Douglas County Economic Development Quarterly Report – 1st Quarter 2024





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Executive Summary

Economic indicators continue to report mixed trends in Douglas County. Employment indicators reported growth across the county, while retail activity and both residential and commercial real estate markets remained slow amid high interest rates and continued vacancy struggles for office properties.

Employment in Douglas County increased 3.2 percent year-over-year in the fourth quarter of 2023. Across supersectors, transportation, warehousing, & utilities reported the strongest growth rate, while education & health services and government added the most jobs over the period. The information and wholesale trade supersectors reported the largest declines in employment.

The **unemployment rate** in Douglas County was 3.6 percent in the first quarter of 2024, up 0.9 percentage points year-over-year. Douglas County had the second-lowest unemployment rate among the seven counties in Metro Denver, behind only Boulder County. The labor force in Douglas County contracted in the first quarter of 2024, falling 0.2 percent or by 446 people working or looking for jobs.

Retail trade activity, which is not adjusted for inflation, decreased 14.8 percent year-over-year in the first quarter of 2024, driven largely by a decrease in general merchandise retailers, which makes up the largest category of retail sales activity. The strongest growth in retail spending was reported in food & beverage retailers and food services & drinking places.

Home sales in Douglas County remained nearly unchanged between the first quarter of 2023 and 2024, falling 0.5 percent or by 7 home sales, driven by a decrease in attached home sales. **Home prices** in Douglas County rose year-over-year for both attached and detached homes. The average sale price for detached homes in Douglas County rose 3.9 percent to an average of \$849,101, while attached home prices rose 3.0 percent to \$510,425 over the same period.

The number of **residential units permitted** decreased 17.3 percent in the first quarter of 2024, with decreases in permitting activity across all building types.

Douglas County's **commercial real estate market** was mixed in the first quarter of 2024, with continued challenges in the office market. The vacancy rate for office properties rose to 15.0 percent in 1Q 2024, up 2.0 percentage points year-over-year, while the average lease rate for office properties rose 3.5 percent to \$27.94 per square foot. Industrial properties reported a decrease in the vacancy rate, falling 2.4 percent to 3.0 percent vacancy in the first quarter of 2024, while flex and retail properties reported nearly unchanged vacancy rates.

Covered Employment by Industry Supersector 4th Quarter 2023 1							
	Douglas	County	Metro Denver				
	4th Qtr 2023			Yr/Yr % Change			
Total All Industries	146,965	3.2%	1,802,300	1.8%			
Private Sector							
Mining & Logging	460	2.0%	11,712	-5.4%			
Construction	11,270	2.8%	111,275	1.7%			
Manufacturing	2,443	2.0%	89,607	-3.0%			
Wholesale Trade	5,985	-4.0%	86,377	-0.5%			
Retail Trade	18,063	0.4%	157,388	1.8%			
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	3,092	21.1%	83,547	3.9%			
Information	4,534	-6.2%	59,659	-5.8%			
Financial Activities	14,736	-0.6%	117,934	-2.2%			
Professional & Business Services	28,595	1.3%	361,045	1.0%			
Education & Health Services	19,304	7.4%	230,490	4.5%			
Leisure & Hospitality	18,048	5.4%	189,669	2.7%			
Other Services	4,970	13.2%	56,059	5.4%			
Government	15,403	7.4%	247,295	5.2%			

Note: Industry data may not add to all-industry total due to rounding, suppressed data, and employment that cannot be assigned to an industry. Source: Colo. Dept. of Labor and Employment, Labor Market Information, QCEW.

¹ Jobs covered by unemployment insurance as reported in the QCEW. These positions represent the vast majority of total employment, although the self-employed, some agricultural workers, some domestic workers, and several other categories of workers are excluded. This data series lags the CES series by about six months and is available for the nation, states, MSAs, and counties.

Unemployment Rates							
Douglas Castle Rock Parker Metro Denver Colorado U.S. County							
1Q 2024	3.6%	3.8%	3.6%	3.9%	3.9%	3.4%	
1Q 2023	2.7%	2.9%	2.6%	3.1%	3.1%	3.8%	

Sources: Colo. Dept. of Labor and Employment, Labor Market Information; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Business Confidence Index

CU Boulder Leeds Business School released their Business Confidence Index ahead of Q2 2024 in which business leaders expressed positive perceptions across all components, after reporting negative perceptions in all components ahead of Q1 2024 (50 = neutral). The index increased from 45.3 in Q1 2024 to 53.7 ahead of Q2 2024. Business leaders cited general economic conditions, politics, and interest rates among the most pressing factors.

