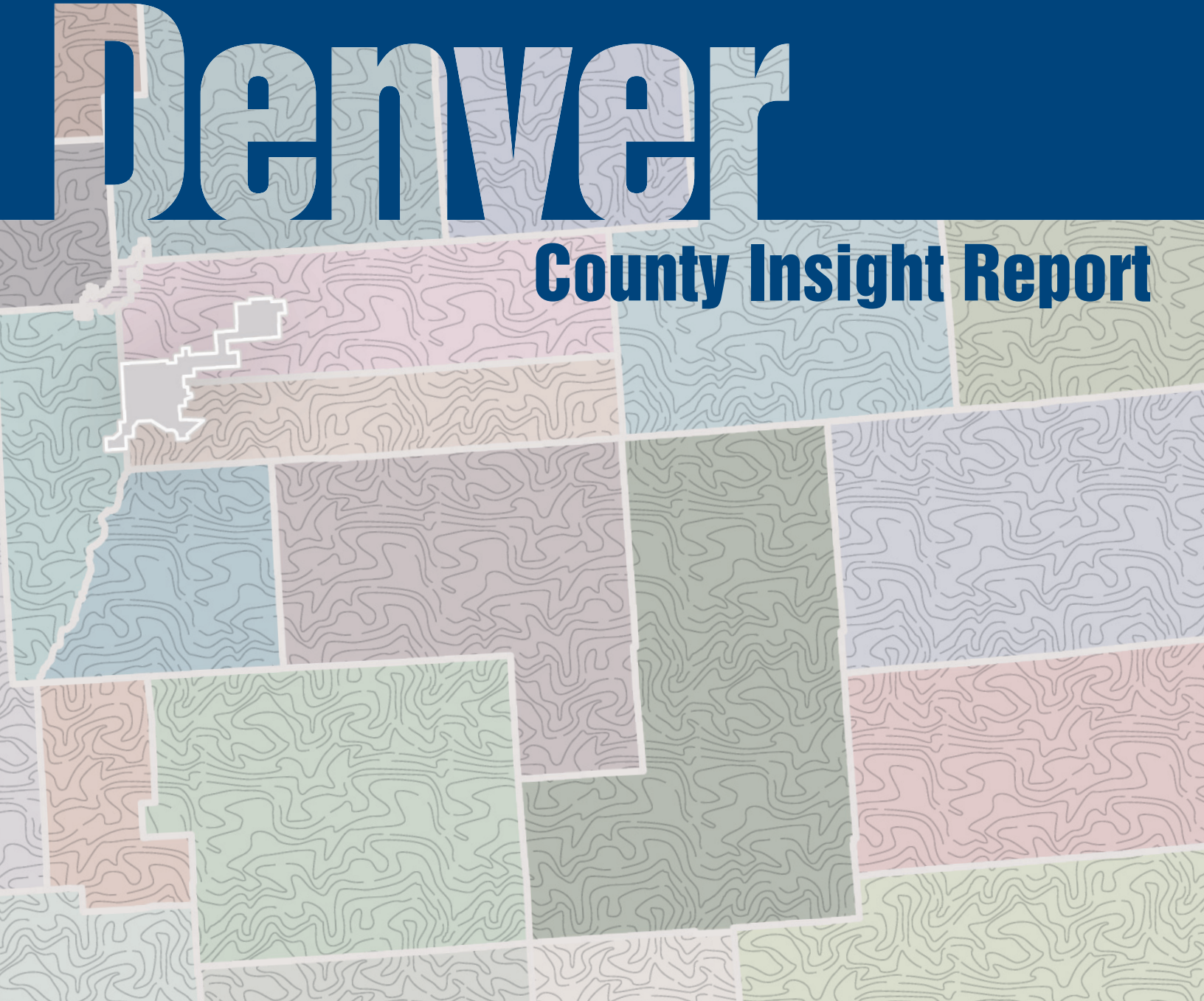


Colorado Housing Connects

# Denver

## County Insight Report



Overview:

# Denver County

Access to safe, stable housing is not just a matter of shelter but a fundamental right. Yet, for many individuals and families across Denver County, the quest for affordable and secure housing remains an ongoing struggle.

