

If You Prefer an Existing Home to a New Home, Factor In Some Improvements

Existing homes can sometimes cost more to own than newer homes. Let's look at the systems that have the biggest impact on long-term ownership costs.

Roofs, HVAC systems, water heaters, insulation, and windows all play a role, but understanding where these components are within their expected service life is important.

It's important for homebuyers to know what costs are on the horizon. There will always be unforeseen expenses with both new and old homes that can't be predicted, but much of the cost a homeowner encounters is fairly predictable.

For example, if a water heater has three years remaining on its expected service life at the time of purchase, the buyer should budget for replacement. However, don't replace it with a new gas water heater. I replaced mine with a new heat pump water heater – for which there are tax credits and rebates from Colorado and Xcel Energy – and was so glad I did.

The same calculation can be made for a gas forced-air furnace. It may not be old enough to have the seller replace it following your inspection, but you should expect to have it replaced within a few years. I recommend upgrading to a heat pump system which uses your existing ductwork, but be sure to buy a *cold-climate* heat pump. That way you won't need a "hybrid" system which retains the natural gas firebox for backup during sub-freezing weather. **Sensi-**

ble Heating & Cooling (720-876-7166) is a good company to ask about such a retrofit. They could sell you a "high efficiency" gas furnace but will probably convince you to go with a heat pump system which costs more but has a higher return on investment from its lower cost of operation.

Insulation is the one exception on this list. Depending on the material, undisturbed insulation can outlive many of the home's core systems. However, the insulation in older homes may be inadequate and can be augmented by having an insulation company blow cellulose into the exterior walls of your home to fill the remaining gap caused by batt insulation that may have settled. The ownership costs associated with insulation are more closely tied to energy performance and comfort. While newer homes are generally more energy efficient than older homes, that doesn't mean older homes cannot be improved through home performance upgrades such as insulation and air sealing. I had **About Saving Heat** (no longer in business) do this to a 1950s home I owned in Golden, and the improved comfort level during cold weather was amazing.

A qualified home energy auditor or home performance contractor is the best professional to evaluate those opportunities. I had Bill Lucas-Brown (970-846-4766) of **GB3 Energy** do an energy audit on my home in south Golden, including a blower-door test.

That audit produced a menu of 14 things that could be improved – from caulking around leaky window frames to blowing additional insulation into the attic. I then hired him to make those improvements, making my home much more comfortable year-round.

In conclusion, a new home can be very attractive for its new components that won't need service or replacement for many years,

but you may find an existing home more attractive, not only for its lower property taxes, but for its charm and location. With the proper investment, you can bring it up to better-than-new condition and a higher level of efficiency. (See what **Steve Stevens** did at <http://RealEstateToday.substack.com>.)

My thanks to **Alpine Building Performance, LLC**, for inspiring this week's topic.

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By JIM SMITH
Realtor®

All Front Range Cities Lost Value Year-Over-Year

Nationally, home prices are essentially flat, rising just 0.8% year-over-year, according to an analysis from ResiClub Analytics based on the Zillow Home Value Index. That modest gain is similar to last year's, but the more important story, felt clearly in Colorado's Front Range markets as well, is the widening divide between metros with rising prices and those slipping into decline.

ResiClub reports that 77 of the nation's 300 largest metro areas posted year-over-year price declines **between May 2025 and May 2026**. That's down from a peak of 110 metros with declines last summer, suggesting the sharp softening that began in early 2025 has stabilized. Even so, the national market remains soft, with appreciation barely above zero and inventory levels still reshaping local dynamics.

Colorado's Front Range cities all appear in those 77 cities, including Denver (metro), Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, Greeley, Boulder, and Pueblo. While none rank among the nation's steepest decliners, each is experiencing slower appreciation than during the pandemic boom, with inventory rising unevenly across the state.

The metros seeing the most weakness nationally are concentrated in the Sun Belt, especially the Gulf Coast and the West Coast. Many of these markets

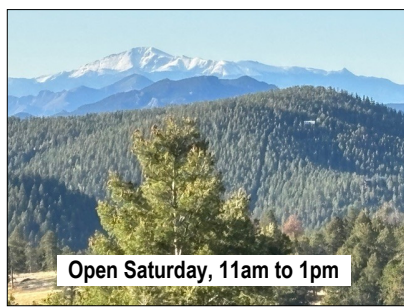
experienced the steepest pandemic-era run-ups, leaving prices out of sync with local incomes once mortgage rates surged in 2022. Builders in these regions have also added substantial new supply, often offering incentives or price reductions to pull buyers toward new construction and away from resale listings.

By contrast, many markets in the Northeast and Midwest continue to post year-over-year gains, supported by inventory levels that remain well below 2019 norms. In some metros, the divergence is dramatic: Hartford, Connecticut, now sits 25.6% above its 2022 peak, while Austin, Texas, remains 27.3% below its peak.

Here's a breakdown of Front Range cities:

Denver–Aurora–Lakewood	-2.68%	Moderate decline; reflects rising inventory and normalization
Greeley	-2.54%	Pandemic-era gains unwinding; not among steepest national drops
Pueblo	-2.44%	Decline consistent with statewide cooling
Boulder	-1.94%	Higher-income market; smaller decline than Denver and Greeley
Colorado Springs	-1.77%	Demand cooling; inventory up from 2021–2022 lows
Fort Collins	-1.18%	Least affected among Colorado metros listed

Here's a Great Conifer Listing With Pikes Peak View



Open Saturday, 11am to 1pm

This home at **30473 Kings Valley Drive** south of Conifer is a must see if you are interested in serene foothills living. Located just a half mile from Hwy 285, it is an easy Denver commute, a 10-minute trip to Staunton State Park or a weekend in the mountains. You'll love to spend time relaxing and entertaining on the expansive deck with its view of Pikes Peak (left). This former builder's home is unique in its architectural design that showcases mountain views. A soothing indoor waterfall greets you when you enter the home, designed to bring the natural beauty of the outdoors

into the home. The main level features a great room with a vaulted ceiling, floor to ceiling windows which provide passive solar heating in the winter, an eat-in kitchen with island, 2 bedrooms and a bath.

Upstairs is the primary suite with 5-piece bath, walk-in closet and a private deck with hot tub. A lower-level family room adds flexible living space. Unlike most foothills homes with well and septic, this home is on the community well and public sewer. View the narrated video walk-through that I created for you at www.GRElistings.com.



Listed at only **\$925,000**, this home is an exceptional value in an exceptional foothills subdivision. **I'm holding it open this Saturday from 11am to 1pm.** Come say hello. If you buy this home using me, I will pay for your professional home inspection, and Jaxzann Riggs of The Mortgage Network will pay for your appraisal if you use her for your mortgage loan. If you can't make the open house, call your agent or me at **303-525-1851** to request a private showing.

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Jim Smith, Broker
CENTURY 21 Golden Real Estate
303-525-1851
Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com



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