

2026-5-24

Colorado has a growing list of turnoffs, including affordability.

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The Denver Gazette · 24 May 2026 · B8 · THE GAZETTE EDITORIAL BOARD

Colorado is now the nation's fourth-most-expensive state to live in and third-least-attractive in which to open new businesses.

Let those stats soak in.

That's No. 47 for affordability and No. 48 for new businesses per thousand residents.

As The Denver Gazette reports, the Colorado Chamber of Commerce's Colorado Scorecard charted the state 34th in affordability just four years ago. It has worsened every year since.

Colorado ranks 48th for housing affordability, dropping from 41st in 2021. A Denver Gazette analysis shows the median listing price of a single-family home was over \$600,000 in Boulder, Broomfield, Douglas, Elbert and Jefferson counties at February's end.

Annual median incomes in those areas range from \$140,100 to \$150,600 for a family of four.

These aren't just statistics. Coloradans everywhere are feeling the strain.

"Ever since the pandemic, prices have risen and won't come down," El Paso County real estate agent Allison Hunter told The Denver Gazette's news staff.

A higher cost-of-living baseline seems to have been baked in. Now, Hunter is considering moving to a more affordable state.

No wonder the nonpartisan Common Sense Institute reports net in-migration to Colorado is now a mere 20th what it was in 2015.

Colorado ranks seventh in economic performance, according to the institute, but its "competitive momentum" has taken real hits, weighed down by excessive regulation and other policies that have forced costs upward.

A new report from Advance Colorado concludes the state is "at an inflection point," noting Colorado is 38th in cost of doing business and 50th for net employment loss per capita.

As The Denver Gazette reports, Colorado's "net establishment births" of businesses per thousand residents ranked 48th in 2024 — losing a net 3,934 business establishments.

"This is not just a down year that we're having in Colorado," DJ Summers, Common Sense Institute's director of research operations, told The Denver Gazette's opinion podcast, "The OpEdge."

Affordability remains a key factor in discouraging businesses from setting up shop, Summers said — noting Colorado's longstanding status as a Silicon Valley in the mountains will "be compromised if people can't live here anymore."

That reputation is also hampered by actions such as the Denver City Council's recent vote declaring a moratorium on new data centers for a year.

Meanwhile, a large data center project in Colorado Springs at a former Intel chip plant directly addresses every concern Denver claims.

Excessive electricity use? It will use at most half the electricity the site drew when it was an Intel plant.

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Costs passed onto other ratepayers? The company will pay a large-load tariff to Colorado Springs utilities so others aren't footing the bill.

Draining water? That's limited by a closed-loop system that only needs to be filled once.

Point by point, the Springs data center meets Denver's concerns, yet Colorado's largest city is shutting out new business opportunities in a fast-growing sector.

This same government-knows-best mindset extends beyond Denver, driving Gov. Jared Polis and the Democratic legislature to build an ever-expanding regulatory state.

As a result, Colorado now ranks as the sixth most regulated state and 36th on Chief Executive's Best & Worst States for Business.

"It cannot market itself anymore on simply the fact that we have 300 days of sunshine, lots of good ski resorts and cool breweries," Summers said. "That used to be enough. Colorado can't sell itself like that anymore."

In large part, we can thank our state's misguided policymakers. From one legislative session to the next, they have piled on business-busting, inflation-inducing policies. They've made doing business here less attractive to job creators, and living here less affordable to workers.

Can't lawmakers see the writing on the wall?