# **DELTA COUNTY** ECONOMIC UPDATE

#### Third Quarter, 2023

#### **Economic Summary**

- Delta City and County sales taxes are both down about a half a percent. Sales taxes are an important indicator because of the national economic narrative regarding consumer spending slowing down.
- Delta County new business entity filings are up 1%, rising from 491 to 496 the same time last year. Overall, Delta new business filings are in a significant uptrend since 2010 and on pace to stay on that trend.
- U.S. GDP growth for Q2 2023 was 2.1%. The previous quarter's growth was initially 1.3% but it was then revised upwards to 2.2%. The Atlanta Federal Reserve's GDPNow estimates 5.4% growth for quarter 3.
- Inflation for October came in at 3.7%, rising from the previous month's number that was closer to 3%. Shelter still remains high, at 7.2%, while food is at 3.7%. Energy prices have fallen from the previous year but are expected to contribute to higher inflation in the coming months.

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# LOCAL ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	Q2 2023	Q1 2023	Q2 2022	change since last quarter	change since last year (comparable quarters)
Local Labor Market					
Unemployment Rate Delta County- NSA	3.30%	4.07%	3.40%	-0.77%	-0.10%
Unemployment Rate Colorado - NSA	2.90%	3.00%	2.90%	-0.10%	0.00%
Unemployment Rate U.S NSA	3.40%	3.80%	3.50%	-0.40%	-0.10%
Labor Force	13,369	12,819	13,327	550	42
Employed	12,927	12,298	12,870	629	57
Unemployed	442	521	457	-79	-15
Business Confidence					
Leeds Colorado Business Confidence Index	43.6	44.1	41.1	-1.13%	6.08%
Sales/Use Taxes	2023 (YTD)		2022 (YTD)		
City of Delta Sales/Use Taxes (as of Sept)	\$6,013,253		\$6,052,261		-0.64%
Delta County Sales/Use Tax (as of Aug)	\$5,452,440		\$5,485,896		-0.61%
Lodging Tax	\$23,843		\$27,307		-12.69%
Business Filings	2023 (YTD)		2022 (YTD)		
Delta County New Business Entity Filings (as of September)	496		491		1.02%

Standard of Living and Growth	2021	2020	2019	2018	% change from previous year
Population	31,661	31,232	31,021	30,835	1.37%
Personal Income	\$867,713	\$841,319	\$809,291	\$783,427	3.14%
Personal Income Per Capita	\$1,457,743	\$1,355,742	\$1,206,772	\$1,175,400	7.52%
Delta County Gross Regional Product (in millions)	\$46,042	\$43,409	\$38,727	\$37,968	6.07%
Median Household Income	\$52,403	\$53,553	\$51,525	\$46,786	-2.15%
Percent of Population Below Poverty Line	13.9%	12.1%	15.1%	14.60%	1.80%

SOURCES IN ORDER OF LISTING: State and Local Unemployment rates: Bureau of Labor Statistics (LAUS); National Unemployment rate: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Labor Force, Employed, and Unemployed: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment; Leeds Colorado Business Confidence Index: Leeds School of Business; Sales/Use Tax information: City of Delta and Delta County; Business Permits: Colorado Secretary of State's Office; Population, poverty, and median household income: U.S. Census Bureau; Personal income: Bureau of Economic Analysis. Note that in all rows where percentages are presented the % change since last quarter and % change since last year represents the difference between the two percentages, not the actual percentage change.

#### The Local Labor Market

The Delta County labor market remains the same, not growing and not significantly shrinking. The employment data from the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment has a small sample size for a county the size of Delta County, so monthly changes are not as important as the longer-term trend. The trend is a falling labor force and employment stagnation. Delta has a low unemployment rate (3.3%), as does the state (2.9%) and the nation (3.4%). Figures 1, 2, 3, and 6 illustrate employment, labor force, and jobs in Delta County, and all show a similar story. As mentioned last newsletter, the BEA jobs data that will be released in Decmeber for 2022 county level data will be an important indicator for Delta to confirm the employment stagnation seen in the LAUS data or to see some job growth year over year.