- The index was highest for industry sales and lowest for hiring.
- Looking out further to Q3 2024, the index registered 53.0, with all six components remaining in positive territory.

The Business Confidence Index surveys business leaders on their sentiments in six key components: the state economy, national economy, industry sales, profits, and hiring in their specific industry, and capital expenditures.

Employment Activity

Employment in Douglas County increased 3.2 percent between the fourth quarters of 2022 and 2023, rising by 4,615 jobs over the year. Ten of the 13 supersectors reported increases in employment during the period, with the largest increases in transportation, warehousing, and utilities (+21.1 percent), other services (+13.2 percent), and government (+7.4 percent). Information (-6.2 percent) reported the largest over-theyear decrease, followed by wholesale trade (-4.0 percent) and financial activities (-0.6 percent).

Employment in Metro Denver increased 1.8 percent between the fourth quarters of 2022 and 2023. Eight of the 13 supersectors reported over-the-year increases, led by other services (+5.4 percent), government (+5.2 percent), and education and health services (+4.5 percent). Information reported the largest decrease of 5.8 percent.

Unemployment

The Douglas County unemployment rate was 3.6 percent in the first quarter of 2024, up 0.9 percentage points from the same quarter in 2023. The county's unemployment rate rose 0.6 percentage points from the previous quarter. Castle Rock's unemployment rate (3.8 percent) and Parker's rate (3.6 percent) also increased year-over-year, each rising by 1.0 percentage point.

The labor force contracted in all three geographies year-over-year. The labor force in Douglas County fell 0.2 percent year-over-year in 1Q 2024, a decrease of 446 people working or looking for a job. Castle Rock lost 49 workers from its labor force (-0.1 percent) and Parker lost 59 workers (-0.2 percent).

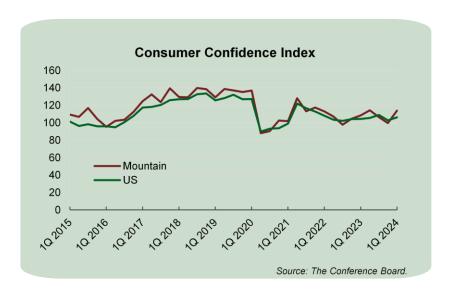
Metro Denver's unemployment rate was 3.9 percent in the first quarter of 2024, up 0.8 percentage points from the same quarter in 2023, and up 0.7 percentage points from the previous quarter. The labor force in Metro Denver fell 0.1 percent year-over-year, representing 2,095 fewer individuals working or looking for a job during the period. The Colorado and U.S. unemployment rates rose to 3.9 and 4.1 percent, respectively, in 1Q 2024, marking a 0.8 percentage point rise in the state, and a 0.4 percentage point decrease in the U.S. The labor force increased 0.4 percent in Colorado and 0.7 percent nationally over the same period.

Consumer Activity

Consumer Confidence Index

Colorado is included in the Mountain Region Index, which reported a 5.1 percent increase in confidence in the first quarter of 2024 compared with the same time last year. Over the quarter, confidence in the Mountain Region increased 14.4 percent.

The Consumer Confidence Index for the U.S. rose 1.7 percent over the year to 106.3 in the first quarter of 2024. Over the quarter, the national index rose 3.5 percent. According to analysts at the conference board, consumers' assessment of the present situation improved at the end of Q1, but they became more pessimistic about the future.



Retail Trade

Retail trade sales in Douglas County reached nearly \$2.4 billion in 1Q 2024, a 14.8 percent year-over-year decrease, not adjusted for inflation. Six of the 10 industry subgroups reported declines in sales year-over-year, with the largest declines reported in general merchandise retailers (-36.6 percent), furniture and home furnishing retailers (-13.5 percent), and clothing accessories stores (-12.1 percent). The largest increase was reported in food and beverage retailers (+6.2 percent), followed by food services and drinking places (+3.8 percent) and motor vehicle and parts dealers (+2.3 percent).

