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From the Denver Business Journal:

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Denver ranked unfavorably as an affordable city for health-care jobs

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The Denver health-care sector may be growing, but it's not a good place for professionals to move for a job because of the high costs of housing here, according to a new report.

Abodo, an online apartment-marketing site, ranked 76 cities in terms as places to find the best and most affordable health-care jobs in the country — an effort that follows on previous reports detailing other industry sectors.

Denver, normally a top-ranked city for most job markets, ranked 57th on the list, largely because of the rising apartment rents that make it tougher to live affordably for lower-paid professionals like pharmacy technicians or licensed professional nurses.

Sam Radbil, senior communications manager for the Wisconsin-based firm, said he was surprised to see Denver's ranking after the company factored in health-care job openings, median salaries for those positions and median rent prices for one-bedroom apartments, which reached \$1,239 at the time of the report.

Denver ranked high in Abodo's recent survey on the best cities for tech workers, but it came in at the middle of the pack for job openings and among the highest rent prices in the country.

"Obviously, there are always going to be some jobs that come with the universities and hospitals in town," Radbil said. "But we wouldn't consider [Denver] a major hub for health-care opportunities."

This issue has not escaped local economic-development leaders, despite the fact that both the **Metro Denver Economic Development** Corp. and the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade have listed health care as one of the core industries for which they seek to recruit jobs.

Patty Silverstein, chief economist for the Metro Denver EDC, noted that cities and health systems around the country have had trouble recruiting another health-care providers to keep up with the expanding pace of jobs in the industry.



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But she acknowledged that the high apartment rates can affect the ability of existing systems to recruit for this and other fields — one of the primary reasons that the EDC has been a leader in the effort to make it harder to file class-action lawsuits over alleged construction defects, a change they feel would make more builders comfortable again with putting up condominiums.

“We weren’t too surprised [at the report] because we know that housing here in metro Denver is indeed going to be pricier than other parts of the country,” Silverstein said. “We recognize it is a concern.”

Just 16 cities had higher median rents than Denver in the study, and only three — Boston, Miami and Nashville — ranked higher on the list than the Mile High City. Denver’s median occupational salary of \$69,660, meanwhile, was lower than most of the cities that had rent prices in its range.

Abodo found that 52.8 of every 1,000 jobs listed as opening in the Denver/Aurora/Lakewood area were health-care positions, a statistic that ranked it tied for 53rd among the 76 cities.

The report ranked the Durham-Chapel Hill region in North Carolina as the best metro area for finding a health-care job and living affordably, followed by Toledo, Detroit, Cleveland and Lubbock, Texas. San Francisco — which had, by far, the most expensive average rent of the 76 cities — ranked at the bottom of the list.

Ed Sealover

Reporter

Denver Business Journal

