

# Pueblo Economic & Workforce Development Dashboard

## Highlights — October 2023

**GDP {Page 3}** was released late last week, and as expected, U.S. economic growth was very strong in Q3 of this year. If we annualize the growth in Q3, the U.S. economy would expand at 4.9% over the course of the year (hence “annualized”). Another way to look at quarterly data is to simply compare Q3 of this year to Q3 of last year, and that growth rate was 2.9%. I personally think that year-over-year analysis is more accurate than the annualized one. Just because one quarter has unusually high or low growth, that doesn’t mean that level of activity will hold for an entire year, which is what the annualized metric states. The year-over-year growth of 2.9% is still, however, above “trend” growth we’ve seen in the U.S. economy over the past many decades (roughly 2.0%).

In the previous quarter (2023 Q2), economic growth was more in line with “trend” growth at 2.1%. The outsized economic performance in the more recent quarter of Q3 was mostly due to relentless *increases* in consumer spending (up 4.0%), private inventory investment, exports, all levels of government spending and residential investment. It’s worth noting that the largest component of personal consumption expenditures was in the services category. Most experts say this summer/early fall bump was part of the last hurrah of consumers who are enjoying full normalcy after the pandemic, are confident about their employment, spending what’s left of their “excess” savings, and indeed relying more on credit cards to finance expenditures. There is a reality check around the corner with savings rates that continue to dwindle (now at 3.4% versus 7.2% in January 2020). Undoubtedly, a portion of the bump in use of credit cards is also due to significantly higher price levels that lower-income individuals, in particular, are struggling with. Lower income households report they are using credit card more so just to cover necessities, and that’s a bit of a red flag for me as I watch credit card delinquencies rise. Goods purchases did not increase as much as services, but still had a nice increase in Q3 after lackluster Q2 levels. Subtractions on GDP in Q3 included nonresidential investment and (more) imports.

Despite the robust GDP read, consumers, businesses and most economists remain skeptical about the U.S. ability to keep up with longer-term trend growth rates of ~2.0%. Remember that GDP is a backward-looking indicator with Q3 representing July to September so in order to speculate how the remainder of this year and next may look, we have to focus on leading indicators. If we do that, a list of headwinds remains. We have improving but still sticky **Inflation {Page 3}** that stayed at 3.7% in both August and September mostly due to shelter and gasoline costs. Because of that inflation, the Federal Reserve may raise **Interest Rates {Page 3}** one more time in November or at a minimum keep them higher for longer, which crimps homebuying and business investment. It’s somewhat technical, but the “real” interest rate is also a factor here because as inflation declines and interest rates stay high, the “real” interest rate is greater, and that disincentivizes borrowing and investing, which hurts future growth. The high “real” interest rate is part of the reason U.S. Treasuries (e.g., bills, notes, and bonds) have been more attractive to investors compared to stock market investments. This alongside general economic uncertainty translates to investor skittishness and stock market volatility as you can see in the chart.



At a household level, the dissipating pandemic savings, rising debt (with increasing credit card *and* auto loan delinquencies), lower government spending due to the (shutdown averting) Fiscal Responsibility Act, general legislative paralysis, and student loan re-payments also factor into what will likely be reduced consumer and government spending, which all factor heavily into GDP.

Having said all that, retail sales do continue to hold up and two contributing factors I have recently covered on Fox21 include many people holding **second jobs**, which help finance continued spending, and many households who still have decent discretionary income because they **locked in sub-3%, 30-year mortgage rates a couple of years ago**.

The narrative that the strong labor market will likely keep an economic slowdown or technical recession from being severe, has not changed. **Job Openings {Page 3}** had an upside surprise in the latest August data (9.6 million openings) and we also had a 336,000 increase in employment across a plethora of industries in September according to the **BLS report**. The increase in employment is more than double the pre-pandemic average and helps explain the national and local declines in **Unemployment {Page 3}** in September. The U.S. rate fell from 3.9% in August to 3.6% in September, and the Pueblo County rate fell from 4.9% to 4.3% over the same period. Another factor in the U.S. economic resilience this year is the simple fact that the U.S. dollar is the world’s reserve currency. This means the demand for U.S. Treasuries will remain relatively strong, which enables the U.S. to finance its expenditures as well as its (ever-growing) debt.

But the recent resilient position of the U.S. could be thrown into question by external factors. Serious geopolitical risks, more recently the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, the Ukrainian crisis, and other global challenges currently pose the largest threats to both global economic stability and inflation. Commodity prices for staples like oil and wheat are at particular risk. These and other exogenous risks could debunk the as-

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# Pueblo Economic & Workforce Development Dashboard

sumption of a mild downturn in the U.S. and consumers are aware of this. [Consumer Sentiment {Page 3}](#) fell in October with an index at 63.8 as the graph on the EPR shows. Some of the decline was driven by higher-income consumers with stock market investments. As shown in the first graph and discussed above, stock market volatility has been high and returns in 2022 and thus far into 2023 are paltry compared to the two previous (pandemic) years. And wealthy people have taken note. Overall, one-year-ahead expected personal finances declined by about 8% and one-year-ahead expected business conditions declined by 16%. Higher expected inflation largely explains household's and business's deteriorating outlook.

I'd like to shift focus a bit to some of the recent demographic data that's been updated by our various state and national sources. Before I do that I'd like to mention that over the past few weeks I've focused on the housing market and if you want more information on that industry, please go to the [Fox21 economic segments](#) directly.

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in the U.S. increased significantly in 2022 for individuals (from \$12,880 in 2021 to \$18,310 in 2022), although not quite as significantly for families of four (\$26,500 in 2021 to \$27,750 in 2022). The increases, of course, correlate with the elevated inflation levels we've had over the past couple of years. It's helpful to juxtapose the FPL to the [MIT Living Wage for Pueblo County {Page 4}](#) because the MIT data represents what individuals and families need to earn to cover necessary expenses. For a family of four with two children and two working adults (each making \$52,000), the total necessary household income to cover all expenses is \$104,000. This is approximately four times the FPL.

A piece of good news is that the percentage of people in the U.S. at or below the FPL went down slightly (from 12.8% in 2021 to 12.6% in 2022). Pueblo County had a larger reduction in the percentage of people at or below the FPL (from 16.3% in 2021 to 14.8% in 2022). The improvements are likely tied to the increases in average wages from \$52,468 in 2022 to \$55,276 in Q1 of this year (up 5.4%). However, the U.S. average wage increased more so going from \$69,992 in 2022 to \$76,180 in Q1 of this year (up 8.8%). I don't likely have to tell you that wages didn't keep pace with inflation for most of the pandemic era, but the aspect of this that's worrisome is that Pueblo wages are still 27.4% below the U.S. average wage and 31.8% below Colorado average wages. Meanwhile, the [Cost of Living Index {Page 3}](#) did slightly improve in Q2 of this year to 98.2% of the U.S. average from 98.7% in Q1 mostly because housing prices that have moderated. But the reality a cost of living at 98.2% of the U.S. average with wages 27.4% below the U.S. is not a good scenario. Shelter is a large component of cost of living so that is one of the linchpins in bringing parity between cost of living and wages.

