



DESTINATION DENVER COLORADO · RELOCATION GUIDE

Moving to Littleton, Colorado

The honest version: the trade-offs, the costs that surprise people, where buyers actually land, and how to plan a move from another state.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Littleton is a city of about 45,000 people on the South Platte River at the southwest edge of Denver, with a genuine red-brick historic downtown, two light rail stations and the Arapahoe County seat. The name also covers a much larger area of unincorporated Jefferson and Douglas counties that only shares the mailing address, so "Littleton" can mean a 1890s block off Main Street or a brand-new house at the base of the foothills. It suits people who want a walkable small-town center inside a big metro, river trails out the back door and a short drive to Chatfield and the mountains. It suits people less well if they need a quick commute to the north or east side of the metro, or if they assume the Littleton address they're looking at comes with Littleton's city services and schools. Often it doesn't.

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Is Littleton the right fit for you?

I'll say it plainly: Littleton is my absolute favorite suburb in the Denver metro.

But before that's useful, we need to make sure we're talking about the same Littleton. The incorporated city is small, about 14 square miles and about 45,000 people, centered on a historic downtown in Arapahoe County. The mailing address called "Littleton" sprawls far beyond that, across Arapahoe, Jefferson and Douglas counties, and most of it sits outside the city limits. The city itself puts it bluntly: a Littleton mailing address does not mean you live in Littleton. Ken Caryl, Columbine, Roxborough and Sterling Ranch all get Littleton mail and none of them are in the city. One name, one mailbox, three different school districts, three county tax bills, different police and parks.

Here's the quick history, because it explains the place. Richard Little, an engineer from New Hampshire, came to Colorado in the early 1860s and brought his wife Angeline out in 1862, partly because he thought the dry climate would help her asthma. He and his neighbors built a flour mill in 1867, he platted the town in 1872 and it incorporated in 1890. The downtown was built in red pressed brick, which signaled permanence, and that's why there are still more than twenty century-old brick buildings standing along Main Street today. Then in the late 1950s the Martin Company, today's Lockheed Martin, set up on the southwest edge of the area to build Titan missiles, and aerospace has been a pillar of the local economy ever since.

Littleton suits people who want a real downtown they can walk to, with a train running through it, and who still want the river, Chatfield and the foothills within a short drive. It suits people less well if their job is in Boulder, the Tech Center's far side or the airport corridor, or if they want brand-new construction inside the city limits, because there's very little of it.

Why people choose Littleton

- A designated historic downtown: three-story red brick, mountains in the background, local restaurants and breweries, and light rail running right through it
- About 1,400 acres of city parks and open space, plus 880-acre South Platte Park and the paved Mary Carter Greenway along the river
- Chatfield State Park, one of the largest bodies of water near Denver, is next door
- Littleton Public Schools at the core, with Jeffco and Douglas County options in the surrounding area
- A reasonable drive to downtown Denver, and the C Line goes straight to Union Station

What gives people pause

- The city-versus-mailing-address problem. The house you love may be in unincorporated Jefferson or Douglas County, with different schools, taxes and services.

- Downtown Littleton is a 25 to 30 minute drive from Ken Caryl or Columbine. The people who really use downtown live within a mile or two and ride an e-bike in.
- Light rail only matters if you live near a station. Most "Littleton" doesn't.
- The RTD line that serves Littleton changed names in 2026 (the D Line was suspended, the C Line came back) during downtown rail reconstruction that isn't finished until 2027. Check the current schedule before you count on it.
- Not much new construction inside the city. For a new house you're looking at Sterling Ranch, which is Douglas County, 35 to 40 minutes from Denver.

Where is Littleton, and how do you get around?

The city sits along the South Platte River southwest of Denver, roughly between Englewood to the north and Chatfield Reservoir to the southwest, with Bow Mar and Columbine Valley tucked against its west side. Santa Fe Drive (US 85) is the spine; C-470 wraps the southern and western edges.