Across Metro Denver, retail sales decreased 1.5 percent year-over-year in the first quarter of 2024. The largest decline was reported in gasoline stations and fuel dealers (-18.8 percent), followed by clothing and clothing accessories stores (-7.0 percent) and furniture and home furnishing retailers (-6.3 percent). The largest increases were reported in sporting goods and hobby retailers (+9.1 percent) and food services and drinking places (+3.7 percent).

Retail Trade Sales (\$000s) by Industry & Municipality 1st Quarter 2024						
Industry	Douglas County	Metro Denver				
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	\$421,005	\$3,730,296				
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	\$140,291	\$1,057,556				
Food and Beverage Retailers	\$341,184	\$3,133,769				
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliance Retailers	\$125,019	\$979,081				
General Merchandise Retailers	\$665,963	\$4,426,900				
Health and Personal Care Retailers	\$89,427	\$966,865				
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	\$50,312	\$495,134				
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, and Jewelry Retailers	\$118,703	\$751,369				
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Misc Retailers	\$173,268	\$1,886,099				
Food Services and Drinking Places	\$233,664	\$2,489,741				
Total Retail Trade Sales	\$2,358,836	\$19,916,810				
Total Retail Trade Sales, 1Q23	\$2,769,920	\$20,214,942				
Year-Over-Year Percent Change	-14.8%	-1.5%				

Source: Colorado Department of Revenue.

Residential Real Estate

Existing Home Sales

Home sales fell modestly in Douglas County between the first quarter of 2023 and 2024. Over the period, existing home sales in Douglas County declined 0.5 percent, or by 7 homes, driven by a decline in single family attached home sales and offset by an increase in single family detached home sales.

Single-family detached home sales in Douglas County rose 2.4 percent over the year, rising by 27 homes during the period. Two of the six submarkets reported decreases in detached home sales, led by Parker (-7.6 percent), and Castle Pines (-6.0 percent). Castle Rock (+7.7 percent) and Lone Tree (+5.0 percent) reported increases in detached home sales, while Highlands Ranch and Larkspur reported no change over the year.

The number of single-family attached home sales in Douglas County fell 13.9 percent between the first quarters of 2023 and 2024, or a decline of 34 homes sold. Three of the six submarkets recorded decreases in attached sales over the period, with the largest decline in Castle Rock (-17.3 percent). Castle Pines reported the only increase in attached home sales, rising 85.7 percent, or by 6 homes.

Existing Homes - Average Sales Price

Home prices increased in Douglas County between the first quarters of 2023 and 2024. The average sale price of a single-family detached home rose 3.9 percent, or an increase of \$31,995, to \$849,101 in Douglas County. Four of the six submarkets recorded increases in detached home prices over the year, with the largest increases recorded in Larkspur (+24.1 percent), Castle Pines (+15.3 percent), and Lone Tree (+12.8 percent). Castle Rock (-4.5 percent) and Highlands Ranch (-3.0 percent) recorded the only decreases over the period.

The price of a single-family attached home in Douglas County increased 3.0 percent over the year, rising by an average of \$14,989 to \$510,425. Two of the six submarkets recorded over-the-year increases in attached home prices. Castle Rock reported the largest over-the-year increase of 8.4 percent, followed by Highlands Ranch (+0.8 percent). Lone Tree reported the largest decline in average price of 8.0 percent over the period.

Douglas County Existing Home Sales 1st Quarter 2024								
	Douglas County Submarkets							
	Castle Pines	Castle Rock	Highlands Ranch	Larkspur	Lone Tree	Parker	Douglas County	
Home Sales								
Single-Family Detached								
1Q 2024	47	336	193	14	21	339	1,130	
1Q 2023	50	312	193	14	20	368	1,103	
Single-Family Attached								
1Q 2024	13	43	47	0	11	79	211	
1Q 2023	7	52	55	0	11	92	245	
Average Sold Price								
Single-Family Detached								
1Q 2024	\$1,151,464	\$795,305	\$798,932	\$1,255,286	\$1,319,591	\$801,370	\$849,101	
1Q 2023	\$998,324	\$832,861	\$823,430	\$1,011,505	\$1,169,527	\$731,217	\$817,106	
Single-Family Attached								
1Q 2024	\$582,679	\$517,030	\$544,189	-	\$585,864	\$459,049	\$510,425	
1Q 2023	\$608,614	\$477,021	\$540,136	-	\$636,841	\$460,511	\$495,436	

Source: Denver Metro Association of REALTORS

Residential Real Estate continued

Foreclosures

Foreclosure filings in Douglas County fell 10.5 percent over the year to 51 filings during the first quarter of 2024, a decrease of 6 filing during the period. Filings increased 27.5 percent over the quarter. Foreclosure filings in Metro Denver fell 5.5 percent over the year to 620 total filings, representing a decrease of 36 foreclosures during the period.

