



BUSINESS HOUSING ADVOCATE WORKBOOK



arvadachamber.org/housing
(303) 424-0313

INTRODUCTION

This Business Housing Advocate Workbook seeks to support you as a business leader in our region in developing your understanding of the effects that barriers to housing access have on your business, what it means to provide testimony and advocate for housing access, and how to develop your own narrative to use in future testimony.

To better understand the housing burden for this region's workforce, there are some important data points to consider first. Understanding data related to income-aligned homeownership and rental access can help support advocacy efforts and help you as business leaders share how lack of housing access impacts your business, recruitment and retention of top talent, and economic success. The below outline data, resources, and links to help craft your testimony and narrative.



Important to consider: AMI (Area Median Income)

Area Median Income (AMI) is defined as the midpoint of a specific area's income distribution. When discussing workforce housing challenges, the Arvada Chamber is typically looking at middle and middle-high income earners.

- The average salary in Arvada is \$51,530 per year, or \$25 per hour according to [ZipRecruiter](#)
- Most salaries in Arvada range between \$37,879 (\$18 hourly) and \$65,180 (\$31) annually per [ZipRecruiter](#). This salary range includes employees in Food and Beverage, Retail, Education, Waste Management, Arts and Recreation, Health Care, and Transportation according to [Lightcast](#) data.

According to the [Denver Housing Stability 2023 AMI Limits](#), the following annual salaries describe each AMI level:

- 60% AMI: \$54,780
- 80% AMI: \$71,900
- 100% AMI: \$91,280
- 120% AMI: \$109,560

According to the [Fannie Mae AMI Tool](#) for Arvada, they identify \$104,244 as the “home ready” income needed to purchase a home in Arvada. Individuals and households earning \$104,244 are best able to afford a home of \$425,000 or below. Among the homes currently on the market for sale, those within this income-aligned category make up 12% of available homes to purchase in Arvada and 21% of available options in Jefferson County, as reported by [Zillow](#).

According to [Out of Reach](#), the “housing wage” needed to afford a 2-bedroom rental is \$32.13 per hour in Colorado (\$66,830 annually) and \$35.69 per hour (\$74,240 annually) in Jefferson County. An individual would need to work 105 hours per week at minimum wage to afford a 2-bedroom rental in Jefferson County.

According to the [Denver Housing Stability 2024 AMI Limits](#), workers making \$54,780 (60% AMI) should be paying \$1,761 for a 2-bedroom rental, and those making \$91,280 (100% AMI) should be paying \$2,934 for a 2-bedroom rental.

According to a report from [Stacker](#), the current average commute time of the workforce traveling to Arvada is 27 minutes. Additionally, 42% of Arvada’s commuting workforce drives 30 minutes or more one-way to travel to their place of work. Research shows that employees commuting 30 minutes or more are significantly more likely to leave their place of employment, and employers are more likely to experience frequent employee turnover. Employees who have a [15-minute](#) or shorter commute are 20% more likely to stay at their place of employment.

Arvada Housing Market:

- The average two-bedroom rental in Jefferson County is [\\$1,671 per month](#)
- The average rent in Arvada, CO is [\\$1,831 per month](#)
- The median home price in Arvada is [\\$630,000](#)
- The median home price in Jefferson County is [\\$640,000](#)
- In [Arvada](#), 75% of housing units are owner-occupied, and 25% of units are renter-occupied
- The rental vacancy rate in Arvada is between [1.9%](#)- [2.6%](#)
- The homeowner vacancy rate in Arvada is [0.5%](#)

What sticks out to you most about the data listed above?

What data point listed above, or otherwise, would be most helpful when developing your narrative?

WHAT IS A BUSINESS HOUSING ADVOCATE?

What is one reason you want to be a Business Housing Advocate?

Workers from across the income spectrum—from teachers to firefighters to hospitality and tech workers—should be able to find and attain income-aligned housing within reasonable proximity to work. To achieve this we need accommodative public policy and direct action through collaborations and business leadership and advocacy.