- **Into Denver:** Plan on about 20 minutes to downtown off-peak via Santa Fe Drive or Broadway. Santa Fe Drive is the convenient road for most of Littleton and continues south toward Sterling Ranch.
- **Into the Tech Center:** C-470 east to I-25. Not a quick trip at rush hour.
- **The west and south edges:** C-470 is the lifeline for Ken Caryl, Roxborough and Sterling Ranch. From Ken Caryl, figure about 35 to 40 minutes to downtown Denver.
- **Light rail:** As of fall 2026, RTD's C Line runs from Littleton-Mineral through Littleton-Downtown, Oxford, Englewood, Bates and Evans to Union Station. Littleton-Downtown has 361 park-and-ride spaces and sits kitty-corner to Main Street; Littleton-Mineral is the end of the line with about 1,200 spaces, across Santa Fe from Aspen Grove. The D Line that used to run to 18th & California downtown was suspended in June 2026, and RTD says it will be permanently discontinued once the downtown rail reconstruction is complete in 2027.
- **The airport:** Far. C-470 east to I-25 and E-470 (toll), or the C Line to Union Station and the A Line.
- **The mountains:** This is where Littleton shines. C-470 to US 285 or I-70 puts you at the foothills in minutes, and Chatfield, Roxborough State Park and Waterton Canyon are a short drive.

What are Littleton's neighborhoods like?

A pattern I've noticed: the closer you get to the foothills, west or south, the mountains stop being a view and start being your backyard. What you trade for that is downtown walkability. Here's how the main areas break down.

Historic Downtown and Old Littleton

The blocks around Main Street, the Ketrang Park pocket and the streets feeding the Littleton-Downtown station. This is the Littleton everyone pictures: older homes, mature trees, the farmers market and Western Welcome Week down the street. These properties carry a premium and rarely come up; my wife and I are constantly watching this area, waiting for the right one. Aspen Grove, with the Tattered Cover bookstore, Alamo Drafthouse and more than 50 shops, and the Breckenridge Brewery Farm House on Santa Fe are both a short ride down the river trail.

Bow Mar

Its own tiny incorporated town on Littleton's northwest edge, straddling the Arapahoe-Jefferson line: about 300 homes on acre lots around a private lake. Homes on the Arapahoe side go to Littleton Public Schools, the Jeffco side to Jeffco. This is among the priciest addresses in the area.

Columbine Valley

Another small incorporated town, on Littleton's west side in Arapahoe County, built around Columbine Country Club (1955) and incorporated in 1959 "to protect the area." Littleton Public Schools throughout. Quiet, affluent, older on average.

Columbine Knolls and the Columbine area

Columbine is an unincorporated community in Jefferson County of about 25,000 people with a Littleton mailing address and Jeffco schools, including Columbine High School. Columbine Knolls is my established-roots pick: one of the area's original planned neighborhoods, with lots up to about a half acre, mature trees and brick ranches and two-stories. It's the counterweight to Sterling Ranch, a place that has held its value for decades. Not cheap, but you know what you're getting.

Ken-Caryl Ranch

Mountain living without having to get into the mountains. Ken Caryl is unincorporated Jefferson County, a community of about 34,000 split by the Dakota Hogback into a valley side and a plains side, with more than 4,800 acres of open space, about 50 miles of private trails, an equestrian center and Jeffco's South Valley Park next door. It's family-dense. I took my daughter for pizza and stopped at a park, and seven or eight deer let us get close. The costs: neighborhood HOAs and about 35 to 40 minutes to downtown Denver on C-470. Jeffco schools.

TrailMark

The one piece of the city that reaches into Jefferson County, in the far southwest corner against Chatfield State Park. Homes from the 2000s, Jeffco schools, and parks and recreation through the Foothills district rather than South Suburban. TrailMark is city of Littleton; the Columbine neighborhoods a mile north are not.