In response to this pressing need, the Colorado Housing Connects Denver County Insight Report emerges as a beacon of understanding and action. This report is not merely a compilation of statistics; it serves as a testament to the thousands of Denver County residents with whom we interacted in 2023. Each data point represents the unique circumstances and challenges faced by individuals and families in the county, shedding light on their diverse housing needs and aspirations.

At its core, this report is a call to action — a call to recognize and address the diverse and complex housing needs within Denver County. It serves as a vital tool for policymakers, community leaders, and advocates, providing valuable insights into the underlying factors driving housing instability and the urgent interventions required to alleviate it.

Through the lens of our real-time data and firsthand accounts, the report illuminates the interconnected web of issues — from eviction risk and affordability concerns to the growing demand for affordable and accessible housing among older adults. By understanding these challenges, decision-makers can empower themselves to craft targeted solutions that uplift and empower our community members.



*In the past year, Colorado Housing Connects has assisted over 34,000 Colorado households in accessing housing resources. Our dedicated housing navigators provide guidance through non-emergency housing services, offering valuable information on topics ranging from rental assistance to fair housing concerns. We serve a diverse range of individuals, including renters, landlords, first-time homebuyers, older adults, and people with disabilities.*

## Our Partners



# Colorado Housing Connects: Solutions Across The Housing Spectrum



HOMELESSNESS

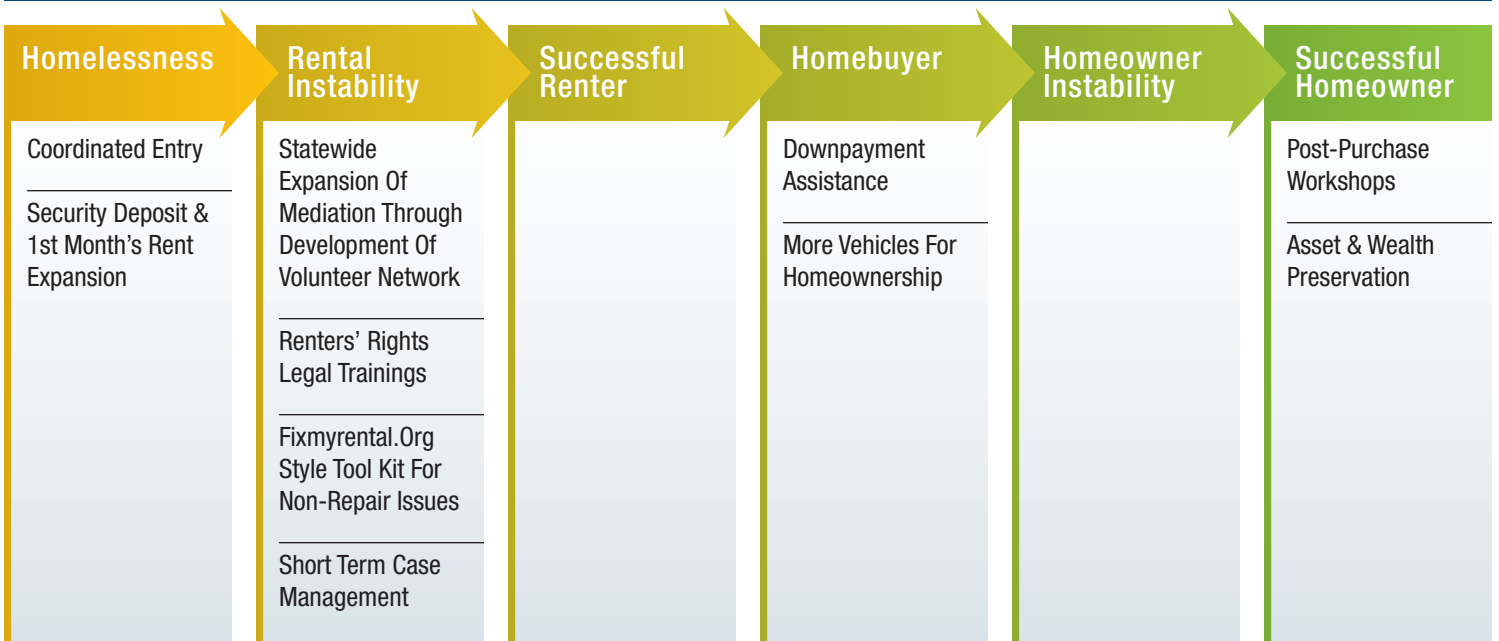
HOMEOWNERSHIP



## CURRENT SERVICES



## GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES



# Denver County Specific Data

## Number of Individuals and Families Served

**10k**

Colorado Housing Connects Households

**114**

Homebuyer Class Households

**172**

Eviction Prevention Legal Workshops Attendees

**199**

Affordable Housing Search Workshop Attendees

## Client Demographics

### Income Levels

0-30%	78%
31-50%	17%
51-80%	4%
81%+	1%

Average Household Size: 2.1

### Age Groups

18 – 59	79%
60+	21%

### Race/Ethnicity

White/Hispanic	25%
White/Non-Hispanic	29%
Non-white/Non-Hispanic	37%
Non-white/Hispanic	9%

Veteran 3%

Homeless: Couch Surfing 5%

Homeowner 3.1%

Landlord 0.2%

Literally Homeless 5.1%  
(Street, Car, Shelter, Motel Voucher, Transitional Housing)

Living in Institutionalized Setting 0.1%

Motel (self paid) 0.2%

Other 1.6%

Renter 84.7%

Spanish speakers served: 6%

## Geographic Breakdown:

Top Zip Codes	Frequency	Percentage
80204	872	9.9%
80219	735	8.4%
80205	560	6.4%
80249	447	5.1%
80220	439	5.0%
80216	419	4.8%
80239	416	4.7%
80231	393	4.5%
80203	367	4.2%
80211	354	4.0%

## Reasons For Seeking Help:

*Eviction Risk, Foreclosure Risk, Affordability Issues, etc.*

Affordable Housing	17.9%
Aging In Place	3.5%
Buying a Home/Pre-purchase	0.1%
Default/Foreclosure Prevention	0.9%
Emergency Housing	0.3%
Eviction Prevention (Non-Monetary)	0.8%
Homeowner: Home Repair	0.9%
Homeowner: Other Questions/Post Purchase	0.2%
