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Blue Party, Green Plans for Dem Convention

Blue is the color of Democratic territory on the national map, but green will be the unofficial color of next summer's Democratic National Convention.

Party officials are vowing to make the convention the most environmentally friendly gathering in memory.

Thousands of delegates will be encouraged to ride bicycles between their hotels and the Pepsi Center, to recycle everything from confetti to coffee cups and to buy "carbon offsets" to repair the damage done from travelers flying to Denver from around the world.

"It will be the greenest convention we've ever had," said Leah Daughtry, CEO of the convention. "We want to incorporate green principles into everything we do."

The Democrats are hoping their efforts to give the convention a green tint will boost their fortunes in the crucial western states, where the environment is a big issue.

The party has a model for what they're trying to do in Denver, since the Democrats tried to make the 2004 Boston convention a green event as well.

The party worked with the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Conventions, which tried to green both the Democratic and Republican conventions.

The coalition plans to work with the GOP at its convention, in Minneapolis-St. Paul. It will be held the week after Denver's Aug. 24-28 convention.

Here's a look at what was done in the past and what the Democrats are hoping to achieve in Denver:

Transportation

2004: To offset the tons of carbon dioxide emitted by thousands of visitors flying into Boston and New York, CERC bought "carbon credits" that helped fund alternative energy, reforestation, and other projects to reduce the impact of carbon gases, which have been linked to global warming.

2004: An estimated 67,315 tons of carbon gas were emitted as a result of the conventions.

2008: Delegates flying into Denver will be given the opportunity to purchase carbon credits when they book their flights. The money raised will be used to fund renewable energy projects in the mountain west.

2004: A fleet of hybrid buses helped shuttle visitors from the airport in Boston.

2008: Democratic officials hope to expand this effort in Denver, adding hybrid vans and taxis to the mix.

2008: Hundreds of bicycles may be on downtown streets, as delegates and visitors are encouraged to ride bicycles between hotels and the Pepsi Center.

2008: Downtown office workers will be encouraged to use RTD or car-pool during the convention.

Recycling

2004: More than a ton of wastepaper generated during the first day of the Boston convention was recycled into commemorative posters given to each delegate on the last day of the gathering.

2008: Convention officials will strive to create a "paperless" convention, helping delegates book rooms and make reservations online and encouraging staff to send all memos via e-mail.

Construction

2004: Of the 116 tons of material used for construction inside the Fleet Center, 81 tons were recycled and 21 tons were salvaged for reuse.

2008: Denver hopes to use mostly recycled material and "green" construction techniques on all interior work at the Pepsi Center.

2004: A 250-kilowatt fuel cell was installed to power the media pavilion in the Fleet Center.

2008: Officials are hoping to use even more alternative energy inside the Pepsi Center. Wind turbines and solar panels may be positioned around the grounds.

2008: Vendors for the convention can expect to see requirements for energy efficiency and recycling in contracts.

Hospitality

2004: Hotels in Boston looked for ways to reduce energy and water consumption. Restaurants served locally grown food, which reduces the need for shipping over long distances.

2008: Denver hotels will emphasize conserving water, asking visitors to take shorter showers and not use many towels.