Sterling Ranch

The master-planned community at the base of the foothills between Chatfield and Roxborough, in Douglas County. Construction started in 2016 on 3,400 acres with nine villages planned and roughly 40 percent set aside as open space; it's still being built, so this is where the newest homes and the newest schools are. A K-12 charter opened in 2026, and a district elementary is scheduled to open in August 2027 (as of August 2026). Expect metro district mill levies through the Sterling Ranch Community Authority Board. It's near Lockheed Martin's Waterton campus, which is a big reason people land here. The drawback is distance: 35 to 40 minutes to Denver.

Roxborough

South of Chatfield in Douglas County, at the foot of Roxborough State Park's tilted red sandstone. Arrowhead Golf Club, a public course designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Jr., winds through the same red rock, and in summer it looks like something out of Jurassic Park, red rocks shooting out of green. Remote, scenic, Douglas County schools.

What does it cost to own a home in Littleton?

Know the whole monthly payment, not just the price. Littleton-specific points:

- **Property tax** — Three counties, three assessors. Inside the city you're almost always in Arapahoe County, and the Arapahoe County Assessor's office sits in downtown Littleton on Prince Street; look up any address there for the exact mill levy. A "Littleton" address in Ken Caryl or Columbine is Jefferson County; Sterling Ranch and Roxborough are Douglas County. Same mailbox name, different bill.
- **Metro districts** — Sterling Ranch and Ken-Caryl Ranch both fund infrastructure through metro districts, and that levy shows up on the property tax bill, not the HOA statement. The older city neighborhoods generally don't have one. Get the number before you offer.
- **HOA** — Expect one in Ken Caryl (master association plus neighborhood HOAs), Sterling Ranch and most newer subdivisions. Downtown and the 1950s-to-70s neighborhoods often have none.
- **Insurance** — Hail, as everywhere on the Front Range. Foothills neighborhoods near open space should expect wildfire questions from insurers. The South Platte has flooded before; the 1965 flood led to Chatfield Dam and the greenbelt that became South Platte Park. Ask about the flood zone on anything near the river.
- **Sales tax** — The city's own rate is the same everywhere, but the combined rate differs by county. Check the city's sales and use tax page for current rates.
- **Older-home costs** — Downtown homes can be a century old; much of the city is 1950s to 1970s. Budget for roofs, sewer lines, electrical and the usual expansive-soil foundation questions.

What kinds of homes are in Littleton?

Inside the city: Victorian and early-1900s houses in the blocks around Main Street, mid-century ranches and split-levels across most of the rest, and a scattering of condos and townhomes near the two stations and Aspen Grove. New apartments are going up at Mineral Place (as of mid-2025), the 63-acre redevelopment next to the Mineral station, alongside a Costco expected to open in 2026 (as of mid-2025). Outside the city under the same mailing address: 1970s-to-90s two-stories in Ken Caryl and Columbine, 2000s homes in TrailMark, and new construction in Sterling Ranch. If you want a house that doesn't need anything, you're almost certainly looking south in Douglas County.

How do schools work in Littleton?

Three districts, by address. Littleton Public Schools serves most of the city plus Columbine Valley and parts of Bow Mar, Centennial, Columbine, Englewood and Greenwood Village, about 12,900 students in 2025-26 with three comprehensive high schools (Arapahoe, Heritage and Littleton), the EPIC career-pathways campus and two charter schools, Littleton Academy and Littleton Preparatory. It carries one of the strongest reputations of any district in Colorado. Jeffco Public Schools covers Ken Caryl, Columbine and TrailMark, with Chatfield, Columbine and Dakota Ridge high schools; Jeffco closed a wave of elementary schools, mostly in 2023, so confirm a specific school is still open. Douglas County School District covers Sterling Ranch and Roxborough, where brand-new schools are still being built. Small slices of the city fall in Englewood and Sheridan districts.

Colorado has open enrollment, and LPS takes in-district and out-of-district applications each fall for the following year, but seats aren't guaranteed. Always check the individual school for the individual address, not the district.

What is there to do in Littleton?