A Business Housing Advocate (BHA) is a leader or representative within a company or organization who actively champions the need for attainable, income-aligned housing for a region's workforce and broader community. A BHA understands that housing affordability is crucial for attracting and retaining talent, improving employee productivity, and fostering a stable and vibrant local economy. Business Housing Advocates work to influence policies and collaborate with local governments, housing developers, community organizations, and local chambers of commerce to support legislation, initiatives, and projects that expand housing stock and access. By addressing housing challenges and barriers, business leaders can create a sustainable environment that benefits both the workforce and the community, ultimately contributing to the overall economic health and resilience of the region.

Why Participate as a Business Housing Advocate?

- Gain access to opportunities to provide testimony and advocacy to housing initiatives and projects that benefit the workforce and community
- Business voices are often missing from housing advocacy and business housing advocacy can provide a key voice to advance these efforts
- Business leaders are able to utilize advocacy to help "move the needle" on increasing access to and stock of income-aligned housing for their workforce

What is one benefit you see to being a Business Housing Advocate for your business, workforce, and community?

TESTIMONY AND ADVOCACY



Testimony and advocacy are crucial tools for business leaders aiming to drive positive change in their communities, especially regarding critical issues like housing access. Testimony involves providing a firsthand account and experience to influence policy decisions and raise awareness about the importance of attainable housing. Advocacy encompasses a broader range of activities, including engaging with policymakers, collaborating with community organizations, and promoting and sharing materials on a specific issue or action. These efforts are essential as they help amplify the business community's voice, showcasing the direct link between housing accessibility and economic vitality, employee well-being, and regional growth.

Providing testimony—a specific advocacy strategy—allows business leaders to directly communicate the real-world consequences of housing access on business to policymakers and the public. By sharing firsthand experiences and expert insights, business leaders can highlight the critical link between income-aligned housing, economic stability, employee well-being, and business success. Testimony can influence legislative decisions, garner public support, and drive meaningful policy changes that benefit both businesses and the broader community.

Providing testimony can feel intimidating, what would you need to feel comfortable and confident in providing your testimony to policymakers and the public?

WRITING YOUR TESTIMONY

1. Introduce yourself.

Address the council, committee, and/or legislators. Share your name, business, location, years in business, number of employees/size of business, scope of business and/or involvement in the community. This should be 2-3 sentences long.

2. Summary of issue and position you are speaking on.

Provide a short summary of the issue, legislation, project, etc. you are testifying for and clear support or oppose position. Briefly share why you are advocating for/against this issue, project, etc. This should be 2-3 sentences long.

3. Tell your story.

Identify how housing access and lack of income-aligned housing impacts your business and how this legislation or project would influence that issue. What would it mean to have income-aligned housing access for the workforce? Share data and a personal story. This should be 2-3 paragraphs.

Have some key data points in mind when sharing your narrative, which can include the following:

- How many employees over the past 2 years have you lost due to housing access (employees who left positions due to housing affordability or access)?
- How many potential employees have declined positions due to lack of income-aligned housing?
- How many employees are commuting 30 or more minutes away from their place of employment?
- Number/percent of employees who live outside of Jefferson County
- Housing wage vs. wage of employees
- Impact of recruitment and retention challenges on your business - finances, production, etc.

4. Make an ask to your audience.

What is your ask for the testimony audience (council members, legislators, etc)? What would be helpful in solving the issue you were providing testimony for? What is your recommendation? This should be 2-3 sentences long.

5. Conclusion.

Conclude your testimony. Thank your audience for listening. This should be 1-2 sentences long.

»» USE THE FOLLOWING PAGE TO DRAFT YOUR TESTIMONY

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HOW TO ADVOCATE

There are numerous ways to advocate and provide testimony, or voice support for legislation, initiatives, and projects that would increase access to housing for middle-income earners. The first step is staying updated on advocacy and testimony opportunities. The Arvada Chamber launched a tool called Muster to help you stay informed about advocacy and testimony opportunities, how to contact your legislators, and provide a voice of support or opposition. You can sign up at arvadachamber.org/Muster and select "Housing" (and other areas) as an interest area. This will allow you to be informed of upcoming advocacy opportunities related to housing.

If you are providing oral testimony for legislation, initiatives, or projects:

Colorado State Legislature:

When a proposed bill is sent to a Committee, the chair of each committee will determine when a bill is scheduled for a hearing and how testimony, if any, will be available. Members of the public are welcome to participate in committee meetings. To testify at the state legislature, you must register ahead of time. You can provide testimony in-person or remotely, and submit written testimony. You will want to be connected through Muster to learn about state advocacy opportunities and opportunity to testify through Committee meetings.