Recently, I talked about the [low level of condo building](#) in our region and state as a missed opportunity in increasing the supply of affordable housing.

We also now have updated educational attainment levels for 2022. For a [Bachelor's Degree or Higher {Page 6}](#), the U.S. increased from 12.8% in 2021 to 13.4% in 2022 (ages 18-24) and from 35.0% to 35.7% for ages 25 and up. Interestingly, Pueblo County increased more so from 4.5% to 8.4% for ages 18-24, but declined from 26.6% to 23.8% for ages 25 and up. The U.S. and local share of the population with [Some College or Associate Degree {Page 6}](#) stayed roughly the same from 2021 to 2022. The U.S. decreased slightly from 40.7% to 39.6% for 18-24 and 28.1% to 27.9% for 25 and up. Pueblo County increased slightly from 38.5% to 40.1% for 18-24 and declined slightly from 35.4% to 34.0% for 25 and up. One thing to keep in mind, however, is that community/state colleges are increasingly used by companies and individuals for relatively short-term training and/or certification. This reflects the changing needs of businesses that quickly want to upskill their workers as well as the shift of many businesses to not require bachelor's degrees. Many businesses today are focusing more on "skills-based training." Those one-off courses are not always captured in the data but represent an important part of the new workforce training paradigm.\*

Lastly, [Pueblo Apartment {Page 7}](#) information for 2023 Q2 has been released. Vacancy rates went down in all areas except Pueblo South, where they rose from 1.7% in Q1 to 2.6% in Q2. Average rents held steady or changed very slightly from Q1 to Q2, except in Pueblo North-east where they increase by \$15 per month. Median rents were higher in Pueblo Northwest (from \$1,372 in Q1 to \$1,390 in Q2) and lower in Pueblo South (from \$936 in Q1 to \$887 in Q2). Generally speaking, the local apartment market is tight in Pueblo Northwest and Pueblo South (vacancies in the ~2% range), moderately soft in Pueblo Metro Area (8.1% vacancy rate) and quite soft in Pueblo Northeast (18.4% vacancy rate).

That's all for now and good luck to Pueblo in the upcoming mayoral election! I hope you have a great week!

Tatiana & Rebecca

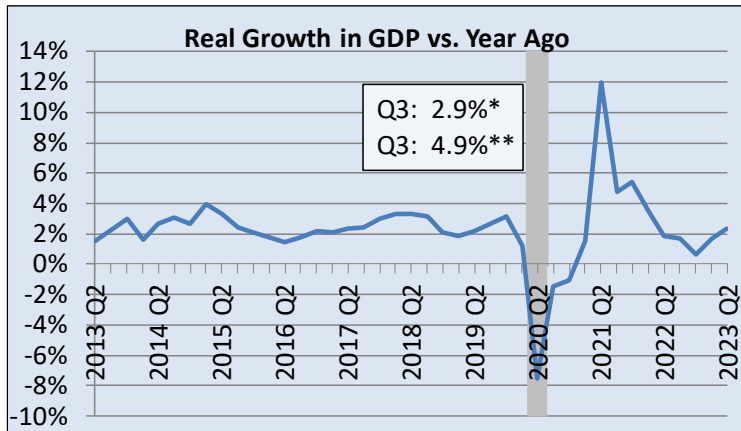
\*Thank you to Lance Bolton for previous conversations around this topic that help inform our work.

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# Pueblo Economic & Workforce Development Dashboard

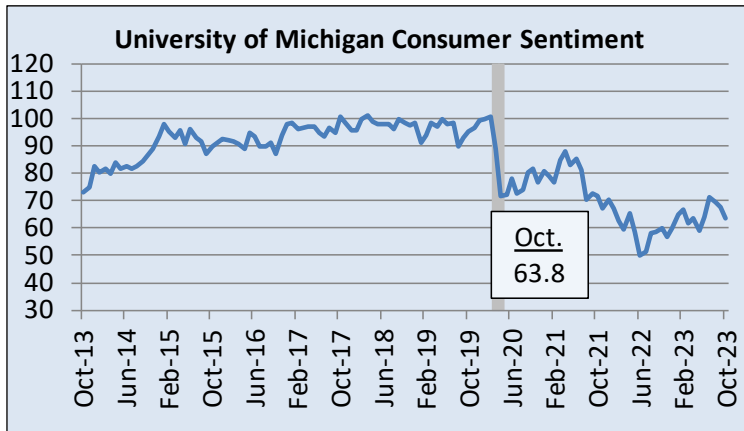
## MACROECONOMIC "BIG PICTURE" (PAGE 3)



\*Estimate of real GDP percent change from same quarter a year ago, SA

\*\*If quarterly changes were annualized over the year.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