Parks, trails and open space

The city counts more than 1,400 acres of parks and open space, and South Suburban Parks and Recreation runs most of them. South Platte Park is the centerpiece: 880 acres of river bottom, seven lakes and two and a half miles of the South Platte, with the Carson Nature Center. It was established in 1983 on river land left open after the 1965 flood. The Mary Carter Greenway is the paved trail through it, running from Englewood to Chatfield past Hudson Gardens, a 30-acre botanical garden on Santa Fe that works for kids and adults. Lee Gulch and the 71-mile High Line Canal trails tie in from the east; the city is finishing a pedestrian underpass under Broadway, scheduled for completion in 2026, to connect the Lee Gulch segments. Ketrang and Sterne are the main neighborhood parks. As of October 2026, the city is weighing long-term options for Ketrang Lake, which has been losing water to evaporation and seepage. Chatfield

State Park next door has a reservoir with boat ramps, a swim beach, almost 200 campsites and more than 30 miles of trail.

Events

Western Welcome Week in August is the anchor, ten days and more than 40 events since 1928, with a Grand Parade down Main Street. A Saturday farmers market started downtown in 2026, the Twilight Criterium bike race takes over downtown in early August, and the Candlelight Walk comes in late November. The Littleton Museum, with two living-history farms, and the Town Hall Arts Center in the 1920 Town Hall round out the culture.

Food and beer

Downtown Littleton has a real row of local restaurants and breweries along Main Street and Alamo Avenue. South on Santa Fe, the Breckenridge Brewery campus has a 300-seat Farm House restaurant and beer garden on 12 acres by the river trail; it's a place I like to hang out.

Three places to start

- **Main Street** — The National Register historic district runs along Main Street, with local restaurants and breweries in red-brick buildings, and the Littleton-Downtown light rail station sits at its southeast corner.
- **South Platte Park and the Mary Carter Greenway** — The paved greenway follows the South Platte through South Platte Park and past Hudson Gardens, a 30-acre botanical garden on Santa Fe.
- **Chatfield State Park** — A reservoir with boat ramps, a swim beach, almost 200 campsites and more than 30 miles of trail, next door to the city's southwest corner.

Who are the big employers in and near Littleton?

Lockheed Martin Space is the giant: about 8,000 of its roughly 11,000 Colorado employees work at the Waterton Canyon campus south of town, where Lockheed builds the Orion spacecraft's heat shield, and in October 2026 it announced up to 1,250 more jobs across Douglas and Jefferson counties, most likely at Waterton. AdventHealth Littleton, the 231-bed Level II trauma center on South Broadway that opened in 1989, is the big medical employer. Littleton Public Schools, Arapahoe County government (the county seat is here) and the city itself are major public employers. Retail is growing at Mineral Place, where Costco is expected to open in 2026 (as of mid-2025) and a SCHEELS with more than 500 jobs is planned for 2029. Much of the workforce commutes to downtown Denver or the Tech Center.

How does Littleton compare with nearby areas?

- **Littleton vs. Englewood** — Next door to the north on the same rail line. Englewood is closer to Denver with its own school district; Littleton has the historic downtown and the county seat.
- **Littleton vs. Centennial** — Centennial is east along the Arapahoe County line, and parts of it share Littleton Public Schools. It's newer, more suburban, with no historic core.
- **Littleton vs. Highlands Ranch** — Highlands Ranch is unincorporated Douglas County to the south: master-planned, newer, with Douglas County schools and a different tax structure. Littleton is older and walkable.
- **Littleton (the city) vs. "Littleton" (Ken Caryl, Columbine, Sterling Ranch)** — Same mail, different everything. The unincorporated areas get the foothills and the newer homes; the city gets downtown, the train and LPS.

A lender's take on Littleton

The thing I keep coming back to is that downtown. Three-story red brick, mountains behind it, a train running through it, and it feels like a small town inside a metro of three million. The more time I spend there as my daughter gets older, the more I enjoy it: Hudson Gardens, the parks, the river trail.

