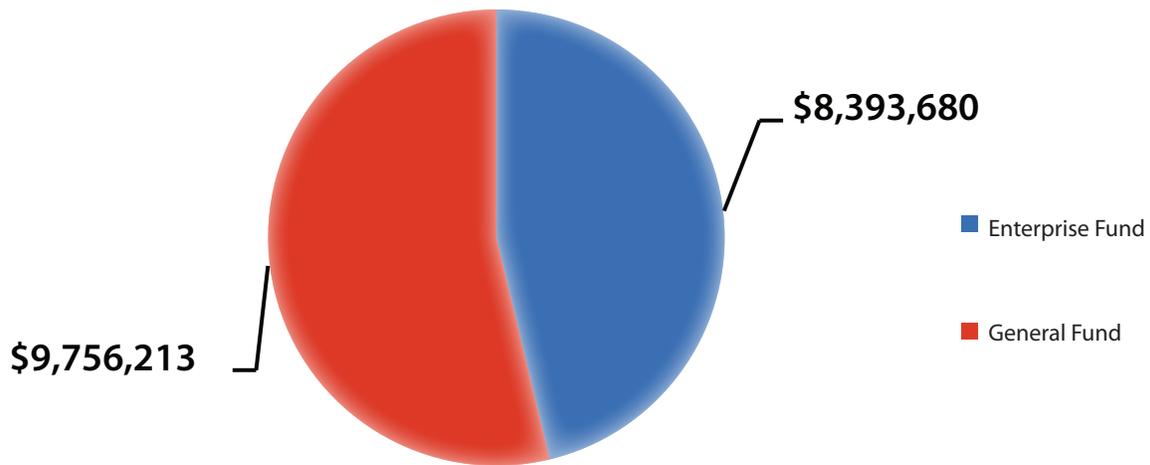
As a result of these and other efforts, in 2012, Denver's GHG emissions were reduced 73,000 metric tons (from 2011), reaching a per capita emissions level of 19.9 metric tons. This exceeded the 2012 goal as stated in the 2007 Climate Action Plan, and is on track to meet the 2020 goal of reducing total greenhouse gas emissions to below 1990 levels.

**Additional DEH accomplishments that helped ensure a healthy planet include:**

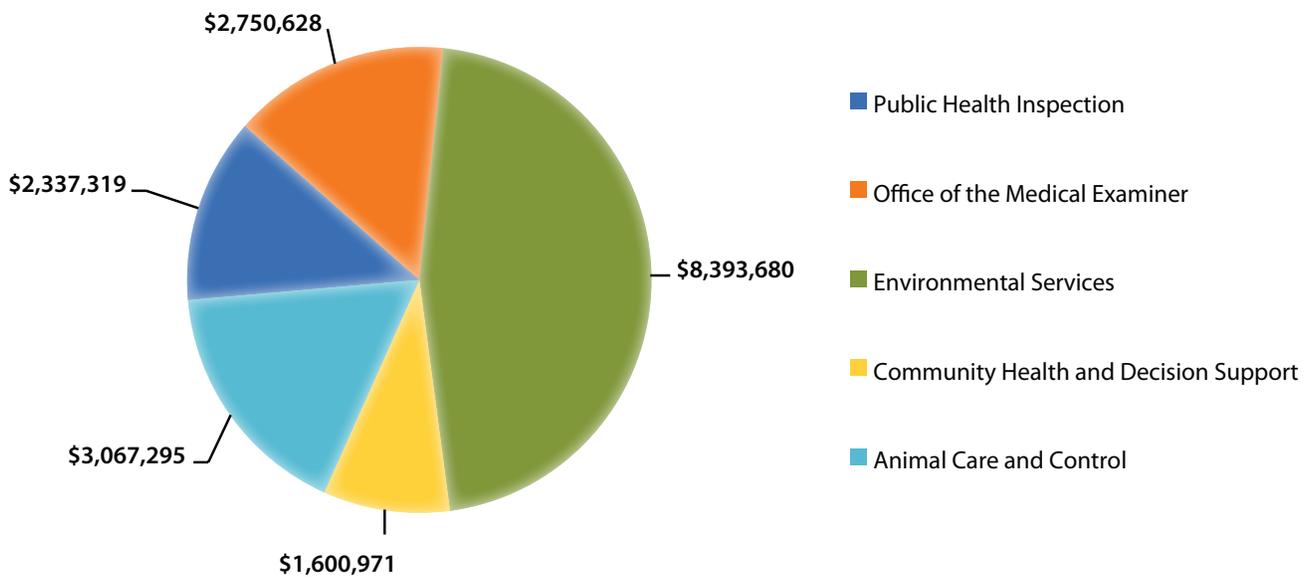
- *Providing environmental career exposures to 145 disadvantaged youth with service learning, education/training and soft skills development.*
- *Providing more than 60 training sessions for almost 1,700 city workers in 28 agencies on topics such as hazardous waste management, stormwater management, spill prevention, asbestos awareness, and/or CPR.*
- *Helped 560 businesses and 3,300 residents eliminate 9,200 metric tons of greenhouse gases through the Denver Energy Challenge.*



## Environmental Health 2012 Revenues



## Environmental Health 2012 Expenses





# DENVER

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

### Board of Environmental Health

**Chris J. Wiant, Chair**  
**Jim Garcia, Vice Chair**  
**Brian J. Gerber, Ph. D.**  
**Paula Sandoval**  
**Patti Shwayder**

### Denver Environmental Health

200 W. 14th Avenue  
Denver, CO 80204  
[www.denvergov.org/deh](http://www.denvergov.org/deh)  
311

### Denver Animal Shelter

1241 W. Bayaud Avenue  
Denver, CO 80223

### Office of the Medical Examiner

660 Bannock Street  
Denver, CO 80204

### Environmental Quality

[www.denvergov.org/deq](http://www.denvergov.org/deq)

### Public Health Inspections

[www.denvergov.org/phi](http://www.denvergov.org/phi)

### Community Health

[www.denvergov.org/deh](http://www.denvergov.org/deh)

### Denver Office of the Medical Examiner

[www.denvergov.org/coroner](http://www.denvergov.org/coroner)

### Denver Animal Shelter

[www.denveranimalshelter.org](http://www.denveranimalshelter.org)