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Understanding the Ballot:

The Facts About Fort Collins'
Biggest Issues

At Common Sense Institute our focus is on jobs and the economy. We know with a more prosperous Colorado: individuals have more opportunity, families flourish, and communities thrive. CSI's goal is to provide research that is based on the facts. **No time is more important to understand the facts than ahead of elections as we look to choose our next slate of local leaders.**

To inform the upcoming elections in Fort Collins, Common Sense is issuing the latest facts on homelessness, housing and crime so that voters can have the latest information ahead of going to vote.

Please review the most pressing issues facing the residents of Fort Collins - [crime](#), [homelessness](#), and [housing](#). Check out the full reports on CSI's website.



Crime

Since 2019, crime in Colorado has skyrocketed to become a major issue for policy makers across the state. CSI utilized data from Colorado Crime Statistics and focused on statistics reported by the Fort Collins Police Department.

The number of incidents of crime in Fort Collins has averaged 7,761 since 2008 and fluctuated between 6,931 and 8,785 between 2008 and 2022. The volatility in total crime incidents has been largely impacted by changes in property crimes, including burglary, vandalism, and theft from motor vehicles. The change in the annual number of incidents of crime in Fort Collins contrasts with a steady increase in crime at the state level through 2022.¹



Fort Collins 2022 total crime rate is **18.8% lower than in 2008**, whereas Colorado's has increased by 28.6% over the same period.

The decline in Fort Collins's total crime rate from 2008 to 2022 was primarily **driven by decreases in property crimes (24.9%) and crimes against persons (23.3%)**.

The Fort Collins Police Department (FCPD) **arrest rate increased by 28.7% between 2008 and 2022**. The **crime rate decreased 18.8%** over the same period.

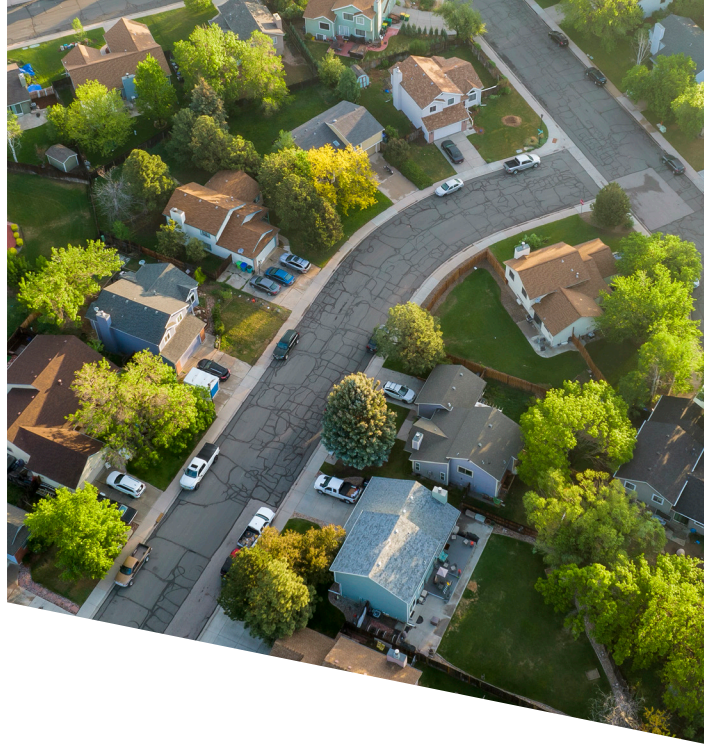
The **number of patrol officers (FTE's) has decreased 4.9% from 136.75 in 2019 to 130 in 2024**, while the **number of community and special services personnel** (now called Special Operations) **has increased 274%** from 16.3 in 2019 to 61 in 2024.

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- FCPD **clearance rates increased 54.8%** from 2008 to 2023.
 - FCPD **budget has grown 22.5%** from 2019 to 2024.
 - FCPD **personnel (FTE's) have grown 7.7%** from 322.75 in 2019 to 347.75 in 2024.
 - FCPD **response times**, currently at 4:06, **continue to improve and are well below their target level** of 5:15.