The honest trade is geography. If you want to walk to Main Street, you pay for it and you wait for the right house. If you want the mountains in your backyard, you go west or south, you take on a metro district and an association, and downtown becomes a half-hour drive. Neither is wrong. Just know which Littleton you're actually buying.

Someday my family and I might end up in Littleton. We certainly would not be upset.

Buying in Littleton: what to do first

1. **Get pre-approved** before you tour. Downtown properties rarely come up and go fast.
2. **Run the address through the city's Address Wizard** to confirm whether it's actually in the city of Littleton, and which county it's in.
3. **Price the whole payment** with the right county's property tax, any metro district levy, HOA dues and insurance.
4. **Confirm the school district and the specific school** for the exact address. Three districts; don't assume.
5. **Drive the commute at rush hour** from the actual neighborhood, Santa Fe or C-470, and check the current RTD schedule if the train is part of your plan.

6. **Veterans:** a VA loan works on a 1900s brick house downtown and on a new build in Sterling Ranch alike. If the property has a metro district or is on well water in the foothills, ask early.

Frequently asked questions

Is Littleton its own city?

Yes. Littleton incorporated in 1890 and is the county seat of Arapahoe County, with about 45,000 residents in about 14 square miles. But the "Littleton" mailing address covers large unincorporated areas of Jefferson and Douglas counties that are not in the city.

How do I know if an address is really in the city of Littleton?

Use the City of Littleton's Address Wizard. ZIP codes don't settle it: 80120 is entirely in the city, but 80123, 80127 and 80128 are only partly in it, and 80124, 80125 and 80126 are not in the city at all.

What school district is Littleton in?

It depends on the address. Littleton Public Schools serves most of the city; Jeffco Public Schools serves Ken Caryl, Columbine and TrailMark; Douglas County School District serves Sterling Ranch and Roxborough. Small parts of the city are in Englewood and Sheridan districts.

Does Littleton have light rail?

Yes. RTD's C Line serves Littleton-Downtown and Littleton-Mineral stations with direct service to Union Station. The D Line that previously served Littleton was suspended in June 2026 and is set to be discontinued when downtown rail reconstruction finishes in 2027.

How far is Littleton from downtown Denver?

About 20 minutes by car off-peak from the city center, longer at rush hour. From Ken Caryl or Sterling Ranch, plan on about 35 to 40 minutes.

What is downtown Littleton like?

A National Register historic district along Main Street with red-brick buildings dating mostly from the 1890s, local restaurants and breweries, a light rail station at its southeast corner, a Saturday farmers market and events like Western Welcome Week and the Candlelight Walk. The city approved a long-term plan to make the central blocks of Main Street curbside and more pedestrian-focused, still in planning as of fall 2026.

Who are the biggest employers in Littleton?

Lockheed Martin Space, with about 8,000 employees at its Waterton Canyon campus, and AdventHealth Littleton, a 231-bed Level II trauma center. Littleton Public Schools, Arapahoe County and the City of Littleton are the main public employers.

Sources

Guide reviewed October 24, 2026, and reviewed again twice a year.

