

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



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# Denver Regional Council of Governments

## Member governments

Adams County

Town of Castle Rock

City of Glendale

Town of Parker

Arapahoe County

City of Centennial

City of Golden

City of Sheridan

Boulder County

City of Central City

City of Greenwood Village

Town of Silver Plume

City and County of Broomfield

City of Cherry Hills Village

City of Idaho Springs

Town of Superior

Clear Creek County

Town of Columbine Valley

City of Lafayette

City of Thornton

City and County of Denver

City of Commerce City

City of Lakewood

City of Westminster

Douglas County

City of Dacono

Town of Larkspur

City of Wheat Ridge

Gilpin County

Town of Deer Trail

City of Littleton

## Non-voting members

Jefferson County

City of Edgewater

Town of Lochbuie

Colorado Governor's Office

City of Arvada

Town of Empire

City of Lone Tree

Colorado Department of  
Transportation

City of Aurora

City of Englewood

City of Longmont

Regional Transportation District

Town of Bennett

Town of Erie

City of Louisville

City of Black Hawk

City of Federal Heights

Town of Lyons

City of Boulder

Town of Firestone

Town of Mead

Town of Bow Mar

Town of Foxfield

Town of Morrison

City of Brighton

Town of Frederick

Town of Nederland

City of Castle Pines

Town of Georgetown

City of Northglenn



# About the Denver Regional Council of Governments

Created in 1955 to foster regional collaboration and cooperation, the Denver Regional Council of Governments is one of the nation's oldest councils of governments. DRCOG is a voluntary association of local governments in the Denver region including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Clear Creek, Douglas, Gilpin and Jefferson counties, the City and County of Denver, the City and County of Broomfield and southwest Weld County. While DRCOG is a tax-exempt public agency, it is not a unit of government, nor does it have statutory authority to require local governments to be members or follow its plans, but it does play several essential roles.

- As the regional planning commission per Colorado state statute, DRCOG prepares Metro Vision, the plan for the physical development of the region.
- As the federally designated Area Agency on Aging, DRCOG is responsible for planning and funding comprehensive services to address the needs of the region's older adults and people with disabilities.
- DRCOG is the region's federally designated metropolitan planning organization serving, as a forum for a collaborative transportation planning process, including efforts to address the region's short-term needs and establishing and maintaining its long-term vision for transportation.

As a council of governments, DRCOG serves as a planning organization, technical assistance provider and forum for member governments to address emerging regional issues.

DRCOG members include 58 local governments, each of which has an equal voice. The region's towns, cities and counties work together to ensure the area remains a great place to live, work and play. DRCOG also has numerous partners, including regional districts; state agencies and departments; the business community; and other stakeholders representing a variety of interests.

## Mission statement

*DRCOG is a planning organization where local governments collaborate to establish guidelines, set policy and allocate funding in the areas of:*

- *Transportation and personal mobility.*
- *Growth and development.*
- *Aging and disability resources.*

## Vision statement

*Our region is a diverse network of vibrant, connected, lifelong communities with a broad spectrum of housing, transportation and employment, complemented by world-class natural and built environments.*

## About the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation

*With an innovative history similar to DRCOG's, the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation was the nation's first regional economic development entity, bringing together the entire 10-county metro Denver and northern Colorado area to promote and support the mutual growth of the region's talent and businesses.*

*When the DRCOG Board of Directors began the conversation about developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Denver region, one of the first questions its members asked was "What does the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation think about the idea?" After conversation with DRCOG staff about the purpose and function of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, staff from the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation were all in.*

## Introduction

The counties and municipalities of the Denver region have been advancing a shared aspirational vision of the future of the metro area for close to 70 years. Working together to make life better for the region's communities and residents, that vision has taken various forms over the years — most recently as a regional plan known as Metro Vision. The DRCOG Board of Directors adopted the first Metro Vision plan (Metro Vision 2020) in 1997 and has continued the dialogue about how best to achieve the plan's evolving vision ever since.

Through those decades of collaboration Metro Vision has evolved to become a living, iterative document that has embraced and expanded a variety of functions, from regional planning and land use to transportation to how the region ages. Now the Denver region is augmenting Metro Vision with a new and much-needed concept: the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

The region has a strong shared sense of its future, and the Board recognizes that the success of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy requires the coordinated efforts of local, state and federal governments; the business community; and other economic development partners, including philanthropic and not-for-profit organizations.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy does not replace the vision, need or activities of any existing regional or community economic development council; rather, it is a tool to promote regional cooperation on issues that extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy anticipates that individual community and regional economic development organizations will contribute to its outcomes and objectives through different pathways and at different speeds for shared and community-specific results. DRCOG's staff also recognizes the extraordinary partnership with Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation that resulted in the development of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy document.

# Profile of the Denver region

## Regional employment

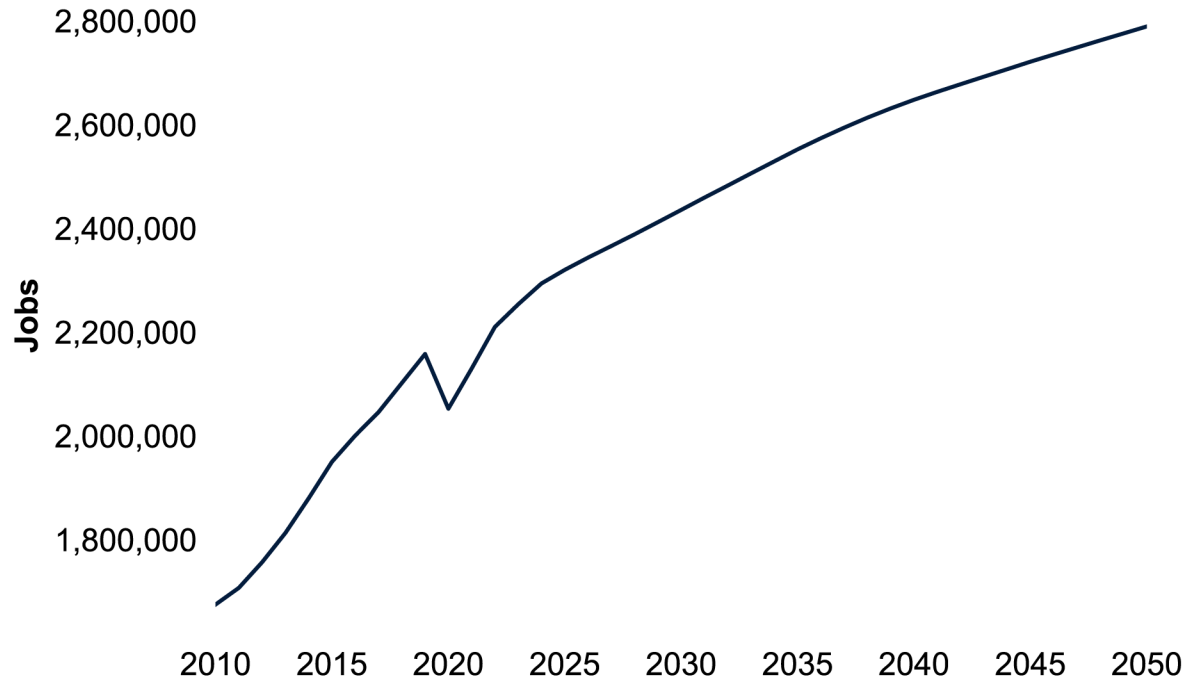
The region continues to attract skilled talent from across the entire country, but there is room for improvement in creating the skills and access to education that the region's residents need to secure a bright economic future for themselves and their families. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy will clarify the necessary upskilling, workforce development and education to provide equitable access to opportunity. One of the region's greatest challenges is to ensure existing and future residents of all ages, abilities and income levels can take advantage of such opportunities. The ease with which people can gain access to opportunities is essential.

### About the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation (continued)

*Raymond H. Gonzales, president and CEO of the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation assigned the organization's chief economist, Meredith Moon, to work with DRCOG staff on strategy development. DRCOG staff considered Meredith Moon and her team to be great partners and the resulting strategy to be better, stronger and more inclusive because of the organization's engagement.*



## Regional employment forecast



Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office. (2020) 2021-2050 Employment Forecast

**As part of its efforts to develop a regionwide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Denver Regional Council of Governments staff hosted a stakeholder meeting with members of the Economic Development Association for Black Communities. During the Aug. 29, 2023, meeting, participants discussed the strategy, the region's economy and the experiences of Black business owners.**

Credit: Jessica Hughes/DRCOG



## Diversification in industries

Many regional industry clusters — networks of businesses that drive wealth creation in the region — are outpacing employment growth across all job sectors in Colorado, according to the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation. The organization, which helps companies select sites, expand and understand metro Denver’s economic market, identifies and tracks employment growth in the region. The region’s competitive environment, transportation infrastructure and low operational costs have attracted some of the country’s most successful and diverse companies.



Photo courtesy of Comal Heritage Food Incubator.

## Regional employment by sector, 2021

Sector	Jobs	Sector share
Professional and business services	257,101	17.00%
Government	256,811	17.00%
Retail trade	176,494	11.70%
Construction	138,426	9.20%
Other services; except public administration	110,655	7.30%
Transportation and warehousing	103,243	6.80%
Finance activities	100,076	6.60%
Manufacturing	95,097	6.30%
Wholesale trade	87,319	5.80%
Information	68,845	4.60%
Education	50,966	3.40%
Arts	46,791	3.10%
Mining	9,903	0.70%
Agriculture	6,077	0.40%
Utilities	4,391	0.30%

*Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office. (2020) 2021-2050 Employment Forecast*

***As part of its efforts to develop a regionwide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Denver Regional Council of Governments staff hosted a stakeholder meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2023. Participants discussed the strategy, the region's economy and conducted an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.***