Building Permits

Residential building permits in Douglas County fell 17.3 percent between the first quarters of 2023 and 2024, declining by 150 units permitted. The decline was driven by a decrease in multi-family units permitted. Multi-family permits reported a 56.9 percent decrease in units permitted during the period, falling by 287 units, while single family attached permits reported a 4.7 percent decrease, falling by 3 units permitted. An increase in single family detached permits offset those declines, with an increase of 46.8 percent from 299 units permitted in the first quarter of 2023 to 439 units permitted in the first quarter of 2024.

Two of the nine submarkets reported over-the-year decreases in residential building permits. Parker reported a decline of 78.0 percent, or 383 units permitted. Unincorporated Douglas County reported a decline of 14.5 percent, or 66 units permitted. Castle Pines and Castle Rock reported the largest increases in building permits, increasing 28.6 percent and 23.5 percent, respectively, over the period.

The average valuation of single-family detached units permitted in Douglas County fell 4.1 percent over the year to \$421,351, representing \$17,936 less per home during the period. Castle Pines recorded the highest average valuation for single-family detached homes at \$650,881, while Aurora reported the lowest valuation at \$241,179. The average valuation for single-family attached units fell 6.6 percent to \$276,245 in Douglas County, while the average valuation for multi-family units was \$127,004 in the first quarter of 2024, an increase of 22.2 percent from the first quarter of 2023.

Douglas County Residential Building Permits									
1st Quarter 2024									
			_	Single-Family Single-Family Detached Attached			Multi-Fa	mily	
	Total Units 1st Qtr 2024	Total Units 1st Qtr 2023	Units	Avg. Valuation per Unit	Units	Avg. Valuation per Unit	Permits	Units	Avg. Valuation per Unit
Aurora	18	17	18	\$241,179	-	-	-	-	-
Castle Pines	45	35	33	\$650,881	12	\$239,307	-	-	-
Castle Rock	126	102	100	\$531,339	3	389,877	1	23	\$176,393
Highlands Ranch	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
Larkspur	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
Littleton	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
Lone Tree	32		31	425,098	1	246,536	-	-	-
Parker	108	491	37	\$548,723	35	\$309,231	2	36	\$209,197
Unincorp. Douglas	388	454	220	\$329,720	10	\$174,004	1	158	\$96,966
Total Douglas County	717	867	439	\$421,351	61	\$276,245	4	217	\$124,004

 $Note: Excludes\ permits\ for\ residential\ construction\ activity\ that\ does\ not\ affect\ overall\ housing\ inventory.\ Source:\ Douglas\ County\ and\ individual\ municipalities.$

Commercial Real Estate

Office Market

The vacancy rate for the office market in Douglas County rose 2.0 percentage points to 15.0 percent between the first quarters of 2023 and 2024. The vacancy rate increased across all submarkets that reported office vacancies. Castle Pines had the largest increase of 19.0 percentage points, followed by Highlands Ranch, which reported an increase of 1.9 percentage points. Highlands Ranch reported the highest vacancy rate of 21.8 percent in 1Q 2024, while Castle Rock reported the lowest vacancy rate of 4.3 percent. The office market vacancy rate in Metro Denver was 14.0 percent in the first quarter of 2024, an increase of 1.3 percentage points from the same period in 2023.

The average lease rate in Douglas County rose 3.5 percent to \$27.94 per square foot between the first quarters of 2023 and 2024. Castle Rock reported the only increase in the average lease rate, rising 4.2 percent to \$28.92 per square foot. Castle Pines reported the largest rent decrease, falling 9.2 percent to \$28.59 per square foot. The average lease rate in Metro Denver increased 0.3 percent to \$31.15 per square foot, \$3.21 higher than the lease rate in Douglas County.

