



Real plans for a vibrant, affordable, safe Denver: Make Denver the Safest Big City in America

We want a Denver where you can walk outside with your kids at night and feel safe in any neighborhood. We want a Denver where you can go to sleep and not worry that your car will be gone in the morning. We can have that Denver, but we need to take a different approach to crime in order to build it. We need to hold those who break the law accountable for their actions while supporting our neighbors in need of intervention—we need **a strong, compassionate, and fair approach to public safety**.

Denver is at a crossroads. We can continue down our current path of increased crime, understaffed law enforcement, and a growing sense of helplessness, and go the way of cities like San Francisco or Portland. Or we can take a different path: a compassionate but effective approach to crime that holds people accountable, connects offenders to the services they need, increases the quantity and quality of law enforcement on our streets, and sets high expectations for public decency. If we do that, we can get back to the city that we're all proud of, a city where you feel at home in every neighborhood. Denverites deserve that sense of peace and safety; as the next Mayor, I will not stop until we deliver it.

Denver can be America's best city. To get there, we have to make Denver the safest big city in America.

Here is how we do it. As with every part of my policy platform, *we know it works* and *we know how to pay for it*.

The Plan

- 1. Restore civility in our public spaces.** My comprehensive [plan to end homelessness](#) includes an unprecedented investment in addiction and mental health treatment. But we must establish consequences for disruptive, criminal behavior on our streets. As Mayor, I will enforce basic standards of decency so that people who are breaking the law are held accountable. Public drug use,

harassment, and assault will not be tolerated; citizens who are following the law need to feel like Denver still belongs to them.

2. **Convert two pods of the Denver Jail to mental health and addiction treatment facilities so we can get low-level offenders the treatment they need.** Enforcement does not need to—and should not—lead to putting people into the traditional prison environment. Under my plan, those whose primary needs are addiction and mental health support will be sent to treatment to get the help they need.
 - o Expand the use of diversionary court programs Diversionary courts, like drug court and mental health court, allow judges to mandate treatment as the punishment for an offense. I will expand the use of diversionary courts *and* push for lower-level crimes to be expunged following the successful completion of an addiction or mental health program. **Offenders will emerge from their arrest having received the support they need**, without the collateral consequences of a permanent conviction. This also includes sending residents to high quality outpatient community treatment programs that can avoid involvement in the criminal justice system altogether.
 - o Convert two pods of the Denver jail to an in-patient mental health and addiction treatment facility. There is a profound shortage of beds for psychiatric care in Denver. To enable the expansion of diversionary courts, my administration will invest in bringing high quality mental health and addiction services to our local jails. Once sentenced through a diversionary court, offenders will be guaranteed access to mental health and addiction services.
 - o Work with community partners to build successful transitions from jail back to the community. Too many people leave jail without any plans for housing or employment. As Mayor, I will work with community partners so that everyone leaves jail already connected to the core services they need: food, housing, medication, and employment.
 - o ***We know it works.*** Incarceration can exacerbate the already high rates of mental illness and addiction in the prison population.¹ In contrast, studies have shown that mental health and addiction treatment reduce crime.²

¹ See

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/05/13/mentalhealthimpacts/#:~:text=Research%20shows%20that%2C%20while%20it,and%20purpose%20from%20their%20lives.>

² See <https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.201700107> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/upshot/spend-a-dollar-on-drug-treatment-and-save-more-on-crime-reduction.html>.

- *We know how to pay for it.* Hiring 10 mental health and addiction specialists to staff two pods of the Denver jail can be paid for through the expected growth of the Caring for Denver Fund, which is earmarked for substance abuse and mental health treatment.³

3. Protect Denver by putting 200 more first responders on the streets, including mental health professionals, EMTs and police officers. Violent crime and property crime in Denver have risen in recent years.⁴ Our force is overwhelmed: a Denver resident who calls 911 can be placed on a waitlist, and calls for serious crimes can receive no police response. As Mayor, I will ensure that we do better, and that the City's most pressing issues receive attention.