Credit: JR Goodwin/DRCOG



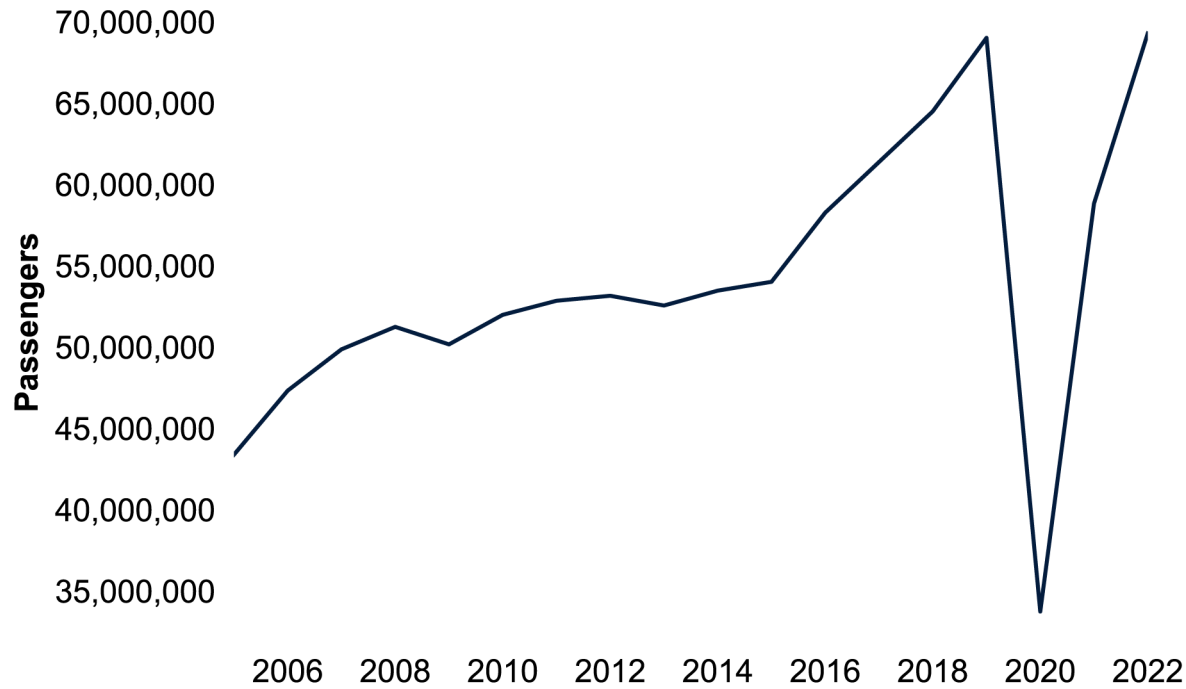
## Capturing public investment to maximize value

Airports play an essential role in fostering business growth and attracting tourists, and are significant economic engines for regions nationwide. The increasingly global nature of business means a key element in any region's success is its ability to move goods and people quickly and economically worldwide, with airports integral to this function. The Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation and Denver International Airport work collaboratively to attract international flights to the region, keeping Colorado connected to the world. Since 2010, the number of flights to international destinations (excluding Canada) have increased by 90%. Flights to Canadian destinations have decreased over the same period. Denver International Airport offers nonstop service to 200 global destinations.

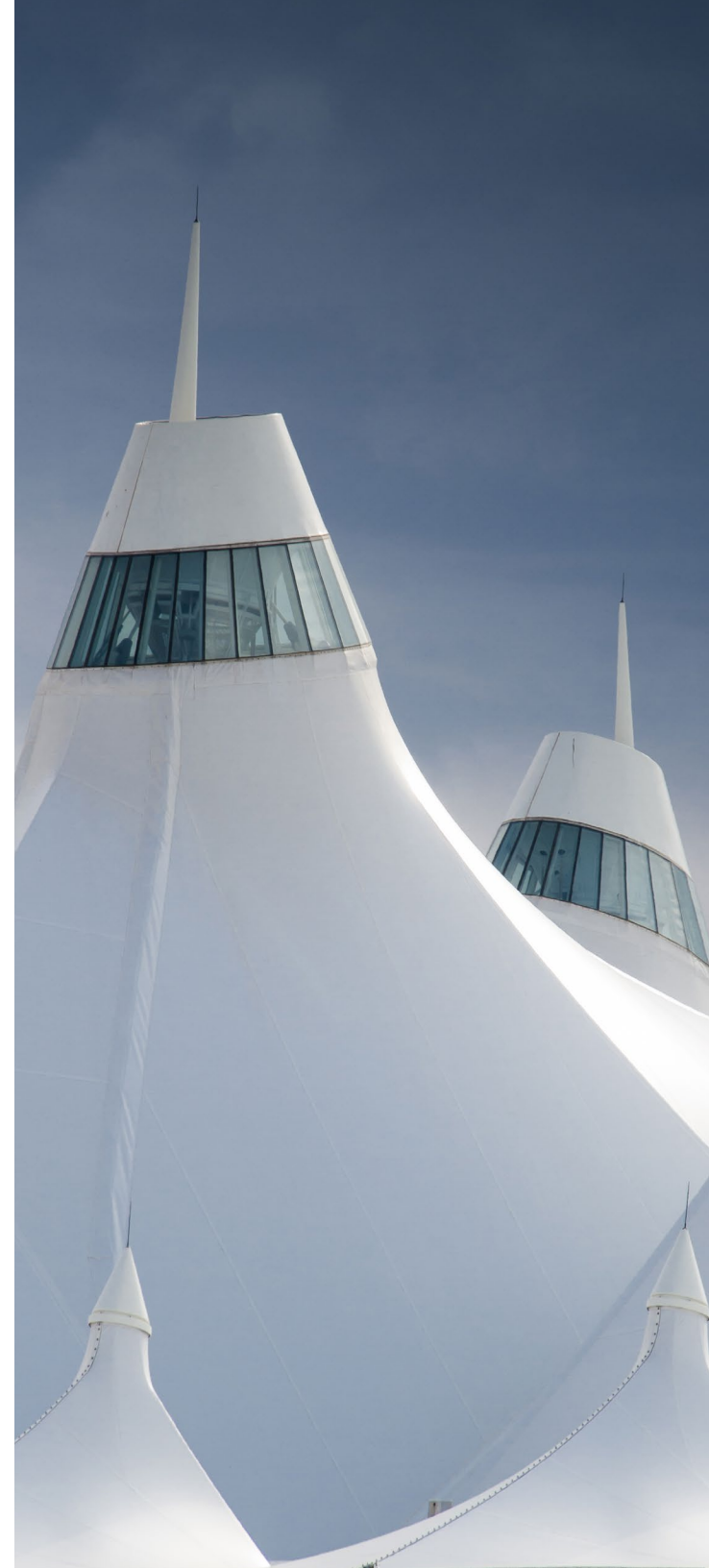


Photo courtesy of Regional Transportation District

### Annual total passengers through Denver International Airport



Denver International Airport December Operations and Traffic year-to-date totals 2005 through 2022. [https://www.flydenver.com/about/financials/passenger\\_traffic](https://www.flydenver.com/about/financials/passenger_traffic)







## Addressing affordability to ensure economic vitality.

Growth and development always come with both benefits and challenges. The success of the metro Denver region in attracting large employers and a skilled workforce, places demands on the pace of housing development. The increased demand for housing of all types puts pressure on the limited housing stock, resulting in increasing housing costs, both in terms of mortgage costs and rents. Increasing housing costs, combined with volatile and increasing costs for energy, transportation, food, health care and other necessities, poses challenges for the region's residents, especially those in lower-income or fixed-income categories.



# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy governance

## Leadership team

DRCOG created a robust leadership team to guide the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy process from start to finish. The 28-member team included representatives from the DRCOG Board of Directors, who are elected officials from across the region; the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, DRCOG's primary partner in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy project ; local government economic development offices; institutions of higher education; state government workforce and economic development entities; large private-sector employers in the region; international trade interests; the manufacturing community; chambers of commerce; minority business groups; the philanthropic sector and financial institutions.

## Stakeholder group

DRCOG also formed a stakeholder group, for which the leadership team provided suggestions for members and community organizations to include in outreach efforts. Stakeholder group representatives extended and deepened the perspectives of subject matter experts within the region to shape the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

## Focus groups

Several members of the leadership team — representatives of the Economic Development Association for Black Communities and the Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce — hosted focus group meetings to enable DRCOG staff to hear directly from community members their concerns and needs to be addressed in the Comprehensive Economic development Strategy.



## Building the partnership through collaboration

Communities throughout the region have a long history of cooperation, including taking advantage of opportunities for growth and investment that result in wide-reaching success. Each community also has its own history and legacy to enhance through investment and reinvestment. The Western values of cooperation and individualism are not at odds, rather, they can bring the region together on key growth and development issues. Collaborators also recognize that the region is stronger because of the diverse local contributions to its shared future that reflect both local and regional values.

Creating the region's first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy presents an opportunity for its local governments to build a broader, deeper, stronger, more inclusive coalition across the region. By uniting new partners and resources, strategy participants will capitalize on the collaborative spirit unique to Colorado and the West, and bolster the region's national recognition as a special place to live, work, play and raise a family.



### Leadership team members

*City of Golden*

*City of Thornton*

*City of Lakewood*

*Douglas County*

*City and County of Broomfield*

*Town of Mead*

*Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation*

*Economic Development Association for Black Communities*

*Clear Creek Economic Development Corporation*

*Colorado Department of Labor and Employment*

*Colorado Workforce Development Council*

*University of Colorado Denver*

*Jefferson County Economic Development Corporation*

*Manufacturer's Edge*

*Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade*

*City of Westminster Economic Development*

*Xcel Energy*

## Leadership team members (continued)

*Denver South*

*World Trade Center Denver*

*Asian Chamber of Commerce*

*Colorado Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*

*Port Colorado*

*Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce*

*Lockheed Martin*

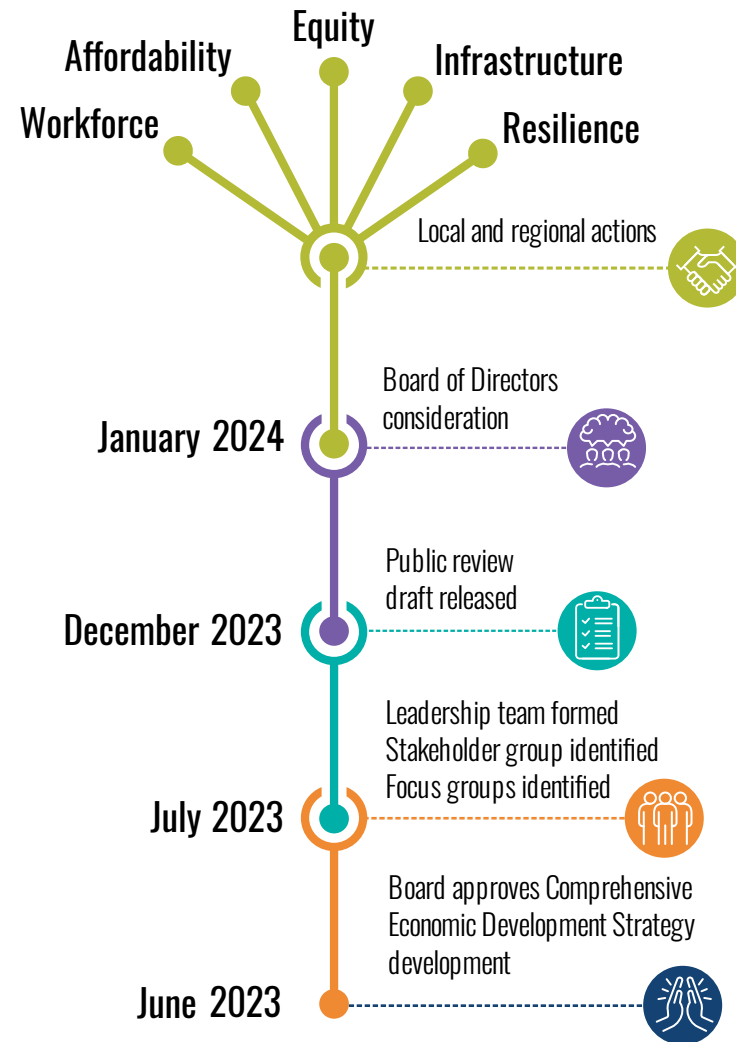
*Denver Branch Bank of the 10th District Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City*