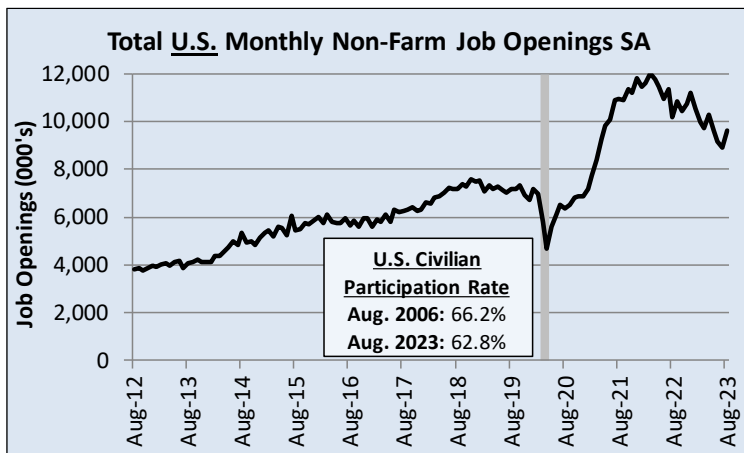


Source: University of Michigan

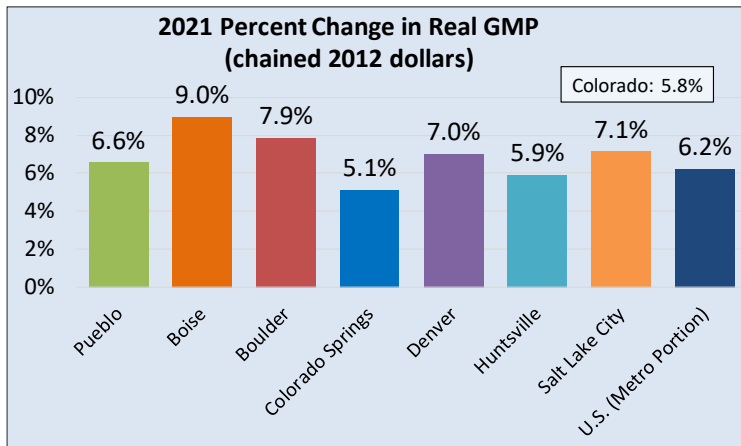
Forecasts for U.S. Real GDP and Unemployment (SA)				
	2021 Actual	2022 Actual	2023 Forecast	2024 Forecast
Real GDP Growth	5.8%	1.9%	2.2%	0.8%
Unemployment Rate	5.4%	3.7%	3.7%	4.0%

Forecasts by Data-Driven Economic Strategies with input from the Conference Board, Wells Fargo, Colorado Department of Labor & Employment, Colorado-based Business & Economic Research, and other anecdotal resources.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Job openings data lags.



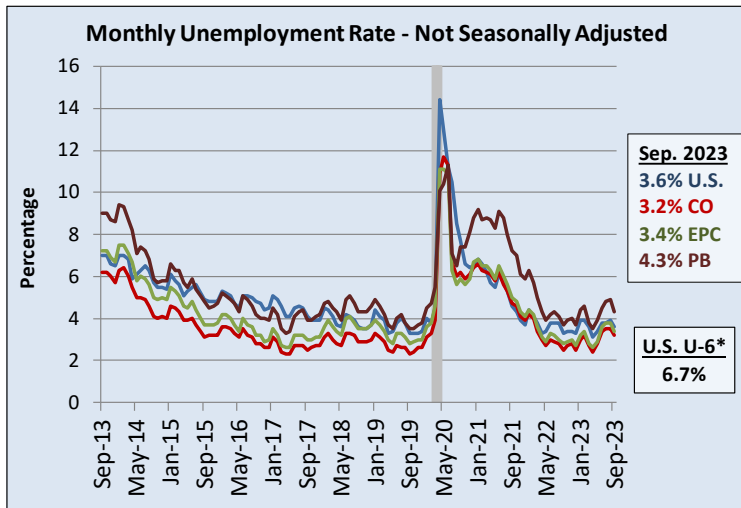
Note: Data includes military. Real GMP is adjusted for regional price parity (RPP). This regional data lags ~23 months.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

U.S. Consumer Price Index - September 2023		
	All items	Less food & energy
Change from August to September 2023 (SA)	0.4%	0.3%
Last 12-months (NSA)	3.7%	4.1%

The 2023 Q2 cost of living in Pueblo MSA was 98.2% of the U.S. average according to C2ER. Colorado Springs's index was 107.2% of U.S.

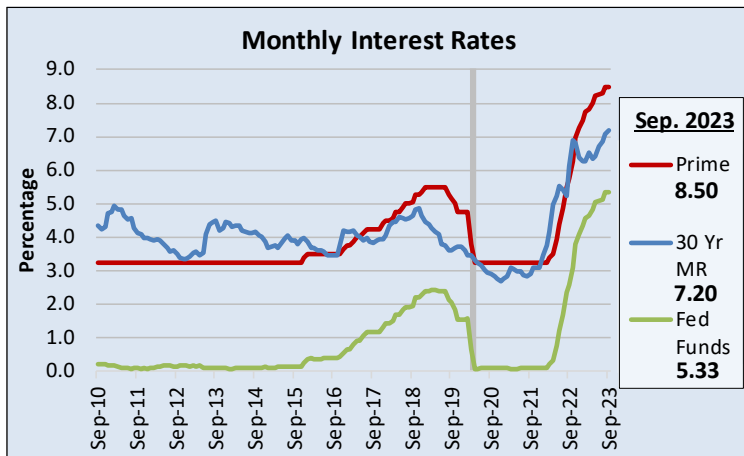
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; all urban consumers (CPI-U)



Note: Data not seasonally adjusted (NSA) to enable comparisons with counties.

\*U-6 includes unemployed, those marginally attached to the labor force, plus those employed part time who would prefer full-time work.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; CO Dept. of Labor & Employment



Source: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

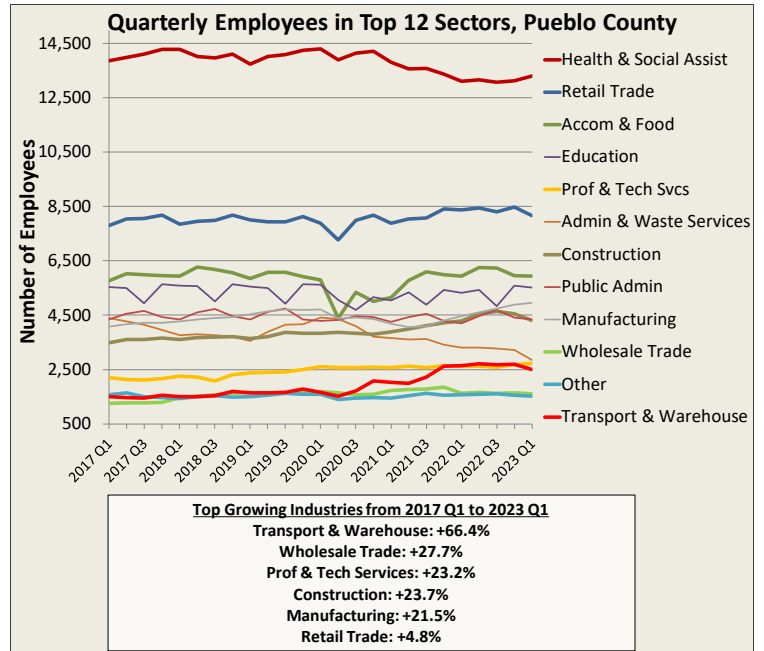
# Pueblo Economic & Workforce Development Dashboard