Industrial Market

The industrial market vacancy rate in Douglas County was 3.0 percent in the first quarter of 2024, down 2.4 percentage points from the first quarter of 2023. Parker reported the highest vacancy rate of 11.1 percent, a decrease of 1.0 percentage points over the year. Highlands Ranch reported the lowest vacancy rate of 0.3 percent. Metro Denver reported a vacancy rate of 7.1 percent in the first quarter of 2024, up 0.7 percentage points from the same period in 2023.

The average lease rate for the industrial market in Douglas County decreased 0.3 percent over the year to \$13.31 per square foot in the first quarter of 2024. Castle Rock and Parker were the only submarkets to report average lease rates in 1Q 2024, with Castle Rock's rate falling 0.2 percent to \$13.24, and Parker's rate rising 18.0 percent to \$14.05. Metro Denver reported an industrial lease rate of \$11.23 per square foot, an increase of 11.2 percent and \$2.08 lower than the rate in Douglas County in the first quarter of 2024.

Flex Market

Douglas County reported a flex vacancy rate of 3.4 percent in the first quarter of 2024, up 0.2 percentage points from the same time last year. Three submarkets recorded increases in the flex market vacancy rate, led by Castle Rock, where the vacancy rate rose 15.0 percentage points to 15.1 percent. Metro Denver reported a vacancy rate of 7.7 percent in the first quarter of 2024, up 1.4 percentage points from the same time last year.

The average flex lease rate in Douglas County rose 26.7 percent to \$16.41 per square foot between the first quarters of 2023 and 2024. Lone Tree reported the only increases over the year of 1.6 percent. Parker and Highlands Ranch reported the largest decreases in the average lease rate, falling 5.9 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively. Metro Denver reported a 5.8 percent increase in the flex lease rate between the first quarters of 2023 and 2024, rising to \$16.13 per square foot during the period.

Retail Market

The retail vacancy rate in Douglas County fell 0.1 percentage points to 2.4 percent between the first quarters of 2023 and 2024. Two of the six submarkets reported increases in the vacancy rate. Highlands Ranch reported the largest increase in the vacancy rate, rising 0.4 percentage points to 3.2 percent, followed by Castle Rock (+0.2 percentage points). Retail vacancies in Metro Denver rose 0.2 percentage points to 4.0 percent during the period.

The average lease rate in Douglas County rose 4.9 percent over the year to \$27.07 per square foot in the first quarter of 2024. Lone Tree reported the largest over-the-year increase of 12.1 percent, followed by Castle Pines (+6.6 percent). Highlands Ranch reported only decline, falling 2.3 percent to \$29.46 per square foot during the period. The retail lease rate in Metro Denver rose 0.4 percent over the year to \$20.54 per square foot, \$6.53 below the level in Douglas County.