*Denver Foundation*

*Arapahoe Community College*

*Denver Economic Development and Opportunity*

## Plan development





# Why does the Denver region need a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy?

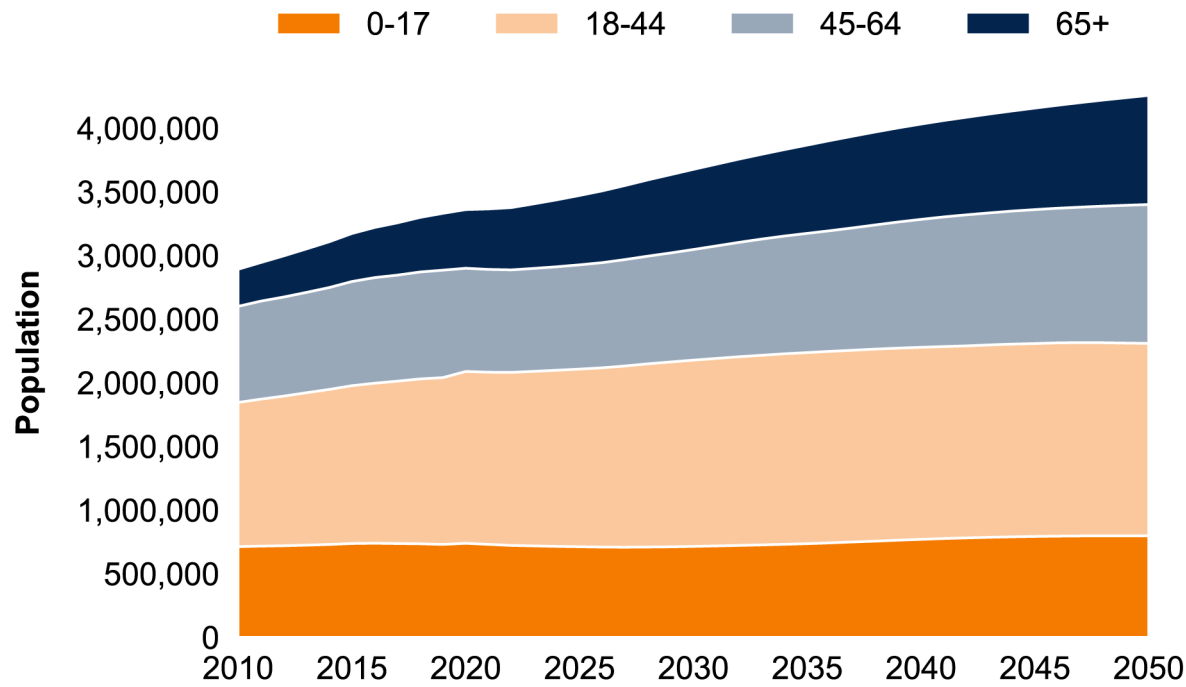
The region has continued to grow and evolve. Despite its great economic development success, challenges and unrealized opportunities have also developed and evolved over time. Recognizing continued growth and success requires addressing those challenges and unrealized opportunities, DRCOG's Board of Directors approved an effort to develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region. The strategy will ensure current and future economic development strategies at the community and regional levels will continue to succeed.

The Denver region is central to Colorado's growing reputation as a leader in innovation. Businesses and residents alike are choosing to move to — and stay in — the region because of the quality of life offered by its outstanding climate, central location, access to ever-expanding recreational opportunities, economic vitality, and diverse communities and lifestyle options.

As the region continues to grow and evolve, its residents face new and ongoing challenges to their quality of life and economic prosperity. By 2030, the region's population is forecast to increase from around 3 million to approximately 3.5 million. With growth comes increasing demands on the region's land and natural resources, and the need to continuously adapt and improve the region's infrastructure and services. Furthermore, as the region's older adult population grows, ensuring residents have access to opportunities, services and care will be essential to their well-being.

The region's 60-and-older cohort is growing at a faster rate than its entire population. By 2030, more than 1 million residents will be 60 or older. The growth among those 65 and older will pose challenges for the labor market. Demographic forecasts predict 400,000 people will retire between 2020 and 2030. Such demographic shifts also have profound implications for regional and local economic development, with an aging population changing housing and transportation needs.

### Regional population forecast by age group



Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office. (2022) 2021-2050 Population Forecast



# How is the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy organized?

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy guides DRCOG's work toward establishing a shared aspirational vision with its many partners. DRCOG's staff developed the plan's content and structure based on key stakeholder engagement activities and the themes and priorities that have guided the region's vision for the past 20 years. Throughout the plan, regional priorities are represented in a cascading series of elements, from top-level themes that describe the region's shared vision for its future down to actions that communities and individuals can take to support desired achievements.

Five overarching themes encompass the region's desired future for Economic Development. The themes organize 16 interrelated, aspirational outcomes, which describe a future DRCOG, local governments and partners will work toward together. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy links future-oriented statements to action through strategic action items.

## Listening to learn



*The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy outreach process identified perspectives and varied, individual aspirations for a vibrant, inclusive economic future for the region. DRCOG staff engaged residents, small business owners, local and regional stakeholders in addition to subject matter experts from a broad variety of the region's economic interests. More than 100 people participated in interviews, focus groups, and a stakeholder analysis to identify strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results.*



## Listening to learn (continued)

**Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce**  
*DRCOG hosted a breakfast meeting of approximately 35 women (and several men) at a local coworking space TARRA. Attendees were asked to answer a series of questions about their experience as women owners of businesses, including "What keeps you up at night?"*

### **Economic Development Association for Black Communities**

*DRCOG hosted a meeting of the Economic Development Association for Black Communities, a startup membership organization of Black business owners, many of them women, to hear about their experiences as minority business owners in the Denver region.*

## What is the region's vision? Themes and outcomes

Each of the five themes provides a destination point for the region and serves to organize how shared values are presented in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Outcomes represent a regionwide aspiration shared by DRCOG, its local governments and economic development partners. They describe a future state desired by member governments and point to areas where success can be measured.

Strategic action items are actions that DRCOG and its economic development partners, local governments and others can take to move the region closer to achieving its member governments' shared vision.

Performance measures provide an evaluation framework to ensure the region is making progress.





## Theme 1: Intentional workforce development

### Outcomes

- The region is recognized as a leader in empowering its residents to compete for and win local well-paying jobs and careers.
- Local partners, working with DRCOG, ensure there are abundant opportunities for employment in urban centers with access to transit, housing and recreation.
- The region has an adaptable, skilled workforce which embraces a culture of lifelong learning.

## Theme 2: Addressing affordability

### Outcomes

- The region encompasses a variety of diverse, livable, affordable communities.
- Diverse, affordable housing options meet the needs of the region's workforce and residents of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- All residents have access to affordable housing, health care, education, transportation, child care, older adult services, energy and healthy food.



## Establishing new partnerships

### Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce and TARRA

*Nine women founded the Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce in 1988 to give women a voice in business, support women in business and provide resources to help them succeed. Women own 10.6 million U.S. businesses and employ 19.1 million workers'— one in every seven employees. Women-owned businesses account for \$2.5 trillion in annual sales. Membership isn't restricted to women. The organization encourages membership and participation by women, transgender individuals, nonbinary people and men.*

*TARRA connects women, women-identifying, nonbinary and male allies through a professional network, private office and membership work club.*

## Establishing new partnerships (continued)

### Economic Development Association for Black Communities

*Economic development plans have spurred economic growth and mobility in communities since the birth of capitalism. Elected officials, experts and industry leaders come together to set the course for economic opportunity, claiming the rising tide from their plans will lift all ships. Yet historically and presently, Black communities remain unaccounted for in economic development plans and the growth they create. The Economic Development Association for Black Communities leads a renewed approach to Black economic development. It is dedicated to creating an inclusive American economy and with an understanding that Black communities face specific and unique challenges in our economies. To meet such challenges, the association serves as a hub for:*

- *Research and reporting around economic trends and policies.*
- *Opportunities for economic advancement such as jobs, training and entrepreneur development.*

## Theme 3: Equitable access to opportunities

### Outcomes

- There are abundant opportunities for economic and social upward mobility for residents of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- Educational opportunities for the region's residents have expanded and investments in education have made it more affordable.
- Economic diversification and diversity in employment opportunities are available to all residents and businesses in the region.
- The region promotes wealth generation and poverty reduction by ensuring access to a more equitable economy for all residents.

## Theme 4: Community infrastructure deployment

### Outcomes

- Investments in infrastructure and amenities allow people and businesses to thrive and prosper.
- The regional transportation system is well-connected, safe, reliable, well-maintained and provides affordable access to jobs and housing.

## Theme 5: A resilient, vibrant region

### Outcomes

- The region has clean air, sufficient clean water and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- The built and natural environment supports healthy and active choices, and a safe, disaster-resistant urban, suburban and rural ecosystem using people-centric design.
- The region is seen as a highly desirable place to do business.
- The region values, protects and connects people to its diverse natural resource areas, open spaces, parks and trails.



### Establishing new partnerships (continued)

- *Advocacy for actions that help Black professionals overcome long-held economic challenges.*

*The association is rooted in three pillars that guide its membership, programs and strategic action: investment, education and advocacy.*

### Possibilities for making progress together

#### Economic development forum

*Working with the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, local and regional economic development and small business development centers, an economic development forum would engage businesses owned by women, Black people, Indigenous people and people of color to identify policies and actions that would advance progress on equity, diversity and inclusion and create stable economic opportunity for unserved and underserved populations in the region.*

## Possibilities for making progress together (continued)

### Regional housing strategy

*DRCOG, working with state, regional and local partners will develop a regional housing strategy. Beginning with the development of a housing assessment, the regional housing strategy will identify key strategies, best practices and policy recommendations for local governments to use locally to address issues affecting affordability in the housing market.*

### Transit-oriented development

*Staff and elected officials from DRCOG and its member governments have long understood the strong ties between housing, employment and transportation. Metro Vision includes several strategies implementable at the regional and local levels to ensure growth and development does not occur at the cost of quality of life, protection of natural resources and the environment.*

## Regional strategic action items

Outcomes represent a shared regionwide aspiration. DRCOG, local governments, economic development and other regional partners will work together toward outcomes, each contributing in a manner appropriate to local circumstances and priorities.