#### Table 1: 1, 5, and 10 Year Employment Comparison (Yearly Comparison)

	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed
Annual	42	57	-15
5-Year	-922	-848	-74
10-Year	-585	184	-769
Annual %	0.3%	0.4%	-3.4%
5-Year %	-6.5%	-6.2%	-14.4%
10-Year %	-4.2%	1.4%	-63.5%

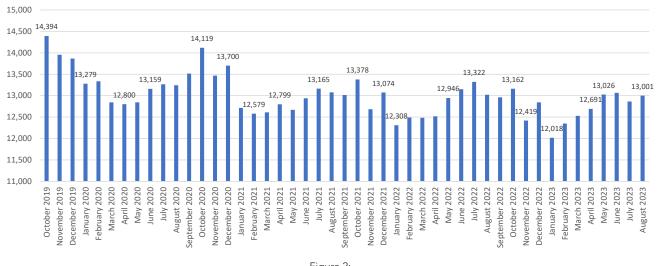
#### **Other Indicators**

Delta City and County sales taxes are both down about a half a percent. Sales taxes are an important indicator because of the national economic narrative regarding consumer spending slowing down. Because of the inflationary environment to be even in real terms (inflation adjusted), sales tax growth would have to match inflation. The fact that sales tax growth is even means adjusting for inflation consumers are spending less. These sales tax numbers indicate the consumer in Delta County is pulling back on spending. Delta County new business entity filings are up 1%, rising from 491 to 496 the same time last year. Overall, Delta new business filings are in a significant uptrend since 2010 and on pace to stay on that trend.

The Leeds Business Confidence Index increased last quarter, rising from an index of 39.8 to 45.1, up 13.32%. This is a large increase, and was driven by expectations for the Colorado economy and for industry profits.

There are no updates to the standard of living and growth data points, the BEA will be releasing new standard of living data in December for 2022.

#### Figure 1: Employment Estimate





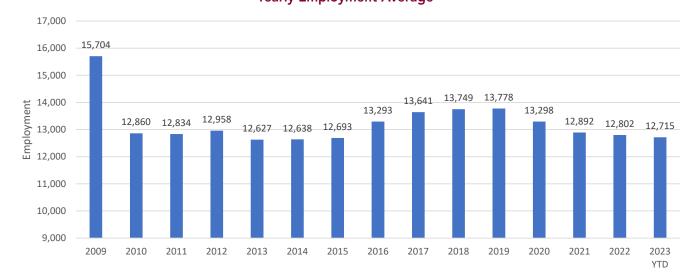


Figure 3: Delta County Labor Force Estimates

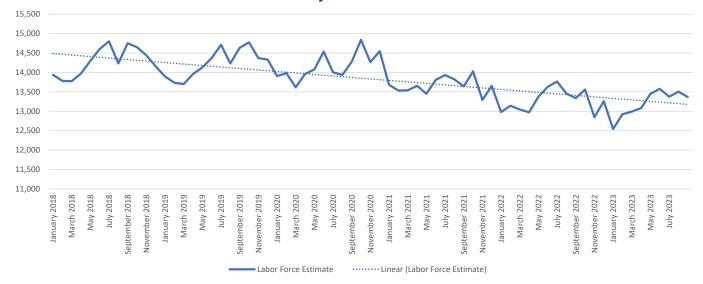


Figure 4: Leeds Business Confidence Index

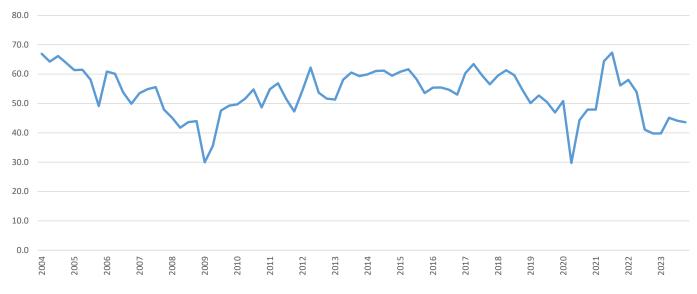


Figure 5: Delta Sales and Use Tax

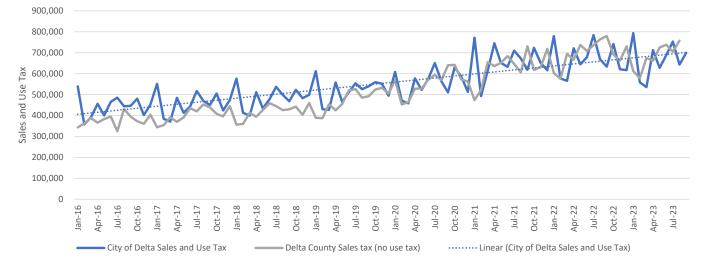


Figure 6: Total Full and Part Time Jobs (BEA)

