

Are you truly ready for rural living?

Depending on where you settle in Middle Park, the nearest Walmart or Target could be more than an hour's drive away. Same goes for the nearest movie theater, bowling alley, or Domino's Pizza. Forget a quick drive to the airport because Denver International Airport (DIA) is NOT just a short jaunt away. Having a car is highly suggested. While some areas of Middle Park have access to public transportation, other areas do not. Furthermore, there are far fewer Uber and Lyft drivers here than in the city, and some areas do not have Uber/Lyft at all. Don't expect to get the largest selection of groceries in some of the more rural towns of Middle Park, and **be prepared for areas of NO cell phone coverage or internet service.**

Have you visited in every season of the year?

Summer is beautiful, green, and has pleasant temperatures. Winter is also beautiful (in its own way), but snow blankets the hillsides and temperatures can drop to -30°F or colder. Spring and Fall bring their own pleasantries but are often referred to as "Mud Seasons" for a reason. Winter lasts much longer than you would think, and summer is much shorter. The different seasons also bring changes to the number of inhabitants in the valley. Summer and winter are very busy, whereas spring and fall are less busy. Likewise, the different seasons bring different challenges regarding road access and conditions. Winter brings snow, so getting in or out of your home on County Roads (and even in town) may take longer than you expect or desired. Our plow drivers work diligently, but there are so many roads to plow, it takes time to get them all clear. ***Slush is often worse than packed snow when trying to maintain control of your vehicle.*** Mud season can also result in dirt roads becoming slick and slimy. **Call "511" or visit www.cotrip.org for road conditions.**



Are you ready for the cost of small-town living?

Believe it or not, the cost of living in Middle Park is quite high. All commodities sold here come from afar, and the cost to transport them here gets added to the price you pay at the store. Sadly, many local businesses struggle to pay wages that match the cost of living. Additionally, the way our local economy waxes and wanes with the seasons means that some businesses only hire seasonally. Thus, finding a full-time, permanent job may be difficult for some newcomers. Finding a home to buy or rent is even harder.

Are you buying your new home because the dense forest around it provides lots of privacy?

Most people today are aware of the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic that devastated our lodgepole pine forests at the turn of the century. Though the beetles have come and gone, wildfire mitigation is still a big deal in both counties. If your prospective homesite has a dense forest around it, please realize that most of those trees may need to be removed to prevent loss of life and structure in the event of a wildfire. **A properly mitigated home is NOT completely hidden behind a vale of thick trees.**

Are you most excited about being up close and personal with the wildlife that call Middle Park home?

Middle Park is blessed to have an abundance of wildlife inhabiting our mountains, valleys, waterbodies, and skies. People come from all over to see our wildlife in their natural habitats. That being said, wildlife inhabited Middle Park long before people settled here. While most wildlife stay out of town limits, it is not uncommon to see wildlife in town as well. Whether it be deer, foxes, raccoons, birds, or even mountain lions and bears, residents and visitors alike must not forget that they are WILD animals (not friendly domesticated ones). **Keep your distance from wildlife, bear-proof your dumpsters and trash cans, and remember that moose sometimes attack when humans get too close** (especially when people are on a stroll with their pets in moose country). *Feeding wildlife also contributes to habituation and the spread of diseases; thus, it is illegal.*

Are you moving here to avoid restrictions on what you can do with your land?

While it is true that there are far fewer HOAs in rural communities than in the city, it does not mean you are free to do whatever you want on your property. **Land in Middle Park is subject to zoning regulations that restrict certain activities.** If your land is zoned for agriculture and ranching is your "business", it does NOT entitle you to operate a non-ag business on your land as well. Be sure to check your zoning restrictions prior to buying land.

Other quirks about rural mountain living

- ◆ The nearest emergency services may be more than 15 miles away.
- ◆ Your route to work may be used for cattle drives during certain times of the year, meaning that you might need to share the road with more than just bicyclists.
- ◆ You will really get to know your neighbors in the small town living. While such opportunity allows you to share friendly waves as you pass each other on the road, it also means that everyone knows everyone else's business! While not so good for the unruly teenager, parents will be blessed with knowing what their children have done before they even step foot in the house. Not that I would know anything about that...lol 😊
- ◆ Being neighborly is a two-way street—the fence you mend today may be good payment for the snow that is plowed from your driveway next winter.