To equip local governments and partners to take action toward each outcome, DRCOG staff used leadership team and stakeholder group recommendations to develop strategic action items (potential activities and contributions). The strategic action items follow each theme, organized by outcome.

Strategic action items identify specific, voluntary opportunities for various regional and local economic development organizations, intentional partners and local governments to contribute to the outcomes identified in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.



Photo courtesy of Regional Transportation District



# Evaluation framework: performance measures

## How will the region's progress be measured?

To help track progress toward the region's identified outcomes, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy establishes a series of performance measures based on:

- Relevance to outcomes and strategic action items.
- Availability of regularly updated and reliable data sources.
- Use of measurable, quantitative information, in addition to anecdotal insights.

Using regular tracking, DRCOG and its partners can verify whether their collective actions to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy are moving the region toward its desired outcomes.

For each performance measure, there is:

1. A baseline, which indicates the region's current status for that measure.
2. A 2030 target, which establishes the desired future outcome for that measure.

Relationships between performance measures and strategic action items are also indicated.

DRCOG staff will report on implementation progress using the performance measures, with reporting frequency based on data availability. Targets or the methodology for measuring success may be refined as new information becomes available or circumstances change. In addition to the performance measures, DRCOG staff will use a dynamic and flexible performance management approach. Staff will continue to research and share data and information that may illustrate progress toward shared outcomes. Staff selected 2030 as the target year for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. A 2030 target allows for sufficient time for the U.S. Economic Development Administration to approve the strategy. Staff also considered a five-year strategy update cycle and the availability of relevant data in establishing the strategy's 2030 target. The following table illustrates examples of performance measures that may be included in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.



## Performance measures

Measure	Where is the region today? (baseline)	Baseline source	Where does the region intend to be? (2030 target)
Share of the region's housing located in urban centers	12% (2021)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	15%
Share of the employment located in urban centers	38.4% (2021)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	40%
Attainment of advanced degree or training by local high school graduates	66% (2020)	2020 <a href="#">Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab Report</a>	68%
Improve graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students	71.9% (2021-2022)	<a href="#">2021-22 State Policy Report: Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement</a> , Colorado Department of Education, March 2023	75%
Percentage of income spent on quality, affordable child care	16% to 27% (2022)	<a href="#">Quality Child Care in Colorado: A Cost Study</a> ; Bell Policy Center 2022	10% to 20%
Share of the region's population lacking access to affordable, quality health care	19.5% (2021)	<a href="#">Colorado Health Access Survey 2021</a>	15%
Percent of unserved and underserved portions of the region with access to high-speed broadband (100/20Mbps)	40.3% for Gilpin County 44.2% for Clear Creek County (2023)	<a href="#">2023 Colorado Broadband Map</a> , Colorado Broadband Office	95%
Number of industry clusters and lifestyle verticals located in the region	11 (2023)	<a href="#">Metro Denver Economic Profile 2023</a> , Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation	12
Surface transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions per capita per day	18.9 pounds per capita per day (2020)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	15 pounds per capita per day
Protected open space	1,795 square miles (2021)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	1,880 square miles

# Theme 1: Intentional workforce development

Each of the region's communities contributes in different ways to the region's economy, resilience, quality of life and sense of place. As the regional economy continues to grow, maintaining local distinctions will protect the ability of residents and businesses to choose the types of communities that meet their unique needs and values. Attracting a skilled workforce and business community depends on the region offering a variety of distinctive, attractive communities to live, work and play. Equally essential are jobs located convenient to housing and transit.

Intentionally developing a regional skilled workforce is dependent upon stakeholders' ability to work together toward the following outcomes:

- The region is recognized as a leader in empowering its residents to compete for and win local well-paying jobs and careers.
- Local partners, working with DRCOG, ensure there are abundant opportunities for employment in urban centers with access to transit, housing and recreation.
- The region has an adaptable, skilled workforce which embraces a culture of lifelong learning.

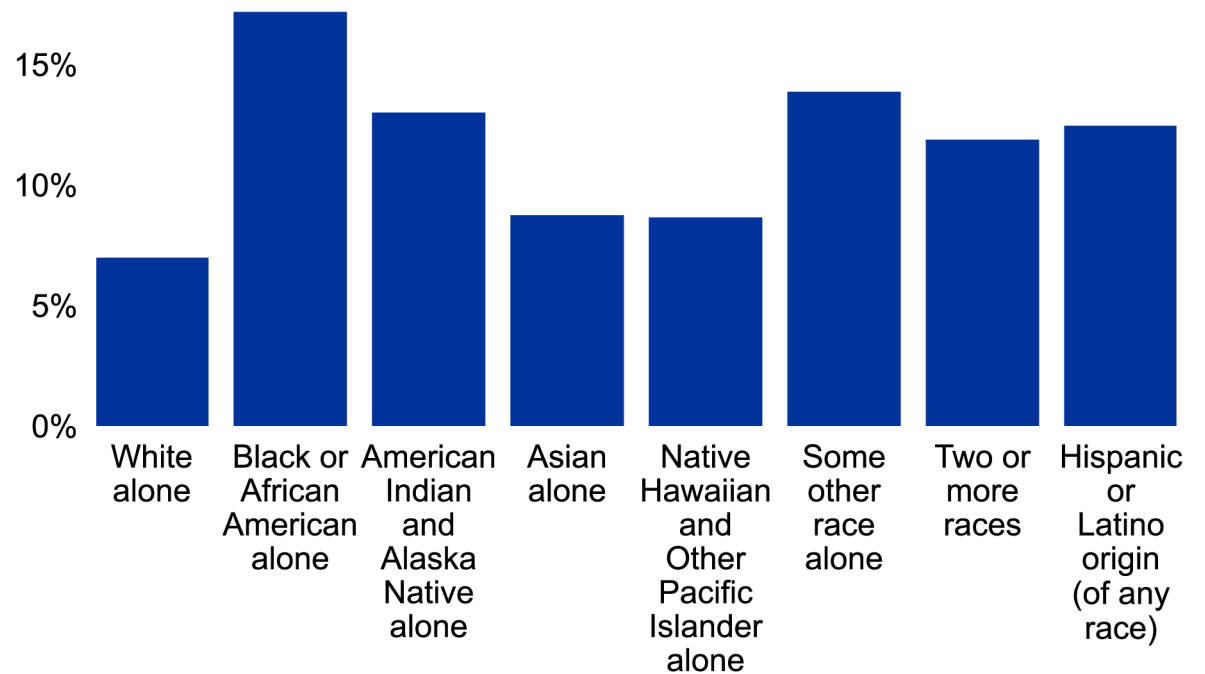
The region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy reflects that the decisions local governments and economic development interests make in determining when, where and how growth — including housing and employment opportunities — will occur are determined by local circumstances and that each community has its own view of the future.





The developers of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy anticipated that many areas in the region will experience significant change during the next five years, while other areas are well-established and likely to remain comparatively stable in terms of growth and development. The intentional workforce development theme emphasizes working with key partners and amplifying existing benefits found in the region’s numerous urban centers.

### Regional poverty rate by race and ethnicity



*U.S. Census Bureau. (2023) 2017-2021 American Community Survey, five-year estimates*

## Outcomes:

- The region is recognized as a leader in empowering its own residents to compete for and win local well-paying jobs and careers.
- Local partners, working with DRCOG, ensure there are abundant opportunities for employment in urban centers with access to transit, housing and recreation.
- The region has an adaptable, skilled workforce which embraces a culture of lifelong learning.



# Strategic action items: ideas for implementation

## Upskilling

- Enable industry led partnerships involving business, higher education, K-12 education, state and local governments and other partners to upskill employees from entry level to experienced professionals for in-demand jobs that pay a living wage and contribute to regional vitality.

## Education

- Work with a broad array of partners to identify new creative approaches to ensuring the resident population has access to educational opportunities and skill development to compete in an upscale job market.
- Ensure a comprehensive education policy incorporates collaborative partnerships with businesses to enhance curriculum relevance, foster practical skill development and provide students with real-world experiences, preparing them to seamlessly integrate into a dynamic workforce.

## Trades and partnerships

- Identify and engage organizations willing to collaborate to create opportunities for local residents to obtain training and certification in industries that may not require advanced degrees.

## Child care

- Work with organizations engaged in delivery and development of a child care workforce to identify pathways for career and wage advancement to ensure a reliable supply of equitably distributed child care centers.

## Cultivating homegrown talent

*Access for residents to jobs, and for employers to qualified workers, is fundamental to the health of the regional economy. Among the region's strengths are its well-educated labor force, major universities and ability to attract talent. Education disparities across races and between lifelong Coloradans and newcomers to the state suggest that the education system is not keeping pace with the needs of the workforce. A reliance on importing talent makes the regional economy vulnerable if it cannot provide the necessary training and opportunities for existing residents or continue to attract new talent. An untrained and underused workforce will hinder the economy, resulting in increased social service demands that divert public funds from more productive uses.*

## Urban centers

*Urban centers throughout the region vary greatly in size, context and location. Many centers are transitioning to a higher-density development pattern guided by local growth plans and aspirations. New townhomes and apartments have increased the share of the region's housing units in urban centers, while also diversifying housing options there. Urban centers are also resulting in significant numbers of new jobs. The Denver region currently has 105 urban centers representing a range of characteristics. Local planning and implementation approaches vary depending on the size of the community, transit service levels, the surrounding development context and other factors. Visit the [Metro Vision: Building places for life and work webpage](#) for more information about urban centers.*

## Diversity

- Work with the economic development community, chambers of commerce and large employers to facilitate a meeting of leaders of women and minority chambers and community groups to explore ways to increase diversity in the workforce at all levels, from classroom to boardroom.

## Equity

- Work with economic and community development interests in the region. Convene a forum that includes small businesses owned by women and people of color and the community at large to identify policies that can ensure progress on equity, diversity and inclusion.

## Transportation

- Invest in transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements to increase affordable and safe access by underserved communities to reduce car-commuting costs and dependence on automobile travel to job opportunities.

## Ageism

- Support existing efforts to address ageism in the workplace.





## Performance measures

Performance measures are essential to monitoring the region’s progress toward Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy themes and outcomes. They are used to periodically measure outcomes and results. They also generate reliable data to help member governments and partners evaluate policies, programs and initiatives.