¹ Colorado Crime Statistics (state.co.us)

Housing

The cost of housing in Fort Collins has made it a more expensive place to live. Since 2015, the price of housing in Fort Collins has exceeded the U.S. average though it is lower than the state average. Significant fluctuations in demand during the pandemic, coupled with a growing supply shortage due to lagging development over the last decade, have created conditions resulting in an imbalance between the demand for and supply of housing.



Consensus expectations for mortgage rates are that they will remain elevated for the foreseeable future as the Federal Reserve tackles inflation. Higher mortgage rates have raised the cost of new home purchases, undoubtedly slowing demand. While this may provide some relief, new housing unit permitting has fallen in the last four years and there are some indications that actual home completions will decline as builders gauge the impact of a slowing economy on housing demand.

Due to elevated prices and rising interest rates, **the affordability of purchasing a home in Fort Collins is at the lowest point in more than 20 years.** In just the past 8 years, the cost of purchasing a home has nearly doubled.

Household incomes have not kept pace with rising housing costs. Between June 2015 and June 2023, the average hourly wage increased 35% from \$22.41 to \$30.23. However, due to the rapidly increasing cost of housing, the number of hours of work required to cover the median mortgage payment increased from 69 hours to 120 hours, a 73% increase.

Between approximately 1,580 and 2,197 permits are needed annually through 2028 to close the city housing supply deficit and meet the demands of future population growth. Projected permitting for new housing has been tapering off since 2019 as home builders reassess the demand for housing in a higher interest rate environment. Based on permit data through June 2023, Fort Collins is projected to be between 395 and 1,013 permits short of the required annual amount to close the deficit plus new housing demand by 2028. Recent reports indicate that the homebuilding market may be contracting. To avoid a similar collapse in new home building that followed the last recession, permitting must remain at elevated levels for the next several years.

57% percent of permits issued in Fort Collins since 2011 are for multi-family structures.

Homebuilders' confidence has declined 41% since a recent high in February 2022. After falling for 9 straight months from February 2022 to December 2022 to 25, the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index for the Western Region is now 54 indicating an increase in home builder confidence.

Home affordability has decreased by 82.5% since 2015.

Homelessness

As spending on homelessness has increased annually, the unsheltered and chronically homeless populations have also increased. Housing affordability in Colorado has plummeted, overall price levels are at record highs due to inflation, and the state's housing inventory is dangerously low. This is a concerning precursor for sustained elevated levels of newly homeless.



Larimer County and Fort Collins, however, have been able to keep their unsheltered rates roughly consistent for nearly four years and have lower levels of chronic homelessness than other cities in Colorado, the majority of which have experienced drastic increases in the past few years.

Fort Collins' situation has not improved across the board, but the city seems to have mitigated some of the rapid increase in homelessness that other major cities have endured. The relative success that Fort Collins has achieved may be due to its uncommon transparency regarding its homelessness programs. The city is also planning the opening of a new mental health facility and 24/7 shelter, both of which demonstrate the city's commitment to long-term solutions.

The City of Fort Collins reports that, since the beginning of 2022, its programs have **provided permanent housing to 577 (42%) of the city's 1,364 who the city has identified as chronically homeless** individuals over those two years.

Fort Collins **currently spends \$38,000–\$95,000 per person annually on homelessness.** This total includes costs incurred by emergency shelters, supportive services, crisis services, hospitals, emergency departments, and other services. The estimated yearly cost of a 1-bedroom apartment in Fort Collins is only \$13,716–\$25,716 per year..

Between 2019 and 2023, the homeless population in Larimer County has grown 20% faster than the county's total population.

**Stay tuned to CSI for all the latest updates and
check out all our research [here](#).**

Don't forget to vote by November 7!



www.common senseinstitute.co.org