DENVER. THE BEST RETURN ON LIFE.

Fact Sheet

The Campaign

Denver. The Best Return on Life (DBRL) campaign is a national, multimedia initiative designed to reshape the city's narrative and showcase its unique value proposition to businesses, job seekers, and investors. By highlighting how professional ambition and personal fulfillment can coexist, the campaign aims to drive economic investment and talent retention while counteracting negative perceptions with data-driven progress.

Who Is Behind It

The DBRL campaign is a privately led, publicly supported national campaign including local public and private stakeholders. It brings together three main groups to coordinate messaging and investment, including the Mayor's office and other government entities, small and large business leaders and nonprofit organizations like Visit Denver and the Downtown Denver Partnership. Local business leaders, residents and community leaders will act as spokespeople and share an aligned, unified message about the city's growth, future potential and unique value proposition.

What Makes Denver Different

Livability & Quality of Life

- Shorter commutes than many major cities (2024 American Community Survey), a lower cost of living (below the national average) compared to major coastal markets, highly rated schools, and diverse neighborhoods.
- A focus on supporting families, including initiatives on affordable childcare, afterschool and summer programs, youth employment opportunities and youth violence prevention.
- Streamline and expand affordable housing options, aiming to develop 20,000 affordable housing units by 2031 (Denver Permitting Office).
- Streamlining and expediting building permits, with more than 5,000 permits approved YTD and quick permits approved for single-unit, two-unit, and townhome interior-only projects (Denver Permitting Office).

Safety & Community Progress

- Homicides declined 45% between 2024 and 2025. Denver recorded its biggest year-over-year drop in homicides of any major U.S. city, achieving its second-lowest overall homicide rate since the 1990s (City of Denver).

- Property crime has fallen 25% since 2022 and motor vehicle theft has fallen 71% since 2022 (Denver Police Department).
- Over 2,500 people moved from unsheltered conditions into housing in 2025 (City of Denver).
    - Denver is the first large U.S. city to end the cycle of veteran homelessness (City of Denver).
    - Unsheltered homelessness decreased by 64% since 2023 (MDHI).

Education & Talent Pipeline

- Colorado ranks #1 in education (U.S. News & World Report 2026), evaluated across preschool enrollment, K–12 graduation rates, national test scores and higher education completion.
- Denver Public Schools holds an 80% four-year graduation rate, matching big-metro benchmarks (The Colorado Department of Education's 2025 District Performance Framework for Denver Public Schools).
- A highly educated workforce: More than half of Denver adults hold a bachelor's degree or higher. At 56.5%, Denver's bachelor's degree attainment rate significantly exceeds the national average, providing employers access to one of the country's most highly educated urban talent pools (U.S. Census Bureau's QuickFacts data report).
- 18.6% of adults age 25+ in the Denver metro area have a graduate or professional degree, compared with 14.1% nationally (U.S. Census Bureau's 2020–2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).
- The Mayor's Denver Jobs Agenda includes Work Denver ($45 million for workforce training).

Cost of Living & Income

- Denver's median household income reflects the strength of its economy and workforce. At $108,046, median household income in the Denver metro area is more than 30% higher than the national median of $81,604 (U.S. Census Bureau's 2024 American Community Survey).
- Denver combines high earning potential with a cost of living significantly below markets such as San Francisco, giving workers and families greater purchasing power without sacrificing access to a major innovation economy (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Price Parities (RPP)).