## LOCAL LABOR MARKET (PAGE 4)

Top Job Openings, Pueblo County, September 2023			
Top Job Titles (Pueblo MSA)	# of Job Postings (Pueblo)	Median Advertised Salary (Pueblo)	Risk of Automation (U.S.)
Registered Nurses	315	\$95,488	Low Risk
Retail Salespersons	115	\$34,432	Medium Risk
1st-Line Supervisors, Retail Sales	97	\$46,208	Low Risk
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	72	\$51,968	High Risk
Food Service Managers	64	\$44,672	High Risk
Sales Reps, Wholesale & Mfg	62	\$52,608	Medium Risk
Customer Service Reps	58	\$32,896	Medium Risk
Maintenance & Repair Workers	56	\$44,928	High Risk
Fast Food & Counter Workers	56	\$32,896	High Risk
Physical Therapists	56	\$94,208	Low Risk

**Pueblo MSA, September 2023**  
**TOTAL Job Openings: 3,705**  
**TOTAL Unemployed: 3,330**  
**Workers Available per Job Opening: 0.90**

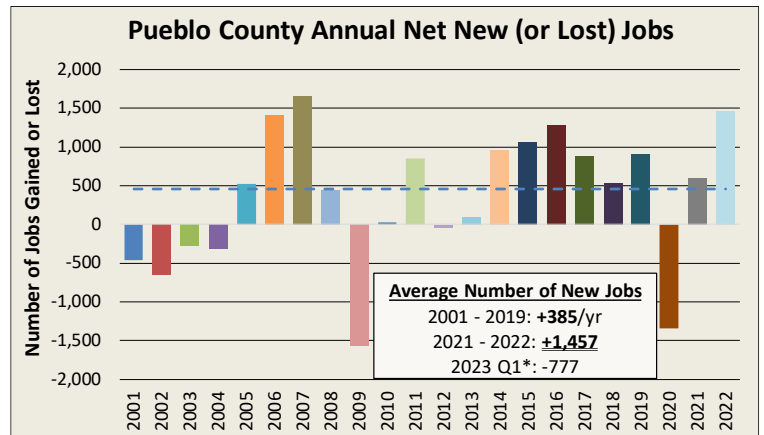
Sources: The Conference Board®-Lightcast® Help Wanted OnLine® via Pikes Peak Workforce Center; CO Dept. of Labor & Employment



QCEW data lags up to three quarters and includes public and private employment. Source: Colorado Department of Labor & Employment, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

Top Employers - Pueblo MSA in September 2023		
Name of Employer	# of Job Postings	Median Advertised Salary
State Of Colorado	128	\$60,544
Pueblo Community College	98	\$80,128
Parkview Medical Center	92	\$62,208
Pueblo County School District 70	77	\$56,704
Parkview Health	66	\$57,472
Pueblo City Schools District 60	62	\$64,000
Colorado State Government	59	\$64,896
Centura Health	56	\$81,664
Health Solutions Us	54	\$56,832
Trane Technologies	52	\$80,128
Pueblo County Courthouse	49	\$58,368
City Of Pueblo	41	\$55,936
Interim HealthCare	32	\$69,888
Aya Healthcare	29	\$117,248
Crossroads Turning Points	28	\$38,528

Source: The Conference Board®-Lightcast® Help Wanted OnLine® via Pikes Peak Workforce Center



\*Quarterly data reflects new jobs (or jobs lost) compared to 2022 annual average number of jobs. The dashed line represents the number of new jobs needed (455) based on population growth and age composition from 2020–2025. This QCEW data lags up to three quarters and includes public and private employment. Source: Colorado Department of Labor & Employment, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

**Pueblo MSA and Pueblo County are one and the same.**

2022 Federal Poverty Level (FPL)		
	Pueblo County	U.S.
% people at FPL or below	14.8%	12.6%
Note: FPL in 2022 was \$18,310 for an individual and \$27,750 for a family of four.		

2023 Q1 Average Annual Wages for All Industries			
Pueblo wages are 27.4% lower than the U.S.			
31.8% lower than Colorado			
15.7% lower than El Paso County			
U.S.	Colorado	El Paso County	Pueblo County
\$76,180	\$81,068	\$65,572	\$55,276
2023 Q1 Total Employment			62,171
2023 Q1 Total # Establishments			4,114

2022-23 Minimum Wage & Living Wage Pueblo County		
	Wage/Hr	Annualized
Minimum wage salary for full-time worker	\$13.65	\$28,392
Living wage: HHs with 1 adult, 2 children	\$45.38	\$94,390
Living wage: HHs with 2 adults (1 working), 2 children	\$39.18	\$81,494
Living wage: HHs with 2 adults* (2 working), 2 children	\$25.00	\$52,000
*Living wage is for each working adult. For specifics, go to <a href="http://livingwage.mit.edu">livingwage.mit.edu</a> .		

Note: QCEW data lags by up to three quarters and includes public and private employment.

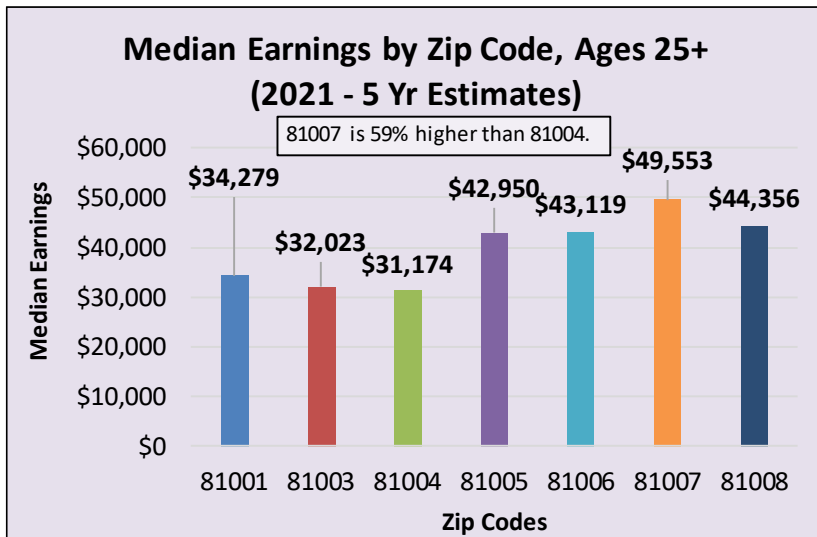
Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, QCEW; Local military installations; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; MIT Living Wage Calculator

