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SECURITY



Addressing the Rising Unhoused Population in Downtown Denver

Downtown Denver is facing a serious crisis. The growing unhoused population is impacting nearly every sector of the local economy and community, from restaurants and retail to hospitality, commercial real estate, and other non-governmental organizations. While homelessness is a complex and deeply human issue, there is an urgent need for practical and compassionate security solutions to restore safety, stability, and vibrancy to the downtown core.

This guide outlines current homelessness statistics, contributing factors, government efforts, and specific impacts on different industries. It concludes by showing how PalAmerican Security offers a differentiated, empathetic, and results-driven approach to restoring safety and dignity in downtown Denver.



Current State of Homelessness in Downtown Denver

- The unhoused population in the Denver metro area has grown significantly in recent years, with Denver accounting for the largest portion of that total.
- Homeless encampments continue to appear throughout downtown, despite ongoing sweeps and increased policy interventions.
- While the city has pledged to house 2,000 individuals in permanent housing in 2025, many business owners and residents feel the crisis has reached a tipping point.

Why the Unhoused Population is Increasing

- Housing Insecurity: Affordable housing remains out of reach for many Denver residents. Rapid growth, gentrification, and limited low-income housing supply continue to displace vulnerable populations.
- Mental Health & Substance Use: A large portion of Denver's unhoused community struggles with untreated mental illness and substance dependency.
- Policy Gaps: Despite new programs, including Denver's experiment with no-strings-attached payments (which showed promise in doubling stable housing), implementation remains inconsistent.
- Encampment Sweeps: While intended to manage safety, encampment sweeps have often displaced people rather than solving the problem, pushing homelessness into adjacent neighborhoods or out of public view.

Government Response

- Mayor Mike Johnston has promised to tackle homelessness aggressively, with efforts like encampment removal, shelter expansion, and housing targets.
- The city has introduced property storage protocols and front-door shelter access points (e.g., Denver Rescue Mission, Samaritan House), but many services are overwhelmed.
- Businesses have received limited grants to offset the impact of nearby encampments.

Construction projects like the 16th Street Mall redevelopment have disrupted foot traffic, reduced business activity, and left blocks visibly deserted.

Recent News & Headlines Impacting Downtown Denver

1. “Downtown Restaurants Closing as Homeless Crisis Deepens” – Denver Gazette Several well-known downtown restaurants, including Michelin Bib Gourmand honorees, have shuttered their doors citing rampant drug use, loitering, and an unsafe atmosphere for customers and staff. Restaurant owners say the city’s inaction has made daily operations untenable.

2. “Triangle Bar Closes, Citing Unmanageable Downtown Conditions” – OutFront Magazine The Triangle Bar, a beloved LGBTQ+ establishment with deep community roots, announced its closure after continued safety issues and the inability to operate due to nearby encampments. The closure highlights how the crisis is impacting Denver’s diverse cultural fabric.

3. “Companies Flee Downtown Office Space, Citing Safety Concerns” – Denver Business Journal As office leases come up for renewal, many companies are choosing to relocate outside downtown due to deteriorating safety and cleanliness. Commercial real estate leaders warn of a “downtown exodus” if visible improvements aren’t made quickly.



Impact on Local Industries

1. Restaurants & Hospitality Groups

- Restaurant and hospitality operators report significant declines in customer volume and staff retention due to public safety concerns.
- Rising operating costs combined with an unstable environment have forced many businesses to either scale back operations or leave downtown entirely.
- As the area's reputation declines, so does tourism—impacting hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues that once thrived on out-of-town visitors and local foot traffic.





2. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

NGOs in downtown Denver are stretched thin. Many operate near or within homeless encampments and face safety risks for staff and volunteers.

- Safety concerns limit the scope of outreach and reduce public participation.
- Without security, their mission work is constantly interrupted or put at risk.

3. Commercial Real Estate

- Office vacancies are rising as companies choose not to renew leases, citing employee safety and declining area reputation.
- Encampments near building entrances deter foot traffic and damage property values.
- Construction delays and rising crime further discourage investment in downtown properties.

PalAmerican's Solutions for Each Sector

Guard Services

- Professional, highly trained officers provide a strong security presence to deter unwanted behavior and protect employees, guests, and assets.
- De-escalation, access control, incident reporting, and stakeholder communication are core competencies.
- Guards act as both protectors and ambassadors—creating safety and reassuring staff, patrons, and guests.

Mobile Patrol Services

- Uniformed patrol officers perform random and scheduled vehicle and foot patrols, locking gates, checking alcoves, and inspecting known encampment zones.
- Alarm response and emergency coordination allow for near-immediate resolution of incidents that may otherwise go unnoticed.
- Reduces fear and increases the perception (and reality) of safety.

Security Operations Center (SOC)

- Denver-based or remote surveillance via PalAmerican's SOC provides 24/7 monitoring of high-risk properties.
- Video analytics detect loitering and after-hours activity, with protocols in place for dispatch or police coordination.
- Ideal for commercial real estate clients with limited on-site security or high vacancy.

PalAmerican's Differentiated Approach to Empathetically Handling the Unhoused

- Clear property boundaries, visible signage, and environmental design tactics (e.g., thorny plants, no-sleep benches, locked dumpsters) discourage loitering.
- Coordination with city officials and law enforcement ensures lawful but humane removal of encampments.
- Strategic lighting, secured outlets, and continuous monitoring reduce opportunities for unauthorized activity.
- Regular cleaning removes unattended belongings and applies the "broken windows" theory to maintain order.
- Officers are trained to respectfully engage, avoid confrontation, and offer information about nearby shelters and support services.
- Staff and residents are educated on safe practices, de-escalation, and how to contribute meaningfully to long-term solutions.

Conclusion & Call to Action

Downtown Denver needs help—and fast. The rise in homelessness is undermining the city's heart, causing businesses to shutter, buildings to empty, and residents to lose confidence in their safety. But with the right partnership, revitalization is possible.

PalAmerican offers a proven, compassionate, and effective approach to restoring downtown safety, maintaining order, and ensuring that every stakeholder—businesses, NGOs, residents, and the unhoused—are treated with respect and dignity.



Take the Next Step

- Schedule a Discovery Meeting – Let's assess your security needs and design a tailored solution for your property, venue, or organization.
- Hire PalAmerican as Your Security Consultant – We provide expert vulnerability assessments, risk evaluations, and strategic recommendations that improve your current posture and prepare your team for the future.
- Implement Comprehensive Training – Equip your staff with essential skills in de-escalation, recognizing, reducing, and managing aggressive and violent behavior to confidently manage today's downtown security challenges.



Contact us today.

Together, we can reclaim the safety, hospitality, and vibrancy of Downtown Denver.

