COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE

MAY 2023

Denver Local Election Guide:

Just The Facts

At Common Sense Institute our focus is on jobs and the economy. We know with a more prosperous Colorado: individuals have more opportunity, families flourish, and communities thrive. CSI's goal is to provide research that is based on the facts. **No time is more important to understand the facts than ahead of elections as we look to choose our next slate of local leaders.**

To inform the upcoming run-off elections in Denver, Common Sense is re-issuing the latest facts on homelessness, housing and crime so that voters can have the latest information ahead of going back to vote.

With ballots being mailed this week, please review the most pressing issues facing the residents of Denver - crime, homelessness, and housing. Check out the full reports on CSI's website. In-person voting begins next week. All ballots must be returned by 7 pm on June 6.

Crime

Crime rates throughout Denver continue to top pre-pandemic levels. In 2022, Denver's average monthly crime rate was 43% higher than in 2019, and 75% higher than in 2008. The average monthly crime rate for motor vehicle theft is 172 incidents per 100,000 residents, an increase of 293% compared to 2014, the year that the state passed statutory reductions of motor vehicle penalties. Click here for interactive maps displaying the crime rates by city council district and by neighborhood.

Denver ranks in the top 10 U.S. cities for crime, including:

- **3rd-highest** motor vehicle theft rate,
- **6th-highest** property crime rate,
- **10th-highest** rape rate.

Approximately 14,980 vehicles were stolen in Denver in 2022.
That is equal to nearly every car being stolen from all parking lots surrounding Empower Field during 3 Broncos home games.

While all districts in Denver face challenges, crime is overwhelming in District 9.
The number of crime incidents in District 9 (15,987) is **91% higher** than the second worst district and more than double the level in the 8 other districts.

Housing

Housing affordability in Denver remains a top concern for both policymakers and residents. Since 2005, Denver has added 162,000 new residents, increasing its population by 29%. Over the same period, the average priced home in Denver has increased 138% from $260,600 to $619,500.

The housing deficit in 2022 in Denver is in the range of 13,148 to 30,930 units. To meet population growth by 2028 and close the housing deficit, **between 31,000 and 49,000 housing units** will need to be built.
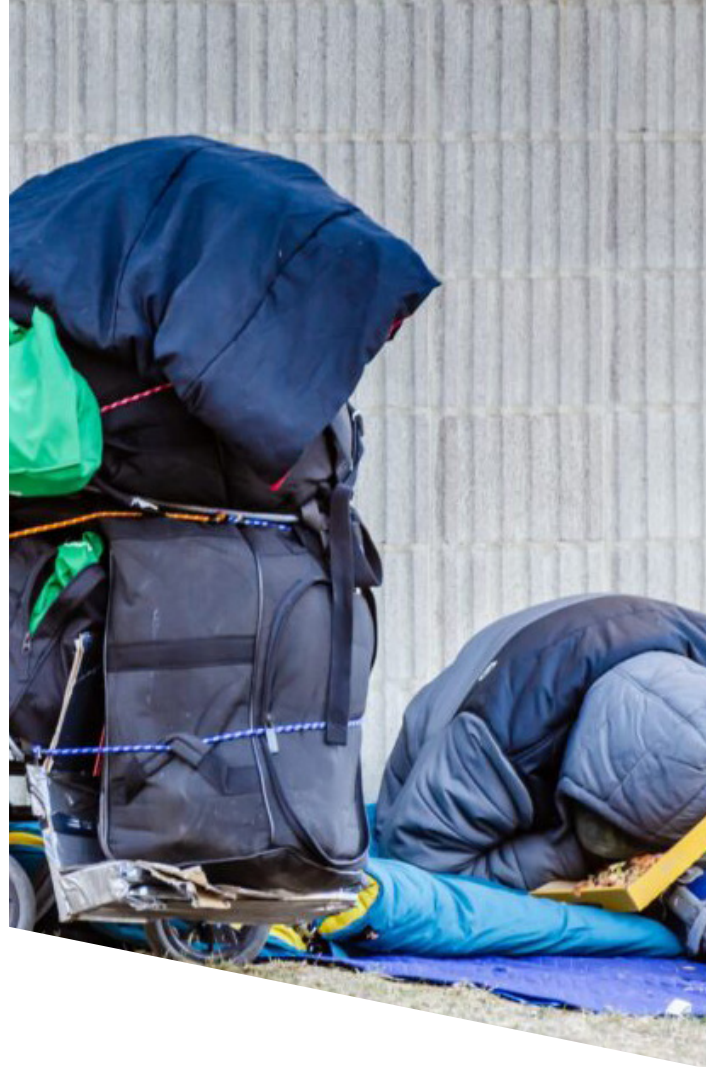
Between approximately 5,187 and 8,151 permits are needed annually through 2028 to close the housing supply deficit in Denver and meet the demands of future population growth.

Household incomes have not kept pace with rising housing costs. Between November 2015 and December 2022, the average hourly wage increased 37% from $28.26 to $38.80. However, due to the rapidly increasing cost of housing, **the number of hours of work required to cover the monthly mortgage payment on an average priced house increased from 56 hours to 104 hours, an 85% increase.**

Addressing affordability requires issuing an adequate number of housing units permits to close the deficit and meet future housing demand, changes to zoning, increasing the mix of housing types permitted so that more housing can be offered at affordable price points, and setting realistic and cost conscious goals for transition to clean and renewable energy to not overburden homeowners.