Other/Unidentified (Voicemail w/o info)	2.3%
Rent/Utility Assistance	63.8%
Tenant-Landlord	9.0%
Utility Assistance-Homeowner	0.2%

## Education Customers Served

Total classes offered

**55**

## Housing Counseling Servs. Provided

57 clients served through one-on-ones

Mediation: 475 households served

**1,279** Denver households received financial assistance for rent and utilities (Similar to the way the Colorado report is).

## Key Takeaways From Data

In our commitment to addressing housing challenges, the Colorado Housing Connects Denver County Insight Report offers real-time data that provides valuable insights into the diverse housing needs within the county.

This snapshot reflects the housing situations faced by thousands of Denver County residents seeking assistance, underscoring the urgency of tailored interventions and dedicated resources such as Colorado Housing Connects to address the challenges the county is facing. In the midst of record inflation rates, high rent prices, a substantial housing shortage, an aging population, and formidable obstacles for first-time homebuyers, it is imperative for decision-makers to address these pressing issues.

Below, we delve into the key takeaways from this report, shedding light on the unique challenges and opportunities to make a meaningful impact on housing stability.

### Low-income individuals and renters dominated our clientele

The data in this report underscores a stark association between income levels and housing instability.

A significant 78% of our clients are in the 0-30% income bracket, emphasizing the critical need for targeted support for our most economically vulnerable residents. This suggests that a significant portion of the community is grappling with financial constraints that directly impact their ability to secure stable housing.

Meanwhile, renters in the county overwhelmingly accounted for the majority of housing-related inquiries, comprising 84.7%. This highlights that renters, spanning diverse income levels, are turning to us for assistance as they navigate the challenges posed by the rental market.

The median gross rent in Denver County stands at \$1,665 per month, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau — a figure that can be daunting for a substantial number of Denver County residents. Coupled with escalating prices of goods, shifts in safety net programs, such as the conclusion of the pandemic-born Emergency Rental Assistance Program, and diminishing support options for struggling renters,

multiple factors are converging, making it increasingly challenging for the average person to make ends meet.

### Why we hear from renters

Because of the challenges renters face, as described above, Colorado Housing Connects heard from more than 6,400 Denver County residents seeking financial assistance for rent and utilities.

Efforts during the pandemic to keep people housed, like eviction moratoriums and emergency rental assistance from federal funds, have come to a halt as rent prices skyrocketed, leaving many Denver County renters on the brink of housing instability. A 2023 study from Moody's Report found that the average American renter is paying more than 30% of their income on housing. The government describes being rent burdened as paying more than that 30% threshold.