- Put more clinical professionals and EMTs on the street. Both the STAR Program and the Co-Responder Program have shown promising results. As Mayor, I will increase the number of EMTs, social workers, and other clinical professionals on the streets to address our City's homelessness crisis. This will have the added benefit of freeing up police resources to respond to more serious crimes.
- Put more officers in communities walking the streets. We need to put more officers on the streets so they can protect communities. Officers must be visible to build trust and establish the relationships that prevent crime. In hiring additional officers, my administration will recruit a more diverse police force, setting a goal that incoming cadet classes are 50% female.
- Establish an Auto Theft Unit. My administration will allocate 20 officers to a special motor vehicle theft investigative unit to address the skyrocketing rates of motor vehicle theft in the city.
- Give law enforcement better tools to prevent and investigate crime. Expand the use of cutting edge technology that prevents crime and successfully investigates it, like license plate readers, halo cameras and shot spotters that allow police to respond immediately to crime with full and usable information they can use to prevent and deter crime.
- *We know it works.* Evidence from across the country shows that a fully-staffed police force with targeted geographies and specializations,

³ The Caring for Denver Fund has grown by approximately \$3-4 million per year, according to page 493 of the 2023 [Denver Budget](#). The total cost of 10 additional clinical professionals will likely be \$1 million.

⁴ See <https://www.cpr.org/2022/03/10/colorado-crime-rates/>. Generally speaking, crime was lower in 2022 than 2021, although it remained higher than 2019 levels.

paired with alternative first-responders for non-violent emergencies, reduces crime.⁵⁶

- o ***We know how to pay for it.*** The 2023 Denver Budget already provides funding for 43 additional DPD positions.⁷ In addition, Denver has spent nearly \$15 million annually in overtime pay over the past several years due to staffing shortages.⁸ The money required to hire additional personnel will be funded from saved overtime expenditures as well as grant money recently made available by the legislature for public safety.⁹

4. Support common-sense consequences for crime that strike the balance between supporting our neighbors in need of intervention and holding people accountable.

- o **Make auto theft a felony, not a misdemeanor.** In 2019, our legislature reduced certain types of auto theft from a felony to a misdemeanor.¹⁰ That mistake has had disastrous consequences: Denver now leads the nation in motor vehicle theft.¹¹ As Mayor, I will push to **raise the penalty for stealing a car back to a felony.** You should not get the same penalty for stealing a car as you do for texting while you drive that car.

5. Reduce gun violence by making it more difficult for criminals and at-risk youth to obtain deadly weapons. When I served as a State Senator, I fought hard to ban high-capacity magazines and institute universal background checks. But there is more we can do at the local level.

- o **Enforce Colorado's Red Flag Law.** The tragic shooting at Club Q exposed a critical vulnerability: If local officials do not pursue the Extreme Risk Protection Orders created by the state's red flag law, individuals that we *know* are dangerous and unstable will continue to carry weapons. As Mayor, **I will ensure the Red Flag Law is *always* enforced where legally permissible.** I will also support expanding the Red Flag Law so that district attorneys can initiate the filing for an

⁵ See <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28202>.

⁶ See <https://news.stanford.edu/press/view/43952>.

⁷ See page 57 of the 2023 [Denver Budget](#).

⁸ See

<https://www.9news.com/article/news/local/denver-sheriff-53k-overtime/73-bd35cc7e-b92d-4909-91ed-8af78173dd65>.

⁹ See <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb22-145>.

¹⁰ See <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb21-271>.

¹¹ See <https://www.westword.com/news/denver-is-one-big-car-theft-hot-spot-15306202> and <https://www.policygenius.com/auto-insurance/best-and-worst-cities-for-car-theft/>.

Extreme Risk Protection Order. Additionally, I will enforce universal background checks on private party transfers, secure storage of firearms, mandatory reporting of lost and stolen firearms, and the relinquishment of firearms by domestic violence offenders.

- o Establish a 10-day waiting period to purchase guns. The evidence from researchers and policymakers across America is clear—waiting periods save lives.¹² That is why, in my first year as Mayor, I will work with City Council to enact a 10-day waiting period for the purchase of any firearm in Denver.

The Budget

Item	Cost	Source
10 mental health and addiction specialists to staff two pods of the Denver jail.	\$1 million.	\$1 million of the \$3–4 million of expected growth in the Caring for Denver Fund.
200 more clinical professionals, EMTs, and police officers on the streets.	\$20 million.	\$3 million from the existing budget, \$10 million in saved overtime, and \$7 million from state grant programs.

¹² See <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1619896114>.