

# 2017 Colorado Planning & Management Region Report

## Region 7 – Pueblo County

### INTRODUCTION

Region 7 is the only region to consist of a single entity: Pueblo County. With a land area of 2,400 square miles, Pueblo County ranks as the 13th-largest of the 64 Colorado counties. The region has seen moderate population growth – about 0.6% on average per year.

County	Census 2010	August 2016	Annual Change
Pueblo	159,063	165,109	0.6%
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>5,029,196</b>	<b>5,538,180</b>	<b>1.6%</b>

*Source: State Demography Office*

### JOBS & THE ECONOMY

Between August 2016 and August 2017, Pueblo overcame its previous peak employment level of 69,500 workers (October 2008) and now reports 71,113 jobs. Unemployment fell in the county by 1.2%, slightly more than the 1.0% improvement in unemployment statewide.

#### Unemployment

County	August 2016	August 2017	% Change
Pueblo	4.8%	3.6%	-1.2%
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>

*Source: Labor Market Information*

Major employers in Pueblo are the Parkview Medical Center, Pueblo School District #60, St. Mary-Corwin Medical Center, Evraz Rocky Mountain Steel, Pueblo School District 70, and Pueblo County.

#### Employment

State Demography Office estimated total employment in Pueblo at 72,571 in 2016, up 1.7% from 2015.

Employment is up 3% from the pre-recession peak, with much of this growth attributable to Vestas.

This summer, Vestas Wind Towers celebrated the completion of its 5,000<sup>th</sup> tower. The international company was recently named the [top manufacturer of wind turbines](#) and Vestas' success has no doubt contributed to the busyness of the Pueblo plant, which is operating at [120% of its capacity](#).

### HOUSING

New residential construction in Pueblo has increased by 25% between August 2016 and August 2017, but still remains considerably below the peak pre-recession building permit numbers. A total of 265 new residential building permits were in 2016, an increase of 68% since 2014. Pueblo has a very low housing cost relative to many other Colorado communities. The median sales price for homes in Pueblo

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in September 2017 was [\\$180,000](#). Compared to the September 2017, the median price increased 8.8%. Based on data from the Pueblo Association of Realtors, the number of homes sold during this period also increased by 13.3% and the Average Days on Market fell by 20% to 71 days.

### **NEW PROJECTS**

The Colorado Department of Transportation is in the process of completing three major highway construction projects within Pueblo County. The elevated section of I-25 through downtown Pueblo between Ilex Street and Center City Drive has been delayed and is now estimated to complete in spring 2019. In addition, construction began this summer on US-50 in the City of Pueblo to widen the highway and improve bridges. The project's completion is expected at the end of 2018. The roadway projects will improve the movement of traffic within and through Pueblo County, reduce congestion, and improve the safety of the federal highways.

The Pueblo Urban Renewal Authority, in partnership with the City of Pueblo, and the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk Authority are set to begin construction on an addition to the Pueblo Convention Center in early 2017. The project is expected to cost over \$20 million, \$14.4 million of which was loaned by Pueblo using the city's half-cent sales tax fund. Construction on an adjacent parking garage began October 2017 and is expected to last 18 months.

Heritage Tourism continues to be a major focus within the region with the implementation of a creative district, the Pueblo Creative Corridor, and agricultural heritage components focusing on marketing the chili pepper and other produce farms on the St. Charles Mesa east of Pueblo.