While Denver County is one of the few communities to continue to offer rental assistance through the Temporary Rental and Utility Assistance Program, it's clear that more needs to be done. The city broke eviction court case records in November 2023 and ran out of rental and utility assistance funds long before the end of the year.

According to a point-in-time survey conducted by the Metro Denver Homelessness Initiative, the primary cause of homelessness in Denver is the inability to pay rent or mortgage. Additionally, eviction or being asked to leave one's home ranks as a significant cause of homelessness.

Denver County residents who experience rent cost burdens typically manage elevated rents by allocating a greater portion of their income to housing expenses. However, when the costs of life's other necessities are concurrently on the rise, these competing financial pressures often culminate in a breaking point.

### Why finding affordable housing is difficult in Colorado

Denver County residents routinely contacted Colorado Housing Connects searching for affordable housing or guidance on how to find affordable housing in 2023.



*A Colorado Housing Connects housing counselor leads a homebuyer education course, providing attendees with essential knowledge about the homebuying process. Colorado Housing Connects offered 35 homebuyer education courses in 2023, empowering community members with the tools and information needed for successful homeownership.*

## Key Takeaways From Data Continued

Home affordability in Denver has fallen 105% since January 2014, according to a report from the Common Sense Institute, a non-partisan research organization. Nearly 18% of Denver County residents who contacted Colorado Housing Connects sought guidance on finding affordable housing, reflecting the high cost of housing in Denver.

Housing is considered affordable if the total cost, including rent or mortgage and utilities, is no more than a third of the household's income. But finding an affordable housing unit can be a daunting task.

Gaining access to affordable housing poses challenges for numerous Denver County residents due to prolonged waitlists and the scarcity of housing choice vouchers, often distributed through infrequent lotteries. Furthermore, accessibility issues extend to specific types of affordable housing, such as tax credit housing and private market housing. The competition is heightened for tax credit housing, primarily sought by residents with higher incomes, whereas private market housing lacks affordability limits, creating additional barriers for those seeking affordable options.

### When owning a home becomes a financial burden

While acquiring a home remains out of reach for numerous Denver County residents, affording the home afterward can also present challenges.

In the past year, Colorado Housing Connects received inquiries from around 90 Denver County households seeking resources for default and foreclosure prevention. This highlights the financial difficulties experienced by some homeowners and underscores the imperative for targeted interventions to assist individuals in retaining their homes during challenging periods.

Homeowners grappling with financial constraints encounter challenges stemming from surges in property taxes and homeowners' insurance, exacerbated by additional inflationary pressures.

Compounding these challenges, many homeowners find themselves struggling to meet ongoing maintenance needs and unexpected expenses.

While in the past, homeowners with mortgage payment difficulties could explore downsizing or relocating, this approach is less viable today for those who secured low-interest rates in earlier periods. Consequently, these homeowners find themselves caught in a predicament — unable to keep up with bills and facing limited options to transition to a more affordable home.

### Can we meet the housing needs of Denver County's aging population?

As Denver County's senior population continues to increase at historic rates, along with the rest of the country, demand for housing that is affordable and able to accommodate an aging population's needs is also on the rise.

Last year, around 2,110 of our Denver County clients were adults aged 60 and up — highlighting a demand for services catering to the unique needs of our aging population and emphasizing the importance of supporting individuals who wish to age comfortably in their own homes. Callers sought to be connected to affordable housing, eviction prevention

resources, home modifications and repairs, and Brothers Redevelopment's Aging in Place Program — which connects clients to government services and resources like Social Security, food assistance, transportation, and other federal and state benefits.

Housing is an expense many older adults cannot afford because their incomes are often fixed or decline over time. When housing becomes a challenging expense for older adults, it becomes even more difficult to afford basic needs like food and healthcare. Combine property taxes and utilities and insurance fees, and there are even more hurdles for Denver County's aging population.

There is an urgent need for affordable housing for seniors due to the increasing number of older adults in the county. While the need is strong, housing assistance like public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, project-based Section 8 vouchers, and Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly do not fully meet demand. This is because many older renter households who are eligible for federal housing assistance face waiting lists that can last for years.