## LOCAL INFORMATION BY ZIP CODE (PAGE 5)

Zip Code	White Alone	Black Alone	Amer Ind/ Native Alaskan	Asian Alone	Other Race Alone	Two or More Races	Hispanic/ Latino Origin
81001	90.5%	97.7%	71.1%	91.1%	72.3%	89.7%	81.0%
81003	82.8%	58.2%	87.9%	79.5%	86.0%	85.3%	79.8%
81004	90.7%	87.6%	80.5%	92.2%	78.4%	85.2%	84.2%
81005	95.1%	95.1%	76.2%	100.0%	78.9%	96.8%	88.9%
81006	93.7%	100.0%	67.9%	100.0%	88.5%	93.6%	89.6%
81007	93.1%	98.4%	86.4%	96.1%	81.1%	97.1%	89.7%
81008	92.1%	100.0%	55.4%	72.0%	96.0%	84.6%	85.5%

Zip Code	White Alone	Black Alone	Amer Ind/ Native Alaskan	Asian Alone	Other Race Alone	Two or More Races	Hispanic/ Latino Origin
81001	20.1%	37.8%	1.0%	47.4%	3.8%	23.6%	10.4%
81003	15.9%	21.9%	11.6%	47.0%	20.5%	23.0%	15.1%
81004	22.1%	12.0%	2.4%	34.8%	8.8%	14.2%	11.8%
81005	26.0%	47.6%	4.0%	42.8%	7.9%	38.6%	16.5%
81006	26.3%	36.1%	1.9%	100.0%	8.5%	15.1%	16.2%
81007	29.1%	19.8%	18.9%	57.8%	18.6%	43.8%	18.9%
81008	30.8%	54.4%	14.5%	59.3%	23.5%	26.6%	20.7%

Note: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander category excluded due to extremely high margins of error (sample size too small). Margin of error can be larger for smaller populations. Five-year estimates are more accurate due to small sample size in many zip codes.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates

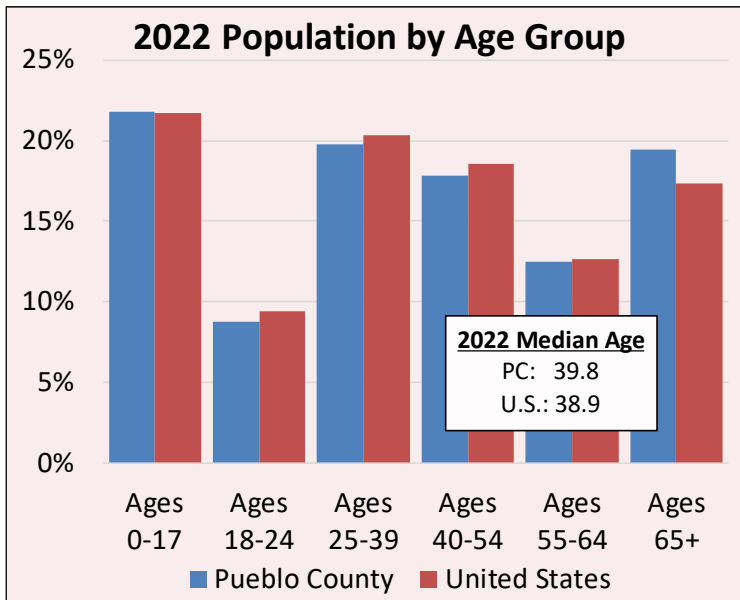


U.S.	Pueblo County
\$56,929	\$51,808

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates

Five-year estimates are more accurate due to small sample size in many zip codes. Data for 5-year estimates lags, so 2021 should be released in December 2022.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates

## DEMOGRAPHICS (PAGE 6)

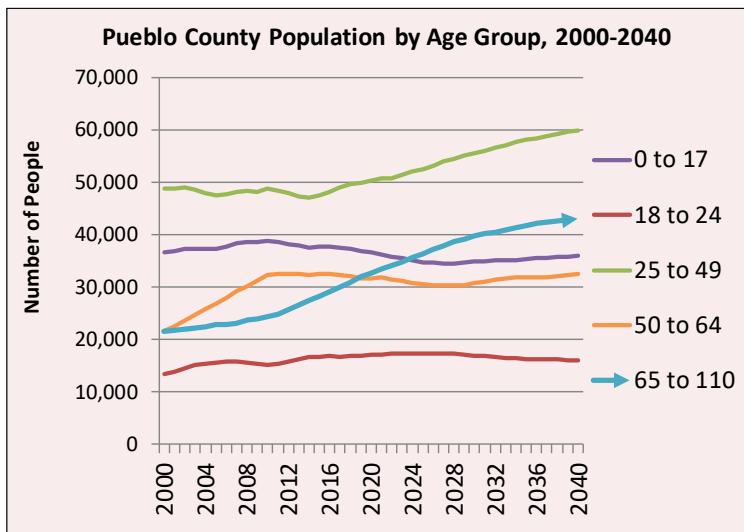


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Population Estimates Program

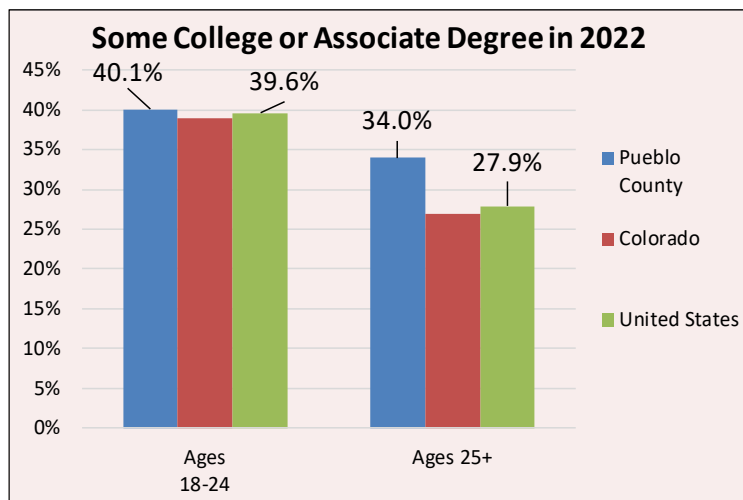
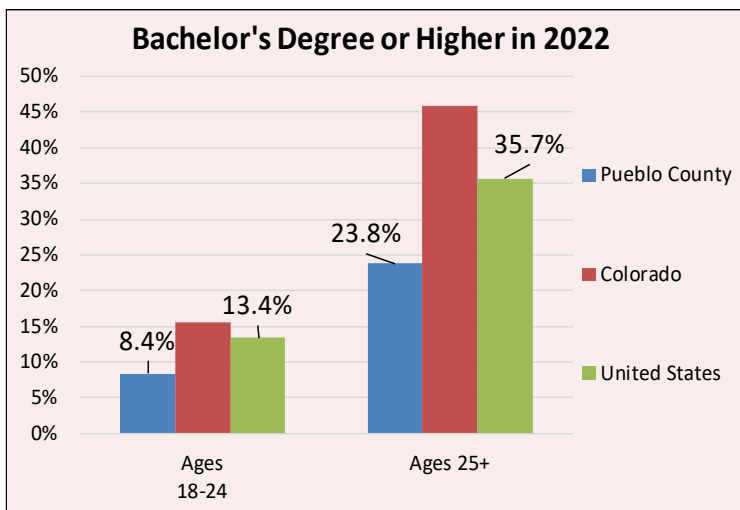
### Population Estimates

