



# Executive Summary

Nearly every community in Colorado has its own museum.  
**Except Denver.**

This initial feasibility study provides a basis for imagining what a Museum of Denver could be and assessing its viability. Building upon the body of literature around starting a new museum, including academic scholarship, how-to guides, first-hand accounts, and comparable feasibility studies, this study applies current theory and best practices in the museum field to the question of a Museum of Denver. This background research provides overviews of crucial considerations for any new museum, such as fundraising, the board of directors, admission revenue potential, financial models, stakeholders and public participation, site selection, benchmarks, and timeline. The study marshals data using multiple methodologies to consider the viability of creating a Museum of Denver.

Reviews of eight potential peer institutions nationally and locally provide case studies and possible operational models from which to develop benchmarks. Detailed data was compiled for each institution and the community it serves.

These institutions were selected to represent a spectrum of institutions across the nation that are located in communities demographically

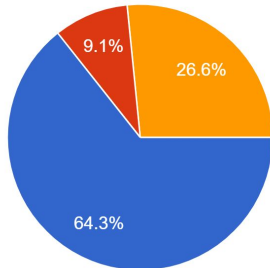
comparable to Denver, sized instructively as potential models for a Museum of Denver, or located locally to provide insight into potential Colorado audiences.

These case studies illuminate the parameters within which the Museum of Denver will likely operate and highlight different approaches to issues the museum will need to sort through, such as collections strategies, pricing structures, workforce size, the likely need for public financial support, frequency of exhibition rotation, and even expanded notions of what constitutes an exhibition. They also highlight Denver's advantages as among cultural markets. With a relatively affluent and highly educated population, as well as the city's rapid recent growth and strong tourism sector, Denver enjoys a number of market advantages that auger support for a new city museum.

To assess interest and gather ideas about what Denverites would like to see out of their museum, an online survey targeted to Denver residents and designed to gauge interest in a Museum of Denver. This survey was distributed via social media channels and by enlisting the help of neighborhood associations. Questions assessed respondents'

Do you think Denver should have a museum showcasing our history and the city today?

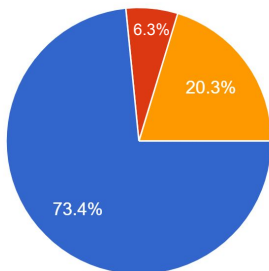
143 responses



- Yes, it's about time!
- No, we already have enough museums
- Maybe, I'm not sure

Would you visit a Museum of Denver?

143 responses



- Yes!
- No
- Maybe, if friends or family were in town

interest in a proposed Museum of Denver and what topics they felt such a museum should address. It also provided space for open-ended suggestions and comments.

This survey found broad support among city residents for a Museum of Denver, with 64 percent of respondents answering that Denver should have a museum showcasing the city's history. If such a museum existed, nearly

three-quarters of respondents said they would be likely to visit (and only 6 percent said they would stay away). Respondents identified Civic Center Park and the Platte River Corridor as good locations for such a museum.

The survey respondents also shared their interpretive preferences for the new museum: Likely museum visitors desire an institution that focuses clearly on the city, exploring the creation and evolution of the urban fabric, and does not shy away from difficult moments in our shared past. At the same time, the survey revealed a thirst for the museum to provide a good time that went beyond the traditional exhibition model many history museums follow.

In conclusion, the Museum of Denver is not only feasible but has a likelihood of success. The next phases of this assessment should further refine collections strategies and potential sites, which will determine necessary staff size and, ultimately, budget. One site that the study recommends for further investigation is the McNichols Building in Civic Center Park. Another possibility raised by this study is that of a partnership with the nearby History Colorado Center.

Wherever it may ultimately be located, a museum in line with those analyzed as case studies could be open in five to ten years in Denver, with an operating budget of \$3 to \$4.5 million supplied in part by public funding sources, and an annual attendance of 130,000 to 150,000.

No matter which path ultimately emerges as most promising, this preliminary assessment offers a very promising start to the creation of a Museum of Denver. Planning should continue.