In every meeting, focus group, interview and discussion about the development of the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, workforce availability rose to the top. But ensuring an available workforce requires intentional investment in housing location, transportation choices, availability of affordable child care and access to quality, affordable health care — a lengthy and exhaustive list of criteria! But with creative and strategic new partnerships and initiatives, the region will continue to produce and ensure a skilled, productive, engaged workforce. As part of its reporting on progress toward intentional workforce development efforts, DRCOG staff will include the following performance measures.



## Performance measures: Intentional workforce development

Measure	Where is the region today? (baseline)	Baseline source	Where does the region intend to be? (2030 target)
Share of the employment located in urban centers	38.4% (2021)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	40%
Improve graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students	71.9% (2021-2022)	<a href="#">2021-22 State Policy Report: Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement</a> , Colorado Department of Education, March 2023	75%



## Theme 2: Addressing affordability

The Denver region's growth has outstripped its development of a variety of housing types to serve the needs of the burgeoning population.

As the region continues to attract new businesses and additional workforce participants, it is quickly running out of affordable options to house them. Recent bouts of inflation have resulted in the cost of living in the Denver metro area increasing significantly as well.

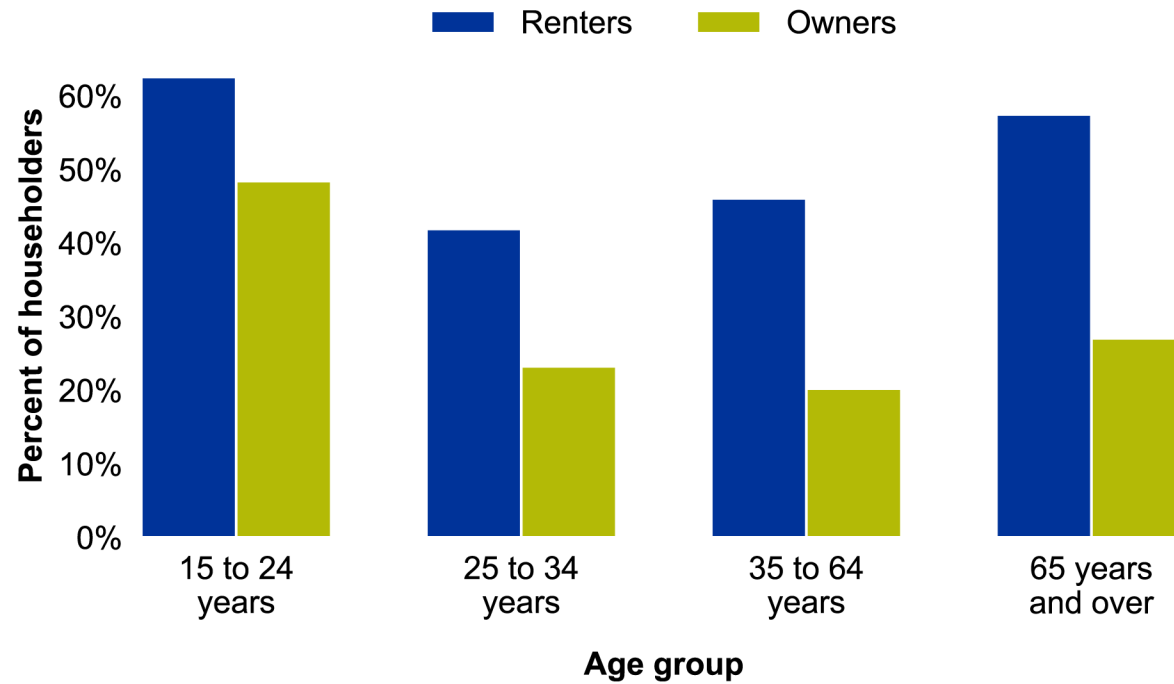
Home ownership has traditionally been the way most families create and transfer wealth, but that system has failed for significant segments of the region's population and is increasingly out of reach for the newest generations. As the demographic trend tends toward smaller household sizes, the region's housing products don't match the market shift.

Transportation and energy costs have risen, as well as the cost of food. Many families are struggling to cover such increases in addition to rising rents and housing costs.

Addressing housing availability and costs requires creative, diverse solutions, not a one-size-fits-none approach. The region's stakeholders need to work together to accomplish these regional outcomes:

- The region encompasses a variety of diverse, livable affordable communities.
- Diverse, affordable housing options meet the needs of the region's workforce and residents of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- All residents have access to affordable housing, health care, education, energy, transportation, child care, older adults services, and healthy food.

## Share of cost-burdened householders by age group and tenure

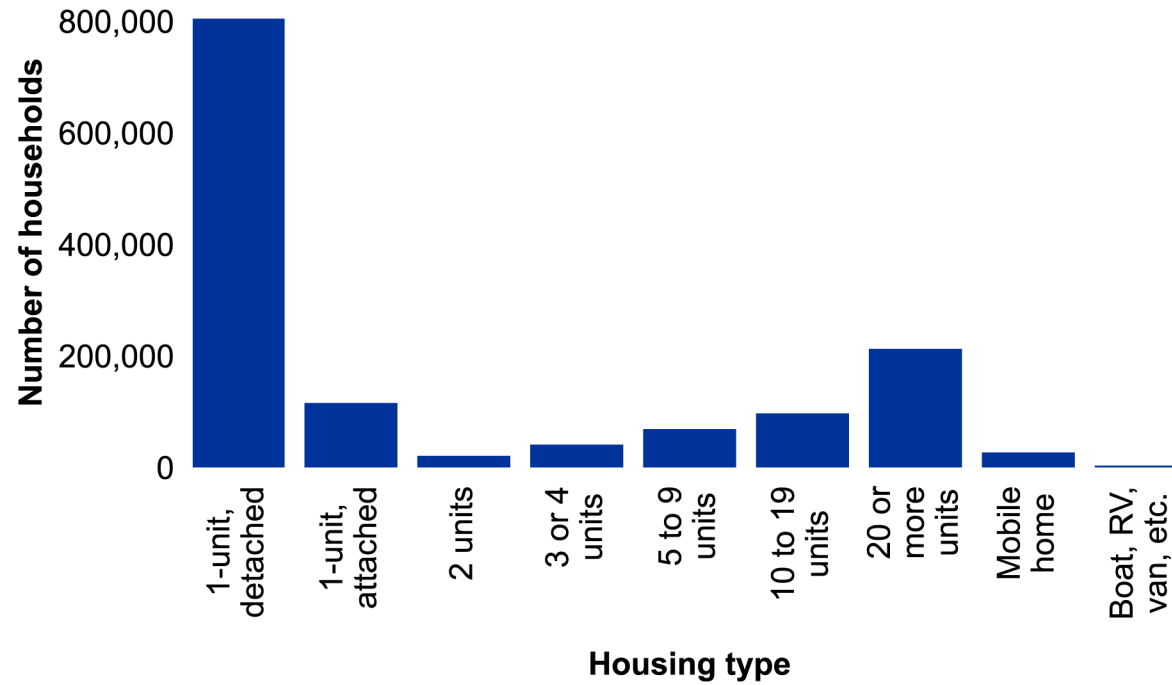


U.S. Census Bureau. (2023) 2017-2021 American Community Survey five-year estimates





## Households by housing type



U.S. Census Bureau. (2023) 2017-2021 American Community Survey, five-year estimates

## Why is affordability important?

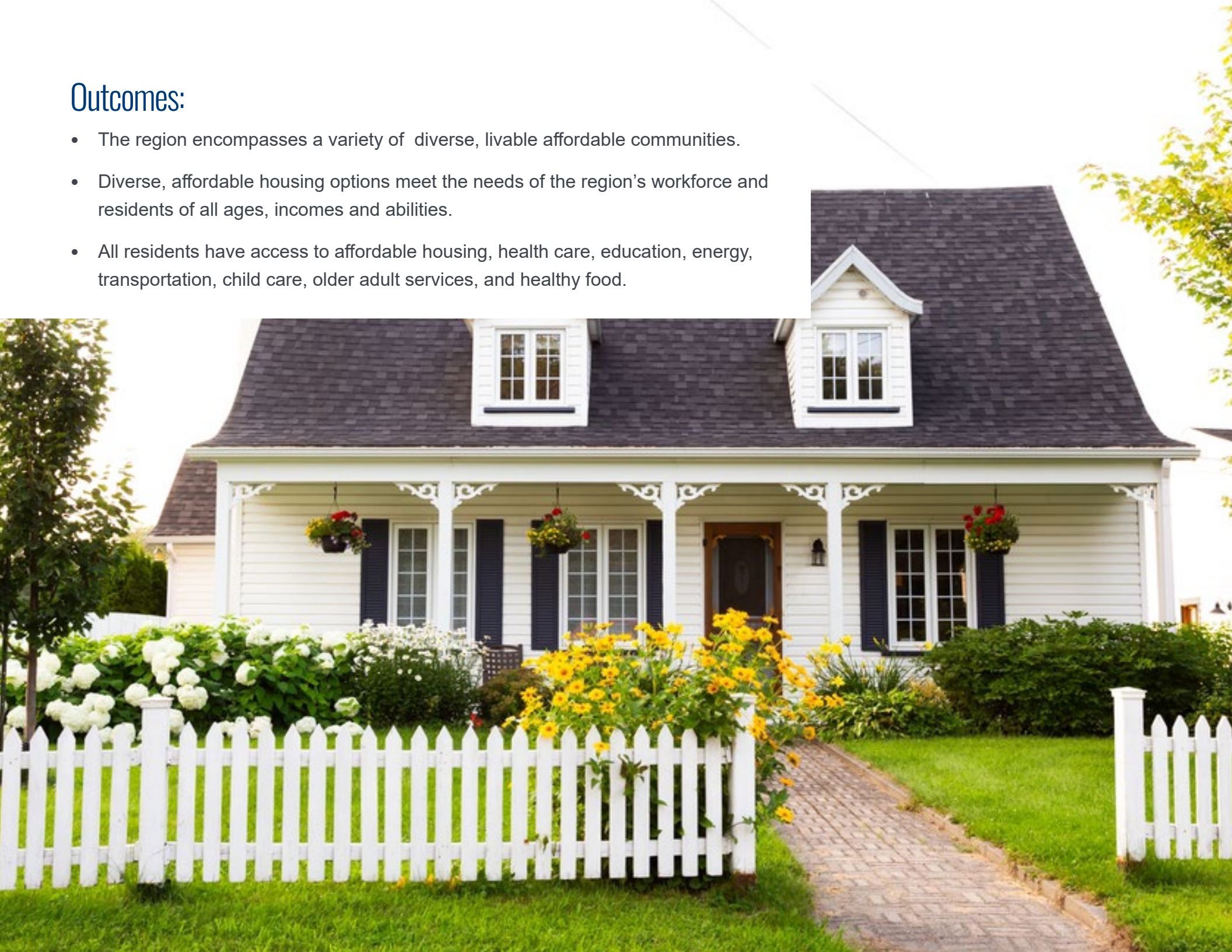


As the region continues to grow, the economic benefits of growth needs to be captured and re-invested in the workforce that is making prosperity possible. A demographic shift with residents older than 60 outpacing the those younger than 18 for the first time in the region's history adds urgency to the need for affordability. The region needs to ensure an available workforce that can meet the rising demands for both older adult services and care as well as quality child care. Workforce expansion cannot come at the expense of adding more low-wage jobs, putting affordability even further out of reach for such workers, however.



