



Facts Regarding Denver's Need for Parks and Open Space

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- Denver's population increased from 498,402 in 1998 to 727,211 in 2020, a 46% increase.
- "Excluding undeveloped area around DIA, 48% of Denver is now paved over or built up. This is up from 19% in the mid-1970s. Expected to 69% by 2040."*
- With only 5% of its land used for parks and recreation, Denver has fallen from 13th place in 2012 to 18th place in 2021 in the Trust for Public Lands Park Score for America's 100 largest cities. In comparison, the percentages of land used for parks and recreation in some other cities are: Washington, D.C.—21%; New York City—16%; San Francisco—21%; San Diego—21%; Portland, Oregon—14%; Boston—19%; Minneapolis—10%; Los Angeles—13%; Seattle—11% and Chicago—9%. According to the Trust for Public Lands, the 2021 national median percentage of land used for parks and recreation in America's 100 largest cities is 15%.
- "Park space per person in Denver has fallen to 8.9 acres per 1,000 residents, down from 9.4 acres per 1,000 residents in 2006 and 9.5 acres per 1,000 residents two decades ago — far below the national average of 13.1 acres per 1,000 residents, city data show. (By comparison, Portland offers 23 acres per 1,000 residents.) Denver officials project the acreage will decrease further to 7.3 acres per 1,000 residents as Denver's population tops 857,000 before 2040."*
- "It would take at least 1,500 acres of new green space to stop the decline and hold steady at about 9 acres per 1,000 residents, and 3,000 new acres of parks to approach the national norm of 13.1 acres per 1,000 residents, city planners said."*
- "Since 2012, Denver has experienced more than 50 days a year with temperatures topping 90 degrees. A 2014 Climate Central analysis of National Weather Service data found that Denver has one of the nation's most severe 'heat island' effects, with a 4.9-degree increase compared with the surrounding, and mostly treeless, high prairie."*
- Denver is ranked 8th worst out of large metropolitan areas for ground level ozone pollution.** In 2019, the EPA downgraded Denver's ozone rating from "moderate" to "serious."
- According to the Denver Parks and Recreation Department's Game Plan for a Healthy City: "The science is clear, our planet is facing a global crisis attributed largely to human behavior that is changing climate patterns around the world.... Parks, recreation, and the urban forest are vital infrastructure to our city's health. Trees and vegetation in our parks as well as along our parkways and streets help clean the air we breathe and provide shade that decreases the cooling load on our energy infrastructure during our hot months. Our parks and urban forests hold, clean, and infiltrate stormwater, decreasing the load on our storm sewer system."

*Source: Bruce Finley, *Denver Post*, January 13, 2019; **Source: American Lung Association 2020 *State of the Air* report