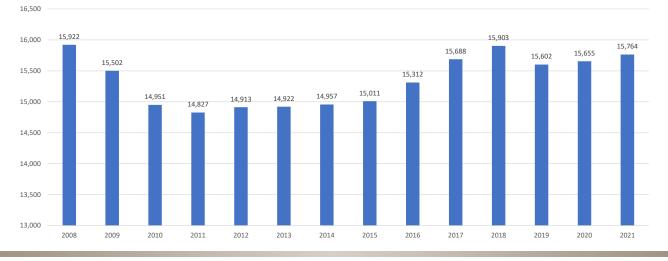


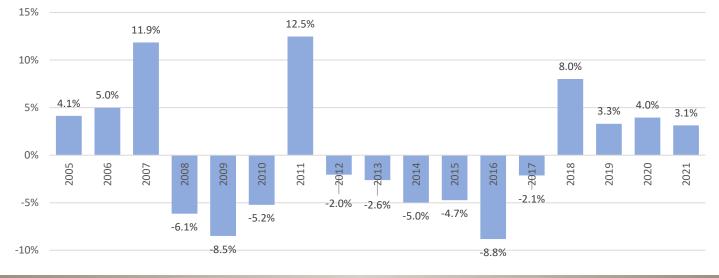
Figure 7: Delta County Median Household Income



Delta County Poverty Rate







#### **Population Trends**

The Colorado State Demography Office produces population estimates and population forecasts. Table 2 illustrates these forecasts for the Western Slope counties. Delta County is expected to grow from the previous 2020 estimate of 31,248 to 33,518 in 2030, 35,506 in 2040, to 36,624 in 2050. That is a 17% increase in population over the next 30 years. This is significantly less than the population growth estimate for neighboring Mesa County, which is expected to grow 42%. Population is a function of birth rate, death rate, and migration. Figures 10 through 15 are sourced from the Colorado State Demography Office, and are heat maps of different population components. Red means large increases, while blue means decreases. There is a key to the right of each figure. Figure 10 illustrates total population change, which for the small counties doesn't accurately represent how relative population change will impact the county. Figure 11 illustrates percent population change, which tells a better story as to the relative change in the county populations. Figures 12 and 13 show birth and death rate, with figure 14 showing the natural rate of increase, or births minus deaths. Delta County has a low birth rate and a high death rate, which means natural population growth is expected to be negative. It is migration (figure 15) that is expected to fuel Delta County's population increase.

Mesa	Montrose	Delta	Garfield	Rio Blanco	Moffat	Routt
155,950	42,800	31,248	61,780	6,520	13,258	24,825
162,629	45,094	32,188	65,632	6,358	12,994	26,751
176,032	48,201	33,518	71,971	6,261	12,841	29,241
190,007	51,133	34,637	79,208	6,081	12,724	31,511
202,388	53,418	35,506	86,470	5,908	12,621	33,472
212,868	54,891	36,160	93,000	5,717	12,509	35,080
221,563	55,571	36,624	97,870	5,507	12,368	36,338
	155,950 162,629 176,032 176,032 202,388 212,868	155,950   42,800     155,950   42,800     162,629   45,094     176,032   48,201     190,007   51,133     202,388   53,418     212,868   54,891	Image: Non-State state	Image: state stat	Image: Non-State information of the state inform	Image: Normal System     Image: No

#### Table 2: Population Estimates Table (2021-2050), Colorado State Dempgraphy Office

Sedgwick Logan Larimer Jackson Phillips Moffat Weld Routt Morgan Boulder Grand Rio Blanco Gilpin Yuma Adams Washington Clear Creek Denve Arapahoe Eagle Summit Garfield Jeff. Douglas Elbert Kit Carson Pitkin Lake Park Mesa Lincoln Teller El Paso Delta Cheyenne Chaffee <= -436 Gunnison -435 to -273 -272 to -109 Fremont Kiowa Montrose Crowley -108 to -55 -54 to 0 Ouray Pueblo Custer 1 to 5,361 Hinsdale Saguache San Miguel Prowers Bent 5,362 to 10,722 Otero San 10,723 to 21,444 Dolores Mineral Huerfano 21,445 to 37,526 Rio Grande Alamosa 37,527 to 53,609 Montezuma 53,610 Las Animas La Plata Costilla Baca Year to year change in total population Archuleta Conejos

Figure 10: Total Population Change (2021-2031)

Figure 11: Percent Population Change (2021-2031)

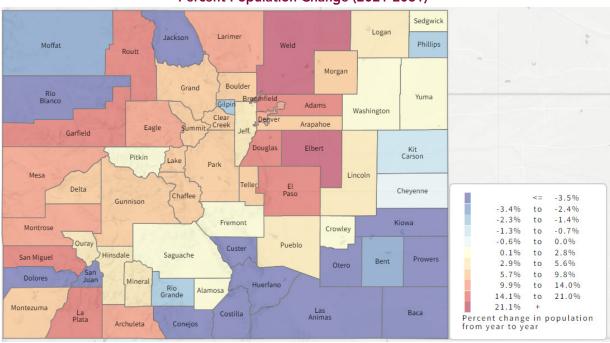


Figure 12: Birth Rate (