Homelessness

The city of Denver is the focal point of Colorado's homelessness problem—the state's biggest population center also contains its highest concentration of homeless people (almost 70% of the metro area's homeless despite less than a third of its total population) and receives the Denver metro area's greatest share of municipal and charitable homelessness spending, both in absolute and per-person terms. According to PIT counts, Denver's homeless population was higher in 2022 than ever before. Though some municipalities around the country and within Colorado experienced reductions in their homeless populations over the last several years, Denver's has been growing substantially.

Over the last 5 years, Denver's homeless population has **risen by almost 44%**—nearly 12 times faster than the city's total population growth between 2016 and 2021. Conversely, the total population in Denver declined by over 4,000 people in 2021.

Since 2015, the Denver metro area's homeless count has grown at a slightly faster average rate than the city of Denver's. Since 2017, however, Denver's growth rate outpaces that of the metro area by **almost 75%**.

Since a low in 2016, the unsheltered share of Denver's homeless has **more than doubled** to just over 27%. This has occurred despite an available supply of approximately 4,500 shelter beds. Previous reporting from the city has indicated that there consistently remain vacancies across these bed types.

As homelessness has emerged as a growing problem in Colorado, many municipalities, including Denver, appear to have dramatically increased their direct and indirect spending on homelessness resolution. Much of this and other new spending in Denver has been enabled by a windfall of federal funds—an exhaustible resource which governments cannot expect to persist long into the future. With this in mind, leaders in Denver, where homelessness continues to be an increasingly severe problem, should strive to adopt practices conducive to the proper management of public resources, transparent recordkeeping, and efficacious policy.

Crime Data from Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10

Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10, the four that will hold runoff elections this month, currently exhibit the four highest crime rates among Denver's 11 City Council districts.

DISTRICT 7

City Council District 7 includes the following neighborhoods: Athmar Park, College View, Historic Baker, Overland Park, Platt Park, Ruby Hill, West Washington Park, and Valverde.

- Incidents of crime have increased 22.7% from 6,242 in 2018 to 7,659 in 2022.

- Baker has the largest share (18.1%) of crime incidents among District 7 neighborhoods.

- From 2018 to 2022, theft from a motor vehicle accounts for the largest share of crime incidents (18.3%) followed by auto theft (16.4%) and public disorder (16.3%).

DISTRICT 8

City Council District 8 consists of the following neighborhoods: Central Park (Old Stapleton), Montbello, Northeast Park Hill, North Park Hill, Skyland, South Park Hill, and East Colfax. **Of Denver's 11 districts, it has the 3rd highest crime rate at 124 crimes per 1,000 residents.**

- Between 2018 and 2022, District 8's crime rate increased by 46%—the 3rd-fastest rate in the city.

  - Over that period, total incidents of crime increased by 50% from 5,364 to 8,047.

- Central Park contains the largest share (48%) of crime incidents among District 8 neighborhoods.

- From 2018 to 2022, larceny accounted for the largest share of incidents (18.4%), followed by auto theft (17.9%) and theft from motor vehicles (16%).

DISTRICT 9

City Council District 9 consists of the following neighborhoods: Central Business District (CBD), City Park, City Park West, Clayton, Cole, Elyria Swansea, Five Points, Union Station, Whittier, Auraria, Globeville, Northeast Park Hill, and Skyland. **Of Denver's 11 districts, it has the highest crime rate at 246 crimes per 1,000 residents.**

- While all districts in Denver face challenges, crime is overwhelming in District 9. The number of crime incidences in District 9 (15,987) is 91% higher than the second worst district and more than double the level in the 8 other districts.

- District 9 has a crime rate twice the average for all districts. District 9 has 9.09% of the population in Denver yet has 20.4% of all incidents in 2022. This equates to roughly 44 incidents (nearly 50) per day in District 9.

- Between 2018 and 2022, District 9's crime rate increased by 36%—the 6th-fastest rate in the city.

  - Over that period, total incidents of crime increased by 39.4% from 11,468 to 15,987.

- Five Points contains the largest share (29.7%) of crime incidents among District 9 neighborhoods.

DISTRICT 10

City Council District 10 consists of the following neighborhoods: Capitol Hill, Cheeseman Park, Civic Center, Congress Park, Country Club, North Capitol Hill, Belcaro, Cherry Creek, Hale, Hilltop, and Speer. **Of Denver's 11 districts, it has the 2nd-highest crime rate at 130 crimes per 1,000 residents.**

- Between 2018 and 2022, District 10's crime rate increased by 5%—the slowest rate in the city.

  - Over that period, total incidents of crime increased by 8.2% from 7,739 to 8,375.

- Civic Center contains the largest share (24.5%) of crime incidents among District 10 neighborhoods.

- From 2018 to 2022, public disorder accounted for the largest share of crime incidents (15.3%), followed by theft from motor vehicles (15.1%) and larceny (13.2%).

Stay tuned to CSI for all the latest updates and check out all our research here.

Don't forget to vote by June 6.

COMMON SENSE INSTITUTE