Meanwhile, because older adults' incomes are typically fixed or declining, financial assistance for rent is also imperative — especially for those with very low incomes — which is defined as less than or equal to 50% of the area median income. Unfortunately, demand for government-funded rental assistance outpaces supply. This is because the number of income-eligible households will increase with population growth, widening economic disparities, and rentership rates rising.

Outside of a need for senior affordable housing and funds for rental assistance, there is also a need for services that help the aging population like home modifications and repairs.

Older adults are much more likely than other age groups to report challenges entering, navigating, and using their homes. Accessible features like ramps and walk-in showers can promote an older adult's independence, sense of autonomy, prevent injuries, and provide an opportunity to age at home. But despite there being available resources for modifications and repairs, many older adults do not qualify because programs have income limits and require a documented disability. With more funding for modifications and repair programs, the county could address the gap between the supply and demand for accessible housing.

Finally, services like Brothers Redevelopment's Aging in Place Program — which is operated through Colorado Housing Connects — will be vital for providing older adults with the resources they need to thrive.

During this time of escalating costs, our staff has learned that many older adults do not know that there are benefits that they are missing or are eligible for, along with community resources. By providing resource navigation, financial burdens can be alleviated while also building a sense of community support and connection.

# Upstream Services

Grounded in the belief that everyone deserves a secure and thriving home, our core principles focus on providing upstream housing services. We aim to ensure that renters never face eviction in the first place, and homeowners can navigate the challenges of homeownership successfully.

In Denver County, where economic relief is crucial for the most vulnerable residents, we go beyond short-term solutions. Our approach centers on economic mobility and financial empowerment as the catalysts for pulling people out of difficult housing situations. Through comprehensive education and targeted services, we strive to empower individuals and families to achieve lasting housing stability.

The following information outlines the fundamental pillars of our approach, each designed to address different facets of housing stability and economic empowerment.

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## Eviction prevention education

When the pandemic upended lives and put many Denver County residents at risk of eviction, we responded by launching Eviction Prevention Webinars.

In partnership with Colorado Legal Services — a nonprofit legal aid program that provides civil legal assistance — Colorado Housing Connects has offered monthly Eviction Prevention Webinars since December 2020. Alongside attorneys from Colorado Legal Services and our housing experts, our Eviction Prevention Webinars have taught thousands of Coloradans about the legal eviction process, what late fees tenants can be charged, resources someone can turn to if they are behind on their rent, and tenant rights if they do fall behind on their rent.

Tenants are often unaware that they need to take proactive measures to safeguard their rights and that they are exempt from certain fees. Unfortunately, many tenants only seek eviction-related legal aid or information when they find themselves in court due to a summons. However, this is not the case for 89% of our workshop attendees.

By participating in our monthly workshops, tenants gain access to crucial information about their rights and financial assistance without the necessity of a scheduled court appearance. Many aren't facing eviction but attend our webinar to learn about the eviction process.

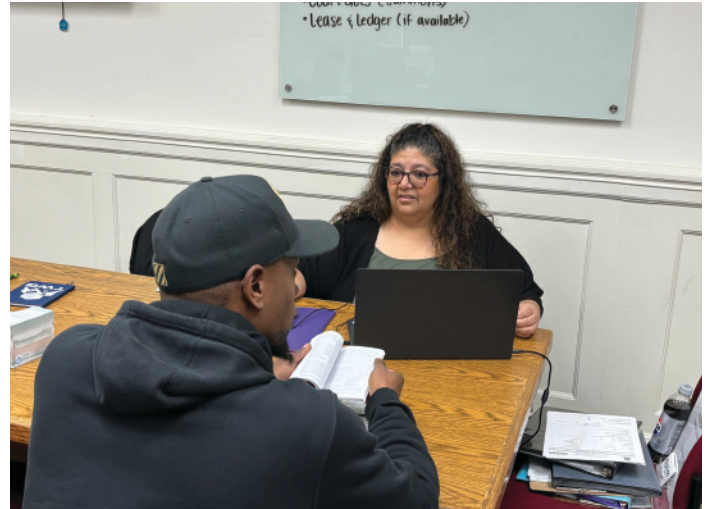
Moreover, each webinar features nonprofit or government representatives, various case managers, policy makers, social workers, and other professionals in the field. The insights gained from our eviction prevention webinars have had a positive impact not only on the attendees but also on their clients, constituents, and renters far beyond the individual participant.