Region (Growth Rate)	2021	2050
Pueblo County (14%)	169,504	192,621
Colorado (29%)	5,814,707	7,486,286

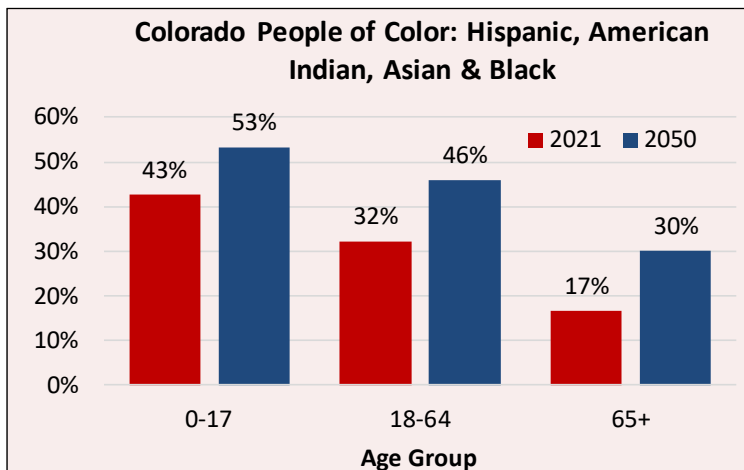
Source: Colorado State Demography Office



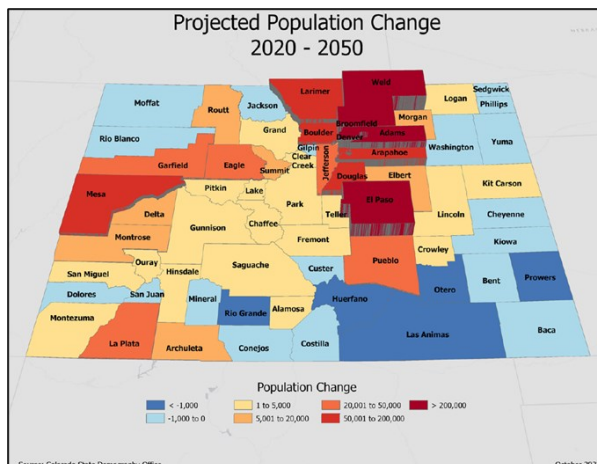
Source: Colorado State Demography Office



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year estimates



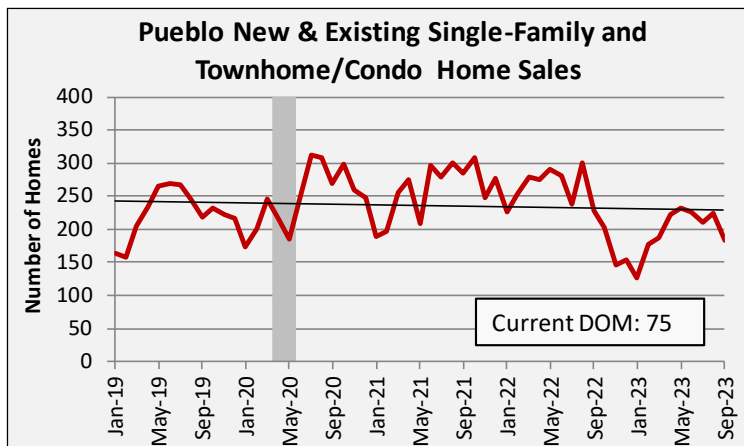
Source: Colorado State Demography Office



Source: Colorado State Demography Office

# Pueblo Economic & Workforce Development Dashboard

## REAL ESTATE (PAGE 7)

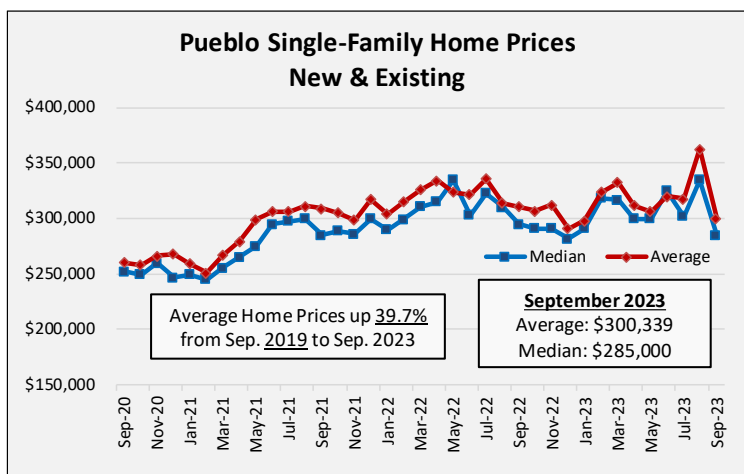


Source: Pueblo Association of REALTORS®, Inc. (PAR)

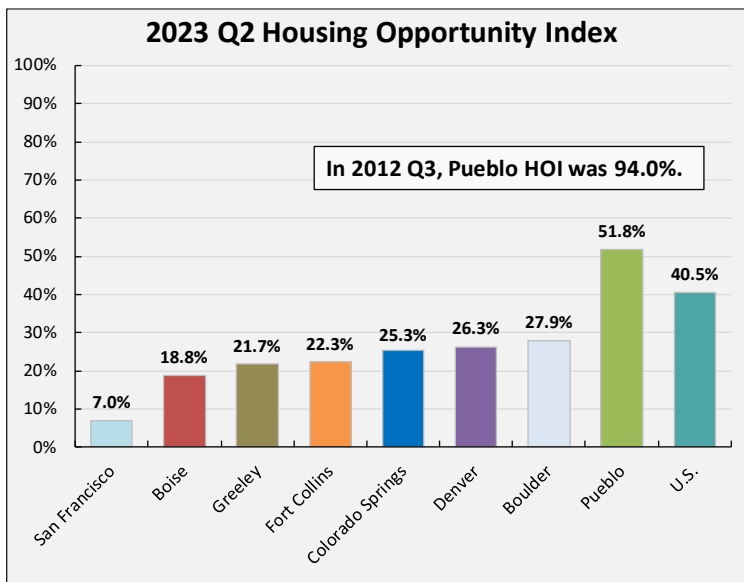
### Median Existing Single-Family\* Home Price 2023 Q2 (CS, Denver, U.S.) and Sept. (Pueblo)