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- City of Littleton: Littleton ZIP Codes (which ZIPs are in the city)
- City of Littleton: Parks and Trails (acres of parks and open space)
- City of Littleton: Annual Report (Mineral Place, Reynolds Landing, Lee Gulch underpass)
- City of Littleton: News Center (Ketrang Lake options, Project Main Street input, SCHEELS incentive, Oct. 2026)
- City of Littleton: Littleton Report, June–July 2026 (Lee Gulch underpass, flash flooding)
- City of Littleton: Business & Sales/Use Tax License (sales tax by county jurisdiction)
- City of Littleton: Historic Landmarks and Districts
- City of Littleton: Santa Fe River Corridor
- Littleton Main Street historic district (National Register, red pressed brick, building dates)
- Littleton Museum: Richard and Angeline Little
- Littleton Museum: Western Welcome Week history
- Littleton Museum: The 1965 Flood of the South Platte River (Chatfield Dam, river greenbelt)
- Littleton Museum (living history farms, Smithsonian Affiliate)
- Air Force Plant PJKS (Martin Company Titan plant, late 1950s)
- Town Hall Arts Center: About
- Colorado Division of Property Taxation: Arapahoe County Assessor
- Arapahoe County, Colorado (county seat)
- RTD: Final June 2026 Service Changes (C Line reinstated, D Line suspended)
- RTD: Final September 2026 Service Changes (C Line to be permanently reinstated and D Line permanently discontinued once downtown rail work is complete, work through 2027)
- C Line (RTD)
- Littleton–Downtown station (parking, bus routes, depot)
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- Colorado Department of Education SchoolView: Littleton 6 enrollment 2025-26
- Colorado Department of Education: Open Enrollment
- Littleton Public Schools (boundaries, charters)
- Littleton Public Schools: Preparing Graduates for the Future (three high schools, EPIC Campus)
- Littleton Public Schools: Goddard open enrollment (in- and out-of-district applications)
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- Douglas County School District RE-1
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- Denver7: John Adams Academy celebrates first week of class (K-12 charter opened 2026)
- Mile High CRE: Sterling Ranch to welcome two new schools (Feb. 2025)

- Mile High CRE: Sterling Ranch district elementary scheduled for August 2027 (Aug. 2026)
- Sterling Ranch, Colorado (acreage, villages, open space, metro districts)
- Ken Caryl, Colorado (CDP, population, hogback, Jeffco schools, Lockheed Martin)
- Ken-Caryl Ranch: Dakota Lodge and Equestrian Center (open space acres, trail miles)
- Ken-Caryl Ranch: About Us (Master Association and Metropolitan District, property-tax-funded special district)
- Jefferson County Open Space: South Valley Park
- Columbine, Colorado (CDP, population, schools)
- Bow Mar, Colorado (incorporation, counties, acre lots, schools)
- Town of Bow Mar: Community (about 300 homes, private lake)
- Columbine Valley, Colorado
- Denver Gazette: Lockheed Martin expansion, Waterton Canyon employment, Orion heat shield (Oct. 2026)
- AdventHealth Littleton
- Denver Gazette: Costco coming to Littleton as Qwest tower demolished for Mineral Place (June 2025)
- ColoradoBiz: Scheels to open Littleton store creating more than 500 jobs (Sept. 2026)
- Colorado Community Media: Littleton approves Project Downtown concept design (Nov. 2024)
- Denver7: Main Street makeover proposed for Littleton (Feb. 2025)
- South Suburban Parks and Recreation: Nature (South Platte Park, Carson Nature Center)
- South Suburban Park and Recreation District (service area, South Platte Park)
- Colorado Trail Explorer: Mary Carter Greenway
- High Line Canal Conservancy
- Hudson Gardens
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife: Chatfield State Park
- Chatfield State Park (1965 flood origin)
- Roxborough State Park
- Arrowhead Golf Club
- Breckenridge Brewery (Littleton campus, Farm House)
- Aspen Grove
- Tattered Cover: Locations and Hours (Aspen Grove store)
- Littleton DDA: Western Welcome Week 98th celebration (Aug. 2026)
- Littleton DDA: New Downtown Littleton Farmers Market (2026)
- Littleton DDA: Littleton Twilight Criterium (early August)
- Littleton DDA: Events (Candlelight Walk)
- Gazette: Western Welcome Week Grand Parade celebrates 97th year (Aug. 2025)
- Denver metropolitan area (population)
- Destination Denver Colorado: Moving to Littleton Colorado | My Favorite Denver Suburb! (June 2026)

A note from Jimmy

I'm a mortgage loan originator with the Everetts Lending Team at Edge Home Finance, licensed across Colorado, and I make these guides because the first thing most people need isn't a loan; it's a straight answer about where they're going. When you're ready to talk numbers, or you just want a second opinion on a neighborhood, reach out.

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