To register ahead of time and choose how you will be testifying or participating, click [HERE](#). You will be able to select how you are testifying and be informed of the Committee and Hearing Item.

Jefferson County Public Hearings:

To testify on a regional initiative or project, you can attend a Jefferson County Public Hearing. These meetings are opportunities for county officials to approve contracts, expend funds, hear testimony, and make decisions on land use and county matters. They are open to the public and located at the Courts and Administration Building (100 Jefferson County Parkway, Golden, CO 80401) in Room One on Tuesdays at 8:00am. You also will need to register ahead of time to testify. You can register ahead of time and learn more [HERE](#).

Arvada City Council Meetings:

To testify on local issues, you can sign up to provide public comment during an Arvada City Council meeting. City Council meetings are opportunities for council members to make official decisions in the form of ordinances, resolutions, or ordinances. City Council meetings are open to the public and have a designated time for public comment. You can sign up to speak during the public comment time frame when you arrive in-person for the meeting, or ahead of time if you are attending virtually. You can learn more [HERE](#).

What are three things for you to remember to effectively provide testimony at the local, regional, or state level?

CONCLUSION



Business leaders have a key role in increasing the access to housing for their workforce through advocacy and testimony to share their experiences and the impact of housing on their business. Through advocacy, business leaders are able to engage and support increased access to housing for the workforce and reduce the housing burden in our region. Testifying can be intimidating, and often advocates only have 2-3 minutes to share an impactful story to support efforts at the local, regional, and state level. Continue to work on your narrative and explore opportunities to tell your story!

Key Elements of Testifying Reviewed in the Workbook:

- **Sign up in advance:** When testifying at the local or state level, it is important to register in advance and reserve a spot and have your time to provide testimony.
- **Practice, practice, practice:** It is always good to practice your testimony to feel confident and comfortable when delivering your argument. Often you are able to have notes or a script when speaking, but it is always good to practice.
- **Be aware of your time limit:** There is often a time limit of 2-3 minutes to provide testimony, so it is important to know how long you have and to stick to that time.
- **Address the chair and members of the committee:** Always start your testimony with addressing your audience and thanking them for their time, both at the beginning and end of your testimony.
- **State your position and use your personal narrative in your testimony:** Remember your narrative to share your story, identify common values with your audience, and state the importance or urgency of your position.

Your experience and voice matter. By using your voice to advocate for housing access for the region's workforce, you can significantly enhance the economic strength and resilience of your region.

RESOURCES

Housing Affordability and Access:

- [Denver Housing Stability 2023 Home Income Limits Data](#): This resource helps highlight the recommended home income and home rent limits for those living in the Denver-Metro area
- [ZipRecruiter](#): This resource provides data on the average wage in Arvada
- [Out of Reach](#): This resource provides data and information at the state and county level on housing affordability, income-levels, and working hours needed to access rental housing.
- [Fannie Mae AMI Tool](#): This resource allows you to look at a city and specific zip code to identify the wage needed to be "home ready," or to afford purchasing a home, in that area
- [Redfin](#): This resource allows you to look at the median home prices, and compare to previous years and other cities and counties.
- [GuaranteedRate](#): This resource allows you to look at how Arvada is "rated" in different areas, including housing to compare how market trends have changed over time, demographics on the community, and current housing availability.
- [Point2](#): This resource allows you to see rental market trends in Arvada, and other metropolitan areas in Colorado, and compare rent costs, attainment, and demographics of renters in your region.

Advocacy and Testimony Tips:

- [One Colorado's Guide to Testifying at the Colorado State Capitol](#): This resource provided by One Colorado has an overview and step-by-step guide of what to expect when testifying at the state capitol, how to sign up, how to prepare, and tips on how to deliver your testimony effectively.
- [Johns Hopkins Public Health How to Testify](#): This resource includes a video and tip sheet on how to effectively give public testimony. This focuses on providing testimony at the legislative level, but can also be applied to opportunities at the local and regional level.
- [ACTE Testifying Before Policymakers](#): This resource includes a template for writing your testimony to share at the local, regional, and state level, and tips for how to deliver your oral statement effectively. These tips can apply to testimony opportunities at the local, regional, and state levels.



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