Location	Colorado Springs	Denver	September 2023 Pueblo (*New & Existing)	United States
Price	\$467,100	\$674,500	\$285,000	\$402,600
1-year % Change	2.9% decrease	3.1% decrease	3.4% decrease	2.4% decrease
MSA Rank	43	16	143	n/a

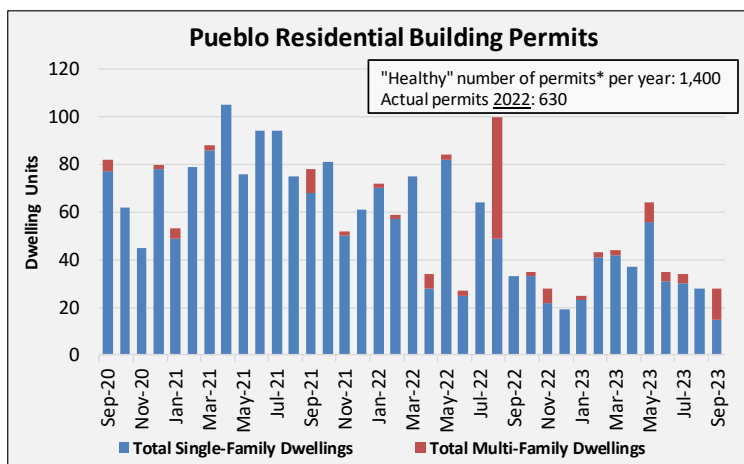
\*Includes existing homes only except for Pueblo, which includes new & existing since PAR only reports both (combined). Pueblo ranking is estimated based on similar MSA city ranking and price is for most recent month. 190 MSAs measured.  
Sources: National Association of REALTORS®, Pueblo Association of REALTORS®, Inc. (PAR)



Source: Pueblo Association of REALTORS®, Inc. (PAR)



\*Most recent Greeley and Pueblo data is not available so their HOI is still 2022 Q3. Note: The Housing Opportunity Index (HOI) is defined as the share of homes sold in that area that are affordable to a family earning the local median income, based on standard mortgage underwriting criteria. It includes new and existing homes.  
Sources: National Association of Home Builders; Wells Fargo

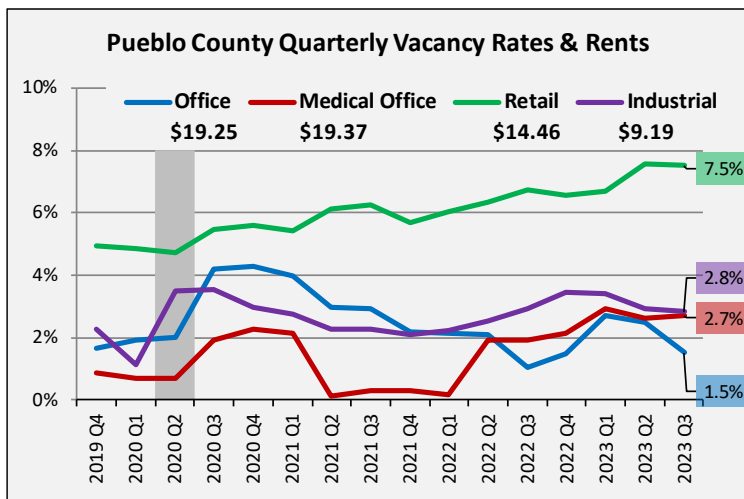


\*The methodology for "healthy permits" includes single-family and multi-family dwellings needed if we incorporate both population growth and the existing shortage of housing between 2023 and 2028. These calculations by Data-Driven Economic Strategies incorporate research by Common Sense Institute and input from the Colorado State Demography Office.  
Sources: Pueblo Regional Building Department; City of Pueblo

### Apartments, 2023 Q2

	Vacancy Rate	Average Rents	Median Rents	Average Year of Construction
Pueblo Metro Area	8.1%	\$1,144	\$1,005	1985
Pueblo Northeast	18.4%	\$1,071	\$1,000	1978
Pueblo Northwest	2.0%	\$1,366	\$1,390	2000
Pueblo South	2.6%	\$910	\$887	1973

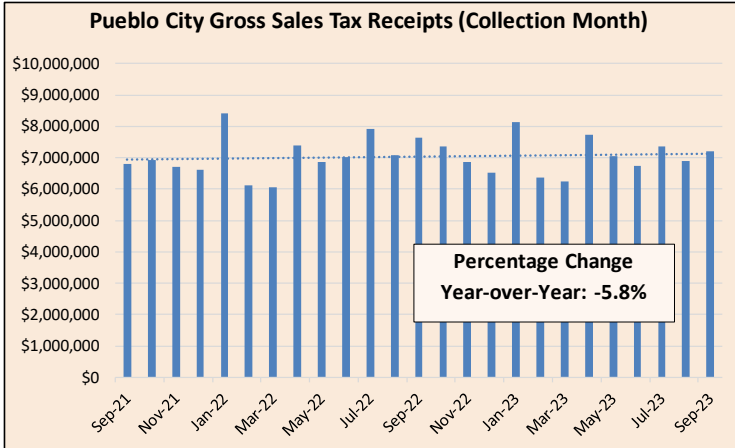
Note: "Only market rate apartment communities were surveyed, and this does not include affordable units, age-restricted units, or employee housing units."  
Source: Colorado Statewide Apartment Survey – created by Colorado Housing and Financial Authority; 1876 Analytics LLC; Apartment Insights



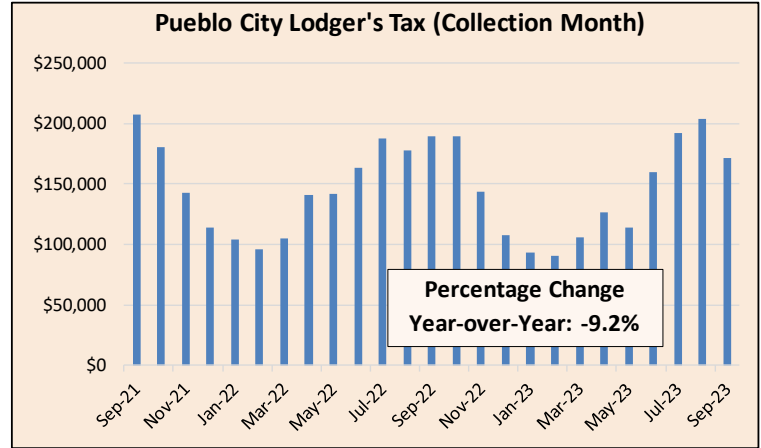
Sources: CoStar Group™; Olive Real Estate Group, Inc.