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## Tenant-landlord mediation

Through our Denver tenant-landlord mediation program, we are bringing tenants and landlords together to resolve common lease disputes and to prevent evictions.

Our Denver tenant-landlord mediation program serves for all manner of housing disputes, including maintenance issues, lease disputes, security deposit disagreements, and more.



*A Colorado Housing Connects housing navigator assists a Coloradoan with applying for rental assistance. Efforts during the pandemic to keep people housed, like eviction moratoriums and emergency rental assistance from federal funds, have come to a halt as rent prices skyrocketed, leaving many Coloradans on the brink of housing instability.*

Mediation is an effective, confidential tactic that can both protect housing for those facing eviction as well as save landlords time and money. Tenants who can benefit from our tenant-landlord mediation services include Coloradans concerned about paying rent, renters who are worried that rental assistance won't come soon enough, and those who are experiencing lease disputes or violations. Landlords who can benefit from our mediation services include those concerned about the costs associated with filing and completing an eviction, unit vacancy, turnover expenses, and the price of providing mediation.

Mediation often has higher settlement rates compared to going straight to eviction court. A research study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition found pre-litigation mediation programs had an 87% settlement rate.

Our tenant-landlord services are not just about resolving disputes — we are fostering understanding and collaboration. Our aim is to bring tenants and landlords together, turning potential conflicts into opportunities for shared solutions.

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## Denver courthouse navigation

When tenants find themselves in court due to an eviction filing, our staff stands by their side, guiding them through the stressful process every step of the way.

Colorado Housing Connects is present at the courthouse inside the Denver City and County Building each week, offering free resource navigation services to tenants facing eviction notices. Our team engages with individuals in need on a one-on-one basis, providing information about Denver's Temporary Rental and Utility Assistance Program, as well as other relevant housing resources.

Many individuals facing eviction are unaware of available rental assistance resources or how to access them. By providing information

## Upstream Services Continued

directly within the courthouse setting, we meet people where they are and eliminate barriers to navigation.

Since November 2022, Colorado Housing Connects has assisted 984 households at the Denver City and County Building.

### Empowering financial futures through financial counseling

Financial counseling also provides tools to empower individuals with knowledge to manage their finances effectively, promoting long-term economic stability and preventing housing crises.

Since 1981, Brothers Redevelopment/Colorado Housing Connects has been a stalwart provider of financial counseling to Coloradans across the state. Our financial counseling and coaching services offer personalized plans to navigate financial crises, develop strategies for self-resilience and stability, build credit, and identify resources for budget relief.

Financial coaching can empower Denver County residents to make smart decisions with money, overcome financial obstacles, and build a secure financial future. Customized to individual needs, financial counseling strategies are culturally sensitive, focused on outcomes and data, and administered by skilled professionals.

Earlier this year, Brothers Redevelopment was awarded a \$400,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Law to support financial counseling services through Colorado Housing Connects, by pairing financial coaching and counseling with existing programs that provide funds for rental and mortgage assistance.

A 2020 study from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization, found that after receiving financial counseling, participants were less likely to experience eviction or forced relocation due to rent arrears. Other research has shown that financial counseling can lead to increased savings and debt reduction,

improved credit scores, and increased confidence and control over finances.

### Colorado Housing Connects' comprehensive HUD-certified housing counseling services

Thanks to our U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) certified housing counselors, Colorado Housing Connects' housing counseling services have helped homeowners through crisis after crisis.

Whether it was during the foreclosure challenges of the 2012 housing crisis, or the continued housing relief and recovery results from the COVID-19 pandemic, our housing counselors have provided support to families in making critical housing choices and equipping themselves for the future.

As a HUD approved housing counseling agency, Colorado Housing Connects provides services to address a full range of housing counseling needs — including assisting homeowners in evaluating their readiness for a home purchase and navigating the homebuying process, helping clients find affordable housing, offering financial literacy training, and providing foreclosure prevention counseling.

It's easy to overlook just how involved housing counseling can be. When we hear from a family facing foreclosure, it isn't just about preserving an asset — it's about fighting for their home, the place where they meet their basic needs, raise their family, and build their life.

Our housing counselors respond to a client in crisis with empathy and compassion while pouring hours into finding resolutions for a homeowner facing displacement.

Several studies have shown that housing counseling can lead to reductions in mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures. This is likely due to improved budget management, credit score growth, and awareness of public resources.

