

## Boulder remains at top of the list

### “BEST PLACES TO LIVE”

#### Denver, Fort Collins, Colorado springs drop amid pandemic

By Aldo Svaldi

*The Denver Post*

Last year, Colorado boasted four metro areas among the top 10 in U.S. News & World Report’s “Best Places to Live” list, no small accomplishment. But the pandemic has changed things up a bit on this year’s list, which rates the 150 most populous U.S. metro areas based on affordability, job prospects, desirability and net migration.

Boulder remains in the top spot for the second year in a row, but 2020 was not kind to Denver’s ranking, which dove from second to 14th or to Fort Collins’ ranking, which tumbled from fifth to 17th. Colorado Springs dropped from fourth to sixth.

“This year we’re looking at how the most populous metro areas in the U.S. fared for much of the coronavirus pandemic and seeing how far they’ll need to come to recover,” said Devon Thorsby, real estate editor at U.S. News, in a release accompanying the report.

He said metro areas where un-

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employment levels skyrocketed the most last year fell in the rankings, while those with greater employment stability fared well. Cities like Denver and Austin, Texas, were also downgraded for rising living costs, which was an important component in the “value” score.

“Housing affordability is always of great concern, but as people solidify their plans to work remotely, struggle to find a house in a hot housing market or consider a cross-country move, a low cost of living is even more important,” Thorsby said.

Denver had the worst of all worlds: an above-average surge in unemployment and higher rates of home price appreciation. Denver’s scores for value, desirability, net migration, quality of life and job market all decreased.

Raleigh-Durham, N.C., moved up nine spots to claim Denver’s old slot at second. And Huntsville, Ala., which snagged the headquarters of the U.S. Space Command from front-runner Colorado Springs in January surged 12 spots to No. 3, surpassing Colorado Springs. The claim that Colorado Springs should keep the U.S. Space Command because it is a better place to live than Huntsville will be harder to make after the new ranking.

Boulder is more expensive than the other Colorado metros in the ranking, hurting its “value” score, which ranked only 6 on a scale of 1 to 10. But it made up for it with a high 8.2 quality- of-life score. Its economy also held up better last year than that of other Colorado metros. Boulder had the lowest unemployment rate among Colorado’s metro areas in May at 4.7%. Denver, by contrast, came in at 5.9%, according to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. Aldo Svaldi: 303-954-1410, [asvaldi@denverpost.com](mailto:asvaldi@denverpost.com) or @AldoSvaldi

# Denver Post: After Colorado springs deep amid pandemic

By Alan Swartz

The Denver Post

Last year, Colorado posted the second-best job growth among the top 10 states, *Wall Street Journal* reported. That was in large part because of a rebound in the construction sector, but the pandemic has changed things on a bit on the year's list, which gives the 10 best states a new ranking for job growth, productivity and other factors.

Bottom reports in the top spot for the second year in a row, but 2020 was not kind to Denver's ranking, which fell from second to fifth or to fourth, ranking a bit higher than fifth in 2019. Colorado Springs dropped from fourth to sixth.

"This year we're looking at how the most populous states across the U.S. fared for most of the coronavirus pandemic and seeing how far they've come to recover," said Devon Tibbitts, chief economist at U.S. News, in a release accompanying the report.

The analysis was done by

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employment levels rebounded the most last year in the rankings, while those with greater employment stability fared well. Texas the best performer, Texas was also downgraded for its higher rate of job loss in non-manufacturing in the second year.

"Finding alternatives in ways of great concern, but as good as solidly their plans to work remotely, struggle to find a home in a hot housing market or consider a cross-country move, a lot of hiring is even more important," Tibbitts said.

Texas had the most of all workers in government, manufacturing and other sectors of those states, representing 10% of the state's workforce, according to the report.

Texas-Dubai, Texas moved up the spot to fourth, while Florida, which had the highest number of jobs in the state, moved from first to second. Texas moved from second to first, and Florida moved from third to second. The report also noted that Colorado Springs should keep its U.S. ranking, but that it will be far from the top ranking.

Florida is more expensive than the other U.S. states in the ranking, having its "value" score, which ranked only a one of 10, but it also has a high quality-of-life score. Its economy also had up better last year than that of other Colorado metro. Florida had the lowest unemployment rate among Colorado's metro areas in May at 4.7%, Denver by contrast came in at 5.7%, a parity to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. (800-854-1411) [www.coloradodol.com](http://www.coloradodol.com) or @coloradodol

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