Business, Capital & Economic Growth

- Downtown's overall foot traffic, including daytime, evenings and weekends, has consistently performed at over 90% since December 2025 (Downtown Denver Partnership).
- Throughout 2025 and 2026, downtown has averaged a 90% activity rate compared to 2019. Evenings and weekends are performing at or above pre-pandemic levels, and stronger months consistently see rates up to 95% (Downtown Denver Partnership).
- Between 2025 and 2026 year-to-date, downtown has welcomed 112 new ground-floor businesses, with 30+ businesses in the pipeline (Downtown Denver Partnership).
    - Context: 61 businesses have closed. Downtown currently has 51 net new ground-floor businesses.
- 2026 leasing activity has reached 1.5M SF year to date, including new leases, subleases, renewals, and pre-leasing (Downtown Denver Partnership).
    - Another ~1.5M SF of office space is slated for redevelopment into residential or mixed-use through the DDDA.
- Colorado's real GDP is projected to grow 2.9% in 2026, **outpacing projected national growth** of 2.1% (University of Colorado Boulder's Leeds School of Business). The same forecast projects that eight of Colorado's 11 major industries will expand in 2026 and that the **state will add approximately 17,500 jobs**. Education and health services are expected to lead job creation, followed by trade, transportation and utilities and government.
- Denver ranks as the #3 most entrepreneurial city in the U.S., adding more than 63,000 microbusinesses in 2024 (GoDaddy). Denver is also a national leader for women in business, ranking #2 among large U.S. metros for women-owned businesses (ColoradoCafe).
- Mayor Mike Johnston and the Denver Office of Economic Development are leading a $100M, 3-year economic strategy to support 10,000 new jobs through the Denver Jobs Agenda, which includes Launch Denver ($6 million for entrepreneurs), Build Denver ($10.5 million for small businesses), Open Denver ($40 million to attract businesses), and Work Denver ($45 million for workforce training). The program features a $40M initiative that offers financial incentives and lease reimbursements for expanding companies that bring 25+ jobs downtown.

Infrastructure & Accessibility

- Denver is backing its growth with major public investment, including the voter-approved $950 million Vibrant Denver Bond, $570 million in Downtown Development Authority investment and the $175 million transformation of 16th Street (City and County of Denver, Visit Denver, Denver Downtown Development Authority).

- Denver International Airport, which served a record 82.4 million passengers in 2025, is the fourth-busiest airport in the U.S. and 10th-busiest in the world. In 2025, DEN achieved a major milestone: for the first time, it ranked #1 among all U.S. airports for the number of domestic destinations served nonstop. DEN issued $2.526 billion in airport revenue bonds in 2018, at the time the largest single airport bond issuance in history. More than $2 billion of the proceeds were designated for capital improvements (Denver International Airport).

Lifestyle & Culture

- Denver averages more than 3,100 hours of sunshine annually, more than San Diego, and comparable to Miami. Its extensive park system puts green space close to home: 96% of Denver residents live within a 10-minute walk of a public park, compared with 76% across America's 100 largest cities. Denver also maintains more than 200 parks within the city and 20,000 acres of mountain parks nearby (National Climatic Data Center, Visit Denver, Trust for Public Land's 2026 ParkScore).

- Outdoor recreation isn't just a weekend getaway in Denver—it's part of everyday life. World-class ski resorts, including Winter Park, Breckenridge, Keystone, Copper Mountain, Arapahoe Basin and Vail, are roughly 100 miles or less from the city, while Denver's mild climate supports year-round golf across 90 metro-area courses. Cyclists have access to 850 miles of paved, off-street biking and walking trails, with connections extending from downtown into the foothills (Visit Denver).

- Denver's cultural scene is anchored by the world-famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre, a thriving network of live-music venues, more than 100 breweries and brewpubs across the metro area, and Michelin-recognized dining. Signature events draw visitors from across the country, including the Great American Beer Festival and the National Western Stock Show, which attracted a record 750,000 attendees in 2026 (Visit Denver, Michelin Guide, Great American Beer Festival, National Western Stock Show).

- Denver is a sports capital, with representation across all five major men's professional leagues and a new era of women's professional sports led by Denver Summit FC, including a roughly $450 million investment that includes the nation's second purpose-built stadium for women's professional sports (Visit Denver, Denver FC, Sports Business Journal).

- The Mile High Line brings together seven of Denver’s largest public and private redevelopment opportunities, including the future Broncos stadium at Burnham Yard, the Denver Summit stadium at Santa Fe Yards, Ball Arena and River Mile, Old Mile High, Downtown Denver, the National Western Center and Park Hill Park.