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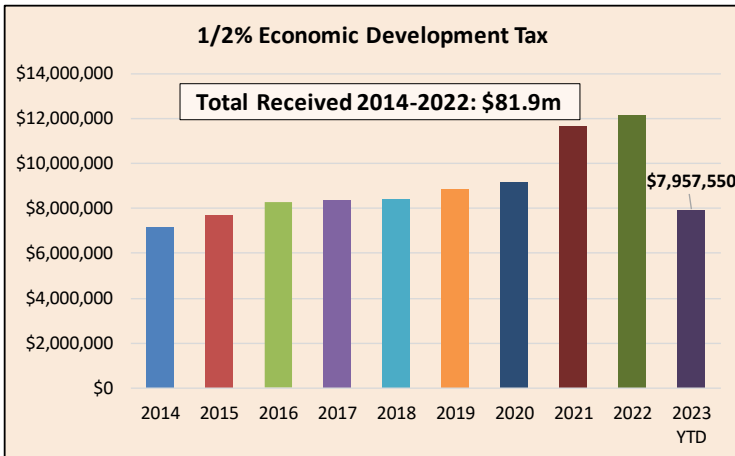
## TAXATION, VEHICLE SALES, AND TOURISM (PAGE 8)



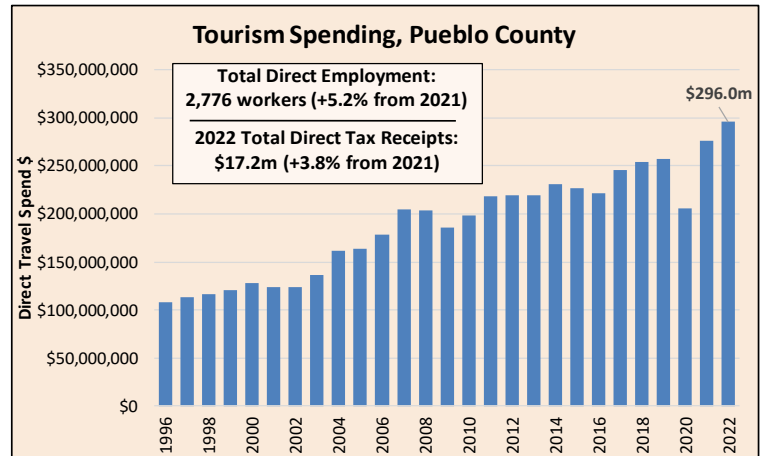
Source: City of Pueblo



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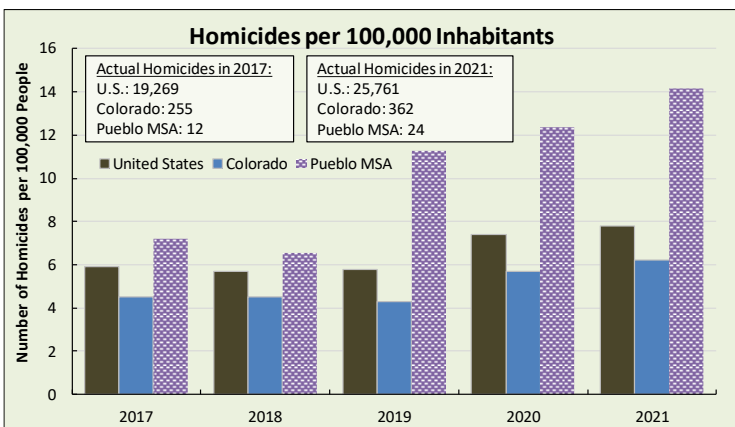
Source: City of Pueblo



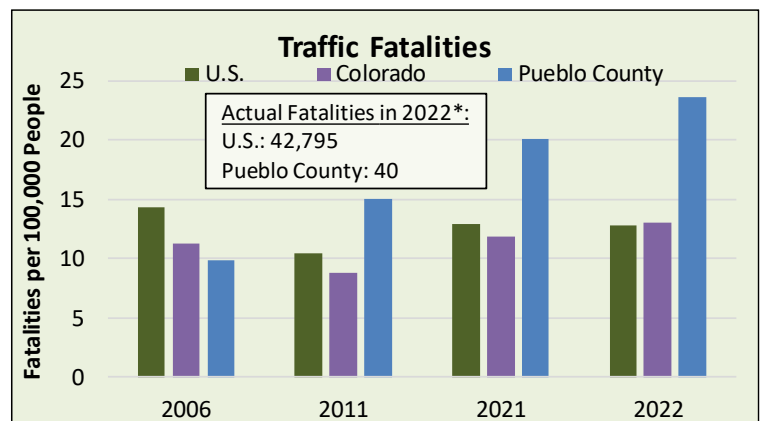
Note: Direct travel includes day and overnight visitors.

Sources: Colorado Tourism Office; Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce

## CRIME & SAFETY (PAGE 8)



Sources: United States Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Underlying Cause of Death on CDC WONDER online Database; Data-Driven Economic Strategies.



\*Preliminary data.

Sources: National Highway Safety Administration; Colorado Department of Transportation; World Bank; U.S. Census Bureau; Colorado State Demography Offices; Data-Driven Economic Strategies

2021 Mortality Rates due to Homicide per 100,000 Population				
Canada	Germany	Italy	Japan	United States
2.1	0.8	0.5	0.2	6.8

Source: UN Office on Drug and Crime's International Homicide Statistics database through The World Bank and World Population Review

Note: "Each year when Crime in the United States is published, some entities use reported figures to compile rankings of cities and counties. These rough rankings provide no insight into the numerous variables that mold crime in a particular town, city, county, state, or region. Consequently, they lead to simplistic and/or incomplete analyses that often create misleading perceptions adversely affecting communities and their residents. Valid assessments are possible only with careful study and analysis of the range of unique conditions affecting each local law enforcement jurisdiction. The data user is, therefore, cautioned against comparing statistical data of individual reporting units from cities, metropolitan areas, states, or colleges or universities solely on the basis of their population coverage or student enrollment."

- Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sworn Police Officers Per 10,000 Inhabitants in 2022	
City of Pueblo	17.8
Pueblo MSA	8.6
Cities with Population 100,000-249,999	15.7

Sources: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Report; U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division