## Outcomes:

- The region encompasses a variety of diverse, livable affordable communities.
- Diverse, affordable housing options meet the needs of the region's workforce and residents of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- All residents have access to affordable housing, health care, education, energy, transportation, child care, older adult services, and healthy food.





## Strategic action items: ideas for implementation

### Housing

- Work with state, regional and local partners to develop a regional housing strategy to address affordability for rent and home ownership.

### Child care

- Work with the provider community, state agencies and other organizations involved with child care, to develop out-of-the-box solutions to address multiple needs by employing simple, cost-effective strategies.

### Health care

- Identify and convene major players that could influence the availability of easy and affordable access to health care for all residents of the region.

### Transportation

- Support and encourage efforts to reduce the cost of commuting to work, including working with the private sector to locate employment centers with ready access to existing housing, transit and active transportation corridors.
- Work with the Regional Transportation District and institutions of higher education to ensure students of all ages have access to transit services at no cost.

### Education

- Work with institutions of higher education, foundations, employers and others to identify ways to reduce cost barriers to entry without adversely affecting the financial vitality of those institutions.

## Healthy food

- Support existing and emerging efforts working to provide access to healthy food for all residents of the region.
- Work with foundations, communities and the private sector to identify creative ways to ensure the financial sustainability of community farms and gardens.

## Performance measures

Performance measures are essential to monitoring the region's progress toward Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy themes and outcomes. They are used to obtain regular measurement of outcomes and results. They also generate reliable data to help local governments and partners evaluate policies, programs and initiatives.

Housing and transportation are typically the two largest components of a household budget. Researchers at the Center for Neighborhood Technology have identified 45% of income as a key affordability benchmark for the combined costs of housing and transportation. The performance measure for this outcome will quantify the percentage of the region's residents living in areas that fall below the 45% benchmark. Staff will tie the threshold for 45% of income to the median household income for the region and will account for household size and number of commuters in a typical household in the region. As part of its reporting on progress toward achieving greater affordability for the region DRCOG staff will use the following performance measures.



## Performance measures: Addressing affordability

Measure	Where is the region today? (baseline)	Baseline source	Where does the region intend to be? (2030 target)
Share of the region's housing located in urban centers	12% (2021)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	15%
Share of the region's population living in areas with housing and transportation costs affordable to the typical household in the region	44% (2015)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	47%
Percentage of income spent on quality, affordable child care	16% to 27% (2022)	<a href="#">Quality Child Care in Colorado: A Cost Study</a> ; Bell Policy Center 2022	10% to 20%
Share of the region's population lacking access to affordable, quality health care	19.5% (2021)	<a href="#">Colorado Health Access Survey 2021</a>	15%

# Theme 3: Equitable access to opportunities

Economic vitality depends on addressing all aspects of the workforce, business and quality of life requirements in order to sustain periods of growth and prosperity and adaptation to change. Although the region has numerous strengths, including a high quality of life, strong track record of attracting skilled labor and investments in world-class infrastructure, challenges remain.

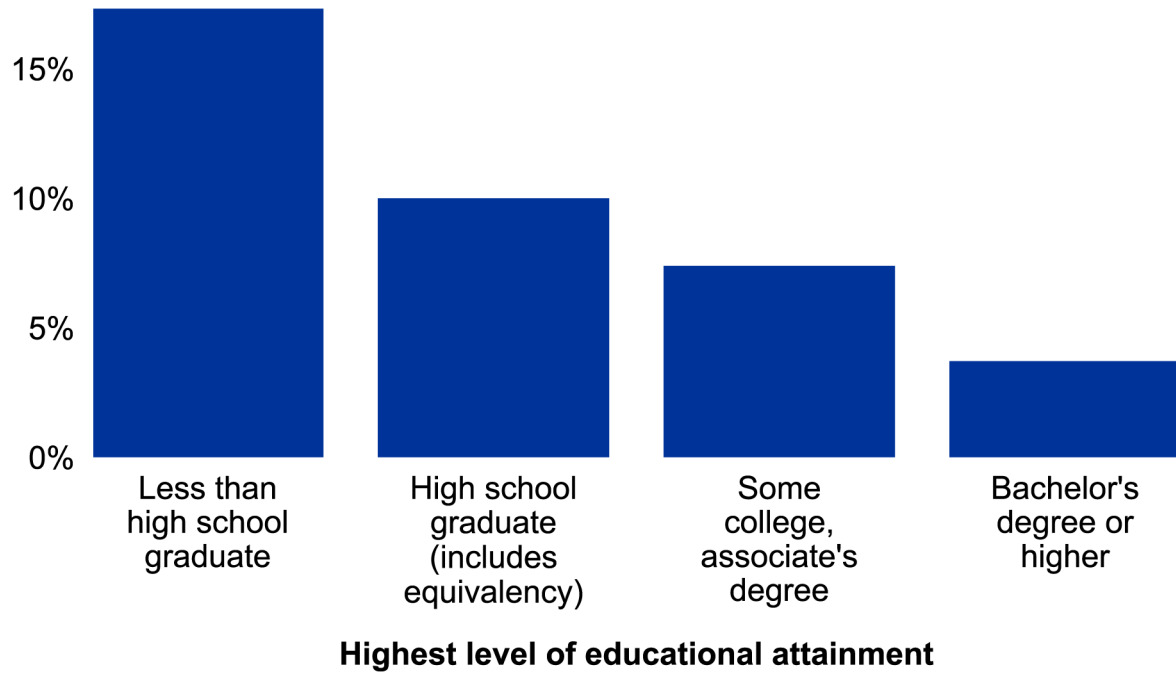
For the region to remain competitive in an increasingly global marketplace it is imperative that the region reduce its reliance on importing educated, skilled labor while lifelong Coloradans have comparatively lower levels of career attainment.

Declining housing affordability and stability for its lower-income workers affects the physical and social health of residents and employers' ability to attract and retain workers.

To create access to well-paying jobs, ensure a variety of educational opportunities are available to homegrown residents and equip new generations to achieve even greater success, the region's communities, partners and institutions need to work together to attain the following outcomes:

- There are abundant opportunities for economic and social upward mobility for residents of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- Educational opportunities for the region's residents have expanded and investments in education have made it affordable.
- Economic diversification and diversity in employment opportunities are available to all residents and businesses in the region.
- The region promotes wealth generation and poverty reduction by ensuring access to a more equitable economy for all residents.

## Regional poverty rate by educational attainment



## Attracting and retaining businesses and workers

*Businesses and residents increasingly desire to locate in regions with access to the full range of community services and amenities, such as employment, health and human services, job training, housing and mobility options, recreation, arts and culture, and participation in civic life. One of the region's greatest challenges is to ensure existing and future residents of all ages, abilities and income levels can easily take advantage of such opportunities.*

*U.S. Census Bureau. (2023) 2017-2021 American Community Survey, five-year estimates*



## Outcomes:

- There are abundant opportunities for economic and social upward mobility for residents of all ages, incomes and abilities.
- Educational opportunities for the region's residents have expanded and investments in education have made it affordable.
- Economic diversification and diversity in employment opportunities are available to all residents and businesses in the region.
- The region promotes wealth generation and poverty reduction by ensuring access to a more equitable economy for all residents.







## Strategic action items: ideas for implementation

### Economic and employment diversification

- Work with the region's economic development subject matter experts, identify opportunities for attracting clean manufacturing, new and emerging industry clusters and other job providers of well-paying jobs distributed across the region to ensure the broadest range of employment opportunities.

### Economic and social mobility

- Work with minority chambers of commerce, other economic development interests, school districts and institutions of higher education to convene an economic development forum to discuss and identify ways to provide access to resources and identify ways in which to help all communities thrive and grow.

### Education

- Work with institutions of higher education, community colleges and the business community to provide opportunities for collaboration with K-12 schools to form partnerships for mentoring, internships and training programs.

### Transportation

- Invest in transportation projects that provide jobs in underserved communities.

### Support for trades and unions

- Work with building trades and other unions and educational institutions to identify opportunities for certification or pathways toward career and wage advancement in non-degree-requiring jobs.

## Industry clusters and lifestyle verticals

*A lifestyle vertical is distinct from an industry cluster and benefits the region in two ways: social impact and economic activity. Metro Denver's two lifestyle verticals, arts, culture and entertainment and outdoor recreation, contribute to the region's distinct culture and quality of life for its residents. The region's lifestyle verticals help it retain a talented and diverse workforce across all industries and act as an economic driver by adding jobs, attracting visitors and stimulating the local economy.*

*A 2018 study funded by the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade valued the economic impact of the state's outdoor recreational industry at \$62.5 billion. A 2023 economic impact study sponsored by the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts identified arts, culture and entertainment as a \$2.6 billion contributor to the Denver region's economy.*

## Entrepreneurship

- Work with lending institutions, venture capital groups, angel investors, federal, state and local governments and other interests to encourage support for investing in startups owned by women and people of color.

## Manufacturing

- Work with local governments to use their comprehensive planning authority to identify real estate suitable for development opportunities for flex industrial and emerging industry clusters in well-suited locations.

## Access to quality health care

- Work with hospitals, clinics, schools, libraries, employers, state government, insurers and foundations to identify low-cost solutions for delivering quality, culturally sensitive health care at the neighborhood level.

## Wealth generation

- Foster partnerships between the financial community and schools, especially within districts that serve lower-income communities to create opportunities for the region's youngest residents to understand the economic power of saving and investing.
- Work with nonprofits like Economic Literacy Colorado and others, ensure the region's teachers, schools and students are equipped with an understanding of financial literacy.

## Support for businesses owned by women and people of color

- Work with state, regional and local economic development partners to ensure businesses that are owned by women and people of color have access to critical support, services and financing.

## Small business support

- Work with state, regional and local partners to explore solutions to commercial gentrification for communities and businesses.

## Public transit

- Ensure public transit systems are clean, safe and sustainable.