Commercial Real Estate continued

Douglas County Commercial Vacancy and Lease Rates by Property Type 1st Quarter 2024						
	Total Existing	Sq. Footage	Vacancy Rate		Avg. Lease Ra	te (per sq. ft.)
	1st Qtr 2024	1st Qtr 2023	1st Qtr 2024	1st Qtr 2023	1st Qtr 2024	1st Qtr 2023
Office						
Castle Pines	55,102	55,102	19.3%	0.3%	\$28.59	\$31.48
Castle Rock	1,330,795	1,330,795	4.3%	2.5%	\$28.92	\$27.76
Highlands Ranch	1,998,206	1,998,206	21.8%	19.9%	\$31.86	\$31.89
Larkspur	27,953	27,953	-	-	-	-
Lone Tree	3,445,499	3,445,499	8.0%	6.6%	\$28.22	\$28.65
Parker	1,238,836	1,238,836	11.3%	9.9%	\$26.78	\$28.32
Total Douglas County	14,071,527	14,071,527	15.0%	13.0%	\$27.94	\$27.00
Metro Denver	205,157,643	204,184,819	14.0%	12.7%	\$31.15	\$31.07
Industrial						
Castle Pines	-	-	-	-	-	-
Castle Rock	1,530,285	1,408,587	3.9%	4.5%	\$13.24	\$13.26
Highlands Ranch	450,277	450,277	0.3%	7.2%	-	-
Larkspur	30,509	30,509	-	-	-	-
Lone Tree	36,686	36,686	-	-	-	-
Parker	1,088,130	1,067,371	11.1%	12.1%	\$14.05	\$11.91
Total Douglas County	8,531,251	8,388,794	3.0%	5.4%	\$13.31	\$13.35
Metro Denver	263,303,103	256,171,492	7.1%	6.4%	\$11.23	\$10.10
Flex						
Castle Pines	-	-	-	-	-	-
Castle Rock	361,041	292,359	15.1%	0.1%	\$23.19	-
Highlands Ranch	351,307	351,307	0.5%	-	\$15.43	\$16.00
Larkspur	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lone Tree	156,116	156,116	3.9%	2.0%	\$13.50	\$13.29
Parker	258,348	228,471	4.9%	3.8%	\$14.41	\$15.31
Total Douglas County	2,805,874	2,707,315	3.4%	3.2%	\$16.41	\$12.95
Metro Denver	49,805,223	49,411,755	7.7%	6.3%	\$16.13	\$15.25
Retail						
Castle Pines	310,696	310,696	0.9%	1.4%	\$24.00	\$22.52
Castle Rock	4,289,979	4,253,127	2.6%	2.4%	\$26.34	\$25.00
Highlands Ranch	3,571,151	3,571,151	3.2%	2.8%	\$29.46	\$30.14
Larkspur	27,435	27,435	-	-	-	\$32.00
Lone Tree	4,442,297	4,442,297	3.0%	3.7%	\$38.51	\$34.36
Parker	4,701,388	4,686,998	1.2%	1.3%	\$22.28	\$21.83
Total Douglas County	19,131,361	19,078,119	2.4%	2.5%	\$27.07	\$25.80
Metro Denver	181,620,037	181,068,247	4.0%	3.8%	\$20.54	\$20.46

Note: Vacancy rate and average lease rate are for direct space only (excludes sublet space). Industrial and retail lease rates are triple-net. N/A indicates non-applicable; - indicates no data. Source: CoStar Realty Information, Inc.

Nonresidential Development Activity

Douglas County building officials issued permits for at least 119,423 square feet of nonresidential space valued at approximately \$28 million during the first quarter of 2024. The largest project was a Whole Foods retail building in Parker that will 49,178 square feet of space valued at \$7.1 million.

DC Commercial Building Permits Issued, 1st Qtr 2024						
Jurisdiction	Project Description	Valuation	Total Sq. Ft.			
Castle Rock	Primary Care Clinic	\$5,000,000	10,500			
Castle Rock	Medical Office Building	\$9,404,000				
Castle Rock	Dental Office	\$2,430,000	5,140			
Castle Rock	Mixed Use Building #8	\$4,047,892	29,605			
Parker	Whole Foods	\$7,108,188	49,178			

Source: Douglas County and individual municipalities.

Certificates of completion or occupancy were issued for 198,882 square feet of nonresidential space during the first quarter of 2024, an increase of over 167,000 square feet from the same period last year. The largest project now ready for occupancy is the Parker Water and Sanitation Building, which includes offices, laboratory space, and warehouse space, with over 127,000 square feet of space.

DC Commercial Certificates of Occupancy Issued 1st Quarter 2024					
Jurisdiction	Project Description	Total Sq. Ft.			
Castle Rock	McDonalds Restaurant	5,096			
Castle Rock	Chipotle Restaurant	2,316			
Castle Rock	Pizza Hut Restaurant	1,649			
Parker	New Horizon Academy Childcare Facility	12,985			
Parker	Learning Experience Early Childhood Facility	10,115			
Parker	Everbrook Academy Day Care	12,723			
Parker	Rocky Mountain Preschool	9,418			
Parker	McDonalds Restaurant	5,328			
Parker	Breaks Plus Store	4,862			
Parker	7-Eleven Convenience Store	4,100			
Uninc	Parker Water and Sanitation Office	127,060			
Uninc	Stone Creek Ranch Community Clubhouse	3,230			

Source: Douglas County and individual municipalities.

Provided by:

Douglas County Department of Community Development 100 Third St.; Castle Rock, CO 80104 303-660-7460; www.douglas.co.us

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