A 2019 study by HUD found that participants in housing counseling



Colorado Housing Connects staff poses for a photo at the Consumers United Association's Right on the Money Award event where we were awarded funding for our housing counseling services. As a HUD approved housing counseling agency, Colorado Housing Connects provides diverse housing counseling services, including homeownership readiness, affordable housing assistance, financial education, and foreclosure prevention.



# Future Work Continued

programs saw average saving increases of \$2,800 and debt reductions of \$5,700. This translates to more stable financial footing and better preparedness for housing-related expenses.

Other research has shown that pre-purchase counseling can increase homeownership rates, reduce risk of default, and create greater satisfaction with homeownership.

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## Preparing the next generation of homeowners

For those embarking on the journey of homeownership, our homebuyer education courses offer comprehensive insights into the process.

Offered monthly throughout the Denver metro area, our homebuyer education workshops are designed to teach attendees the ins and outs of the homebuying process. Topics discussed include steps to homeownership, like financial preparation, working with a mortgage loan officer, house hunting, budgeting, credit, fair housing, finding a real estate agent and a lender, the costs of homebuying and the approval process, and what to expect after closing.

Classes are offered in English and Spanish and are taught by government-certified housing counselors.

Homebuyer education is crucial for potential homeowners because it teaches current market trends to help prospective buyers make good decisions with home investments and promotes sustainable housing and successful homeownership.

According to a study by the Urban Institute — a nonprofit research and analysis organization — homeowners who participated in homebuyer education were 31% less likely to be delinquent on their mortgages and 40% less likely to foreclose on their homes than those who did not participate. Other research has found that homebuyers who participated in education programs saved an average of \$1,500 more on their down payment than those who did not participate, according to a study by the National Endowment for Financial Education — a nonprofit dedicated to improving financial well-being in the country.

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## The role of post-purchase counseling in informed decision-making

Navigating homeownership is a delicate balance between your home as a shelter and an asset for wealth building. For homeowners, decisions like major repairs, buying a car, settling debt, or funding a child's education may prompt consideration of tapping into equity. However, our post-purchase counseling provides impartial guidance on refinancing, home equity lines of credit, managing major expenses, and leveraging homeownership for wealth building.

In consultations with our post-purchase housing counselors, homeowners can explore unbiased options to safeguard their homes while pursuing financial goals. Many homeowners find themselves bombarded with unsolicited ads, urging them to make the most of their home equity. Our focus is on ensuring homeowners make informed choices without jeopardizing the security of their homes.

Research from the Urban Institute found a 20-50% reduction in mortgage

delinquencies and foreclosures among homeowners who participated in post-purchase counseling. The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation found that homeowners who enrolled in post-purchase counseling were 2.83 times more likely to receive a loan modification and were 70% less likely to re-default on their modified loan.

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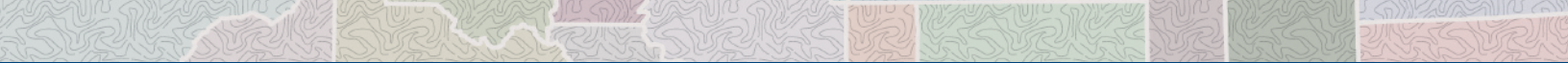
## Navigating the affordable housing landscape through education

Navigating the rental market can be a formidable task, especially when financial constraints are not the only concern. For Coloradans grappling with the soaring cost of rent, our affordable housing search workshops serve as a valuable resource to demystify this complex and overwhelming process.

In these workshops, we provide insights into effective strategies for navigating affordable housing, identifying housing options that align with client needs, understanding crucial protections throughout the housing search, and guidance on taking proactive steps when the search feels overwhelming. Our goal is to empower individuals with the knowledge and tools to navigate the affordable housing landscape with confidence.

Topics covered at the webinars include types of affordable housing, challenges of affordable housing, income levels for affordable housing, and teaches community members how to access affordable housing.

Education around affordable housing is a beacon of empowerment, illuminating pathways to stable and secure living for individuals and families alike. By fostering understanding of the rental market, housing options, and essential safeguards, education equips individuals with the knowledge to make informed decisions, reducing the stress associated with housing challenges. Moreover, this knowledge instills a sense of confidence, enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of the housing landscape with resilience. Ultimately, an informed community is better positioned to access affordable housing, fostering a stronger foundation for overall well-being and community stability.



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