## Performance measures

Performance measures are essential to monitoring the region's progress toward Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy themes and outcomes. They are used to obtain regular measurement of outcomes and results. They also generate reliable data to help local governments and partners evaluate policies, programs and initiatives. As part of its reporting on progress toward creating equitable access to opportunity, DRCOG staff will use the following performance measures.

An essential aspect of intentional workforce development is making sure that all the region's residents, irrespective of socioeconomic status, have the ability to thrive and prosper and have access to the means to provide for wealth accumulation. An important element of the American dream is to be able to make sure that future generations have more advantages than current generations. Working with new partners, it should be possible for the region's communities and partners to ensure prosperity increases continue for all residents, regardless of income, age or abilities.

## Civic Academy

*In 2016, DRCOG assumed responsibility for what was then known as Citizens' Academy, an initiative of the now-defunct Transit Alliance. The seven-week, no-cost learning opportunity provides participants the opportunity to explore Metro Vision themes including transportation, economic vitality, housing and civic engagement. Weekly three-hour sessions include presentations from local subject matter experts, small-group activities and networking. In addition, participants develop individual plans for action during or after the academy.*

*With over 1,000 alumni, including numerous elected officials, DRCOG ensures residents from across the entire region, of all income levels and ethnicities have the same opportunity to participate in learning more about the robust nature of civic life in the region.*

## Performance measures: Equitable access to opportunities

Measure	Where is the region today? (baseline)	Baseline source	Where does the region intend to be? (2030 target)
Attainment of advanced degree or training by local high school graduates	66% (2020)	2020 <a href="#">Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab</a> Report	68%
Improve graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students	71.9% (2021-2022)	<a href="#">2021-22 State Policy Report: Dropout Prevention and Student Re-engagement</a> , Colorado Department of Education, March 2023	75%
Number of industry clusters and lifestyle verticals located in the region	11 (2023)	<a href="#">Metro Denver Economic Profile 2023</a> , Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation	12

# Theme 4: Community infrastructure deployment

The region's continuous investments in infrastructure support a globally connected economy and offer opportunities for all residents to share and contribute to sustained regional prosperity. Robust and successful communities, accessible and protected natural resources, and diverse cultural amenities are economic assets that make the region a highly desirable place to live, work, and raise a family.

Economic vitality depends on providing a high quality of life across the region's diverse communities. Investments in infrastructure will help ensure the region remains globally competitive by establishing and maintaining the connected multimodal transportation system on which businesses depend for access to local, national and global customers, and an available, desirable workforce. Economic and community development initiatives and activities will ensure the region's infrastructure will support and contribute to the growth of the region's economic health and vitality. While the region has created a solid foundation of mobility infrastructure, financial resources for transportation and infrastructure in all categories during the next 25 years are expected to be less than what is needed to maintain and selectively improve it. Funding for infrastructure has not kept pace with the continued growth or increase in construction costs. Additional revenue sources must be identified to fully address the future infrastructure needs and desires of the region's residents and businesses.

Achieving success in making the region's communities prosperous, inclusive and successful depends on its communities' and partners' ability to work together toward the following outcomes:

- Investments in infrastructure and amenities allow people and businesses to thrive and prosper.
- The regional transportation system is well-connected, safe, reliable, well-maintained and provides affordable access to jobs and housing.

## Cultural facilities and amenities

*In addition to traditional infrastructure investments, arts and cultural investments and amenities are rapidly emerging as foundational elements in the sustained economic health of regions. Since 1989, the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District has funded nonprofit organizations and local government agencies that provide cultural benefit to Denver area residents. The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District spans seven counties including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson. Unlike in many regions, where cultural organizations compete with each other, the Denver region's collaborative spirit results in venues, musicians, museums, galleries and troupes working together to engage, inspire and reflect the region's diversity.*

Jeannene Bragg,  
Curious Theater Company.



## Outcomes:

- Investments in infrastructure and amenities allow people and businesses to thrive and prosper.
- The regional transportation system is well-connected, safe, reliable, well-maintained and provides affordable access to jobs and housing.



## Cultural facilities and amenities (continued)

*In addition to funding large museums, the Denver Zoo, the Denver Botanic Gardens and performing arts organizations, the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District also funds hundreds of local grassroots cultural organizations. County cultural councils are instrumental in ensuring that investments in arts, culture and science occur in all communities for the benefit of all citizens.*



## Strategic action items: Ideas for implementation

### Housing

- Work with strategic partners, state and local agencies, and members of the community, to develop a regional housing strategy to identify barriers to development of a wide variety of affordable housing options for both renters and potential homeowners.
- Create a menu of options for local and state government to make affordable housing projects easier to initiate and minimize risk.

### Broadband

- Work with state and local level officials to plan for and secure funding for deployment of high speed, reliable, affordable broadband across the entire region to facilitate economic development, educational opportunities and access to advanced health care for all residents.

### Transportation

- Target investments to ensure the region's transportation network is multimodal, safe, efficient and minimizes negative environmental effects.

### Water and sewer

- Take advantage of federal and state funding to upgrade and modernize existing water and sewer infrastructure and ensure new infrastructure is future-proofed and well-maintained.

### Transit

- Address first- and final-mile challenges and improve interconnectivity with the region's multimodal network.



## Microgrids

- Share information about beneficial applications of microgrid and renewable energy technology by working with federal, state and private sector partners.

## Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

- Invest in transportation improvements, like wayfinding signage and completing gaps in bicycle/pedestrian pathways to enhance opportunities for active transportation across the region.

## Performance measures

Performance measures are essential to monitoring the region's progress toward the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy themes and outcomes. They are used to periodically measure outcomes and results. They also generate reliable data to help member governments and partners evaluate policies, programs and initiatives.

Community infrastructure is a broad and inclusive category that fundamentally underpins what makes communities attractive for families, workers and businesses. But deploying and maintaining infrastructure is time consuming, costly and often inconvenient to neighborhood residents. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated why providing infrastructure like high-speed broadband is such a critical component of community infrastructure. The Denver region's residents' healthy, active lifestyles also require significant investment in safe, protected active transportation corridors and trails. Performance measures quantify the current level of infrastructure investment as well as establishing targets for 2030 in terms of regional active transportation corridors and high-speed broadband. As part of its reporting on progress toward making strategic community infrastructure investments, DRCOG staff will use the following performance measures.

## Increasing travel access and choice

*The Denver region continues to make significant investments in transit, such as the Regional Transportation District's FasTracks transit system while also envisioning future intra- and inter-regional transit connections. Although the completed portions of the FasTracks program have expanded regional mobility, such improvements cannot be fully realized without easier connections for those walking, biking, driving, sharing a ride, or riding a bus to first- or final-mile connections to transit. The region and local jurisdictions continue to increase the viability of walking and bicycling by expanding the bicycle and pedestrian network and providing additional supportive infrastructure. Providing various travel choices can help reduce vehicle miles traveled, ground-level ozone and other air pollutants, which can lead to improved individual and environmental health. A transportation system that serves users of all travel modes also helps ensure that people of all ages, income levels and abilities remain connected to their communities and have the means to access services, amenities and employment opportunities.*

## Performance measures: Community infrastructure deployment

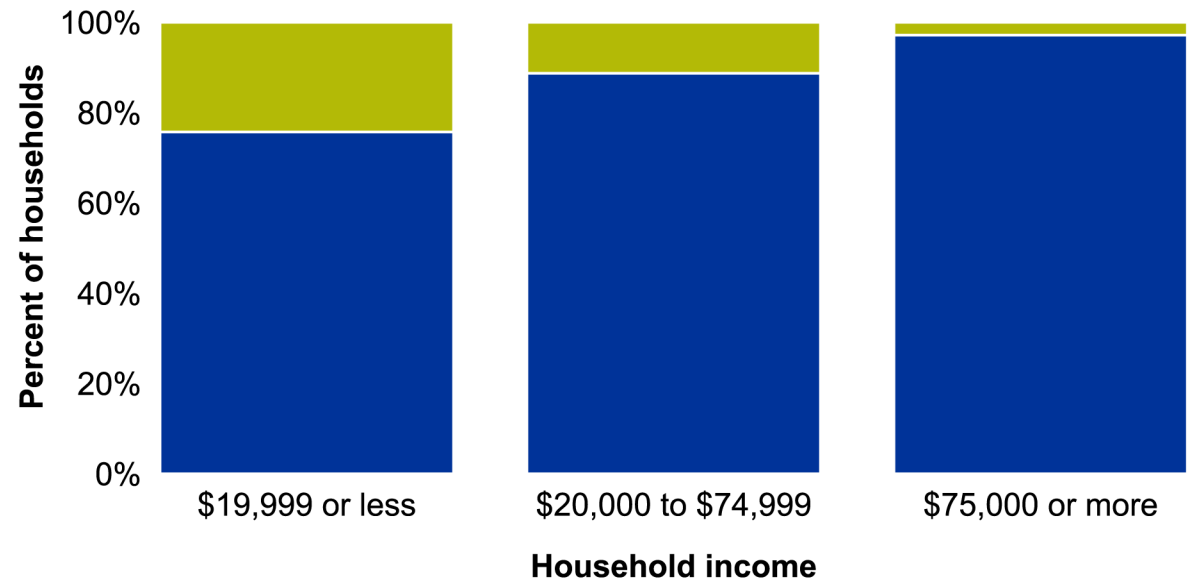
Measure	Where is the region today? (baseline)	Baseline source	Where does the region intend to be? (2030 target)
Percent of unserved and underserved portions of the region with access to high-speed broadband (100/20Mbps)	40.3% for Gilpin County 44.2% for Clear Creek County (2023)	<a href="#">2023 Colorado Broadband Map</a> , Colorado Broadband Office	95%
Miles of existing regional active transportation corridors	684 miles (2018)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	750 miles (10% increase)





## Broadband access by household income

■ With broadband    ■ Without broadband



*U.S. Census Bureau. (2023) 2017-2021 American Community Survey, five-year estimates*

# Theme 5: A resilient, vibrant region

An economically sustainable region balances economic vitality, environmental quality and a high standard of living for its residents. A sustainable economy is also resilient — economic downturns are less severe and recovery is faster. The benefits of economic health, vitality and growth expand opportunities for all residents in a sustainable economy.

The underpinnings of a sustainable and resilient region and economy include all the region's assets: physical infrastructure and transportation, quality of life and amenities, an education system that supplies skilled labor and is accessible to all, the ability to attract and retain talented workers and innovators, a high-quality built environment, and housing options that are accessible and affordable for all ages, incomes and abilities. Maintaining a vibrant region and economy depends upon the region's communities' and partners' ability to work together toward the following outcomes:

- The region has clean air, sufficient clean water, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- The built and natural environment supports healthy and active choices, and a safe, disaster-resistant urban, suburban and rural ecosystem using people-centric design.
- The region is seen as a highly desirable place to do business.
- The region values, protects and connects people to its diverse natural resource areas, open spaces, parks and trails.

The Denver region is home to an extensive network of economic development professionals engaged in business recruitment, expansion and retention efforts. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy creates a regional growth framework that ensures the underpinnings of a sustainable and resilient economy are considered by regional and local decision-makers. The outcomes and strategic action items in the “A resilient, vibrant region” section support the ongoing efforts of the many economic development organizations and local governments that promote the vitality of the region and reinforce essential connections between such groups.



**Nearly all the amenities at LaVern M. Johnson park in Lyons were damaged or destroyed during the September 2013 floods. In response, the town built a diversion structure and eight whitewater park structures. Not only do the enhancements reduce the likelihood of future flooding, they also improve fish habitat and provide recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, such as this kayaker.**

Photo courtesy of Town of Lyons.

## Increasing community resilience

*Resilient communities withstand, and recover quickly from, shocks and stresses with minimal outside assistance. According to research in support of the state’s resilience-planning efforts, resilient communities have shifted planning away from one-time events toward recognition of hazards as ongoing and routine features of environmental systems and accepting uncertainty as part of planning. Community size and geographic location; technical, administrative and financial capacity; and community goals influence hazard and resilience planning. Planning for resilience, environmentally and economically is a collaborative approach among elected and appointed officials, economic development professionals, health departments, land use planners, first responders, emergency planners, public works staff, residents, community advocates, business owners, developers and numerous other stakeholders. Sharing lessons learned from past incidents helps inform communities preparing for the next event.*

## Outcomes:

- The region has clean air, sufficient clean water, and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- The built and natural environment supports healthy and active choices, and a safe, disaster-resistant urban, suburban and rural ecosystem using people-centric design.
- The region is seen as a highly desirable place to do business.
- The region values, protects and connects people to its diverse natural resource areas, open spaces, parks and trails.



## Strategic action items: ideas for implementation

### Building and zoning codes

- Streamline permitting, development and regulatory processes to encourage rapid deployment of affordable housing, strategic private sector investment and primary job creation by providing predictable, uniform legal and regulatory guidelines.

### Homelessness

- Work with local, regional and statewide subject matter experts, local communities, the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, the Salvation Army and other service providers, the philanthropic sector and the state attorney general's office to identify small steps that can be implemented locally to reduce homelessness in the region and seek to identify major policies that get in the way of making progress.

### Safety

- Explore how other communities have addressed the gap between crime statistics and the public perception of safety then work with local communities, community advocacy organizations, institutions of higher education and first responders to identify potential solutions for closing the gap.

### Quality of life

- Encourage development that creates a superior live-work-play community with ready access to parks, open space, safe trails and nature.

### Water quality and quantity

- Increase collaboration with local and regional partners on water quality issues, including storm water management, and maximize the efficient use of municipal and industrial water.

## Anticipating the unanticipated

*In May 2015, Gov. Hickenlooper adopted the Colorado Resiliency Framework, establishing a vision and definition of resilience for the state. The framework identifies guiding principles and outlines specific strategies including a resilience plan that provides for an annual progress report.*

*In 2016, the Colorado Department of Local Affairs released Planning for Hazards: Land Use Solutions for Colorado. It provides guidance to Colorado counties and municipalities for integrating resilience and hazard mitigation into plans, codes and standards related to land use and the built environment. The state's resilience planning efforts provide a framework for communities in the Denver region as they assess threats and refine local strategies to become more resilient.*

## Anticipating the unanticipated (continued)

*In 2020, The Colorado Resiliency Office released an updated Colorado Resiliency Framework. That document, in combination with the office's Resiliency Playbook provides a guide for state agencies to incorporate resilience into specific programs. The office also facilitates the integration of resilience and community recovery programs into the work of other state agencies.*

### Hazard mitigation

- Increase use of best practices in land use planning and management to decrease risk.

### Air quality

- Increase collaboration with local and regional partners, including the business community on air quality initiatives.

### Health and wellness

- Identify opportunities for the region to deploy and implement Healthy Cities strategies.

### Environment

- Working with regional organizations such as Metro Denver Nature Alliance, Denver Botanic Gardens and others, create a region where both people and the environment thrive and grow.





## Performance measures

Performance measures are essential to monitoring the region's progress toward Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy themes and outcomes. They are used to periodically measure outcomes and results. They also generate reliable data to help local governments and partners evaluate policies, programs and initiatives.

Resilient economies, environments and communities don't happen overnight. Resilience requires planning and depends on a population that has strength of character and determination to succeed. While that largely describes the residents of the DRCOG region, it can always do better, be more prepared, be more flexible and more tolerant. And that will take all the region's combined resources to make it happen. As part of its reporting on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy progress toward creating a resilient, vibrant region, DRCOG staff will use the following performance measures.



## Protecting air quality

*Growth in the region represents significant challenges to the quality of the region's natural environment. As more residents and businesses call the region home, the need for travel increases. This contributes to a persistent problem in the region: air pollution, including ozone.*

*Ground-level ozone is formed when emissions from everyday items combine with other pollutants and "cook" in heat and sunlight. Sources of such emissions include industry; power plants; oil and gas production; gasoline-powered vehicles; and lawn equipment. At ground level, ozone is a health hazard, especially for the young, elderly and people with pre-existing respiratory conditions, such as asthma.*

*Notable progress has been made, but the effects of air pollution are wide-ranging, putting at risk individual health, the experience and value of the region's outdoor assets, and the ability of its economy to grow.*

## Performance measures: A resilient, vibrant region

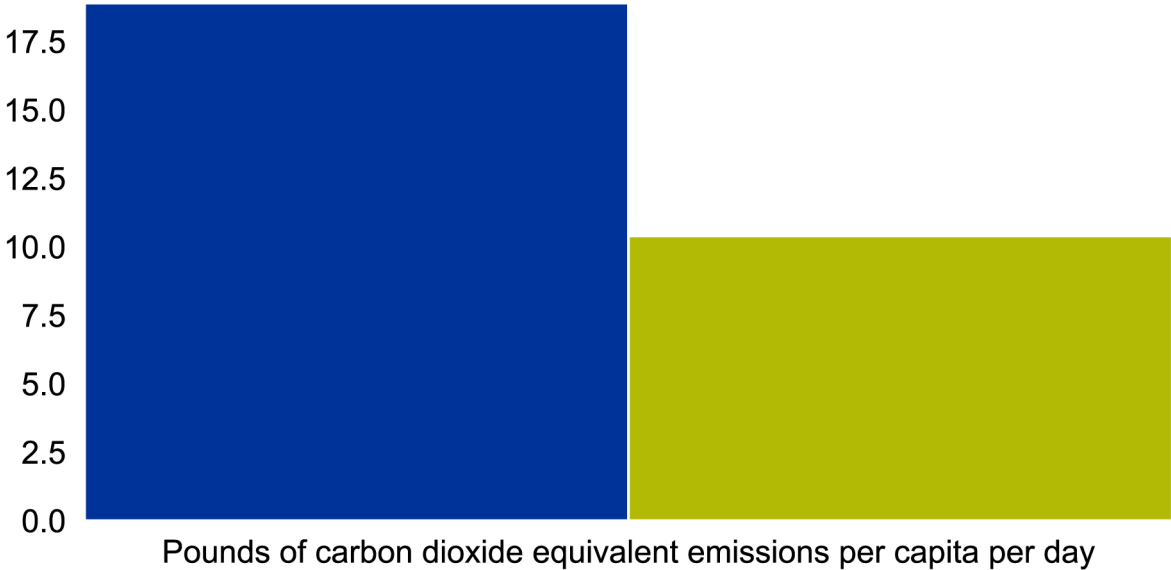
Measure	Where is the region today? (baseline)	Baseline source	Where does the region intend to be? (2030 target)
Surface transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions per capita per day	18.9 pounds per capita per day (2020)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	15 pounds per capita per day
Protected open space	1,795 square miles (2021)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	1,880 square miles
Share of the region's housing in high-risk areas	1.0% (2021)	<a href="#">Metro Vision</a>	Less than 0.8%





### Surface transportation greenhouse gas

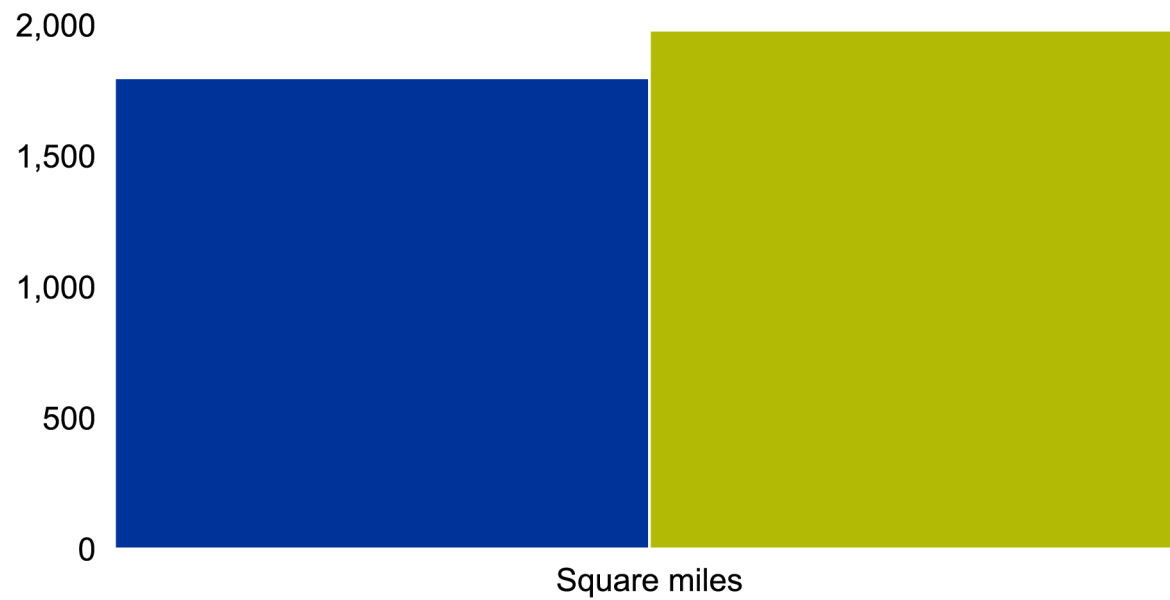
■ Baseline (2020)    ■ Target (2040)



*Metro Vision*

## Protected open space

■ Baseline (2020)    ■ Target (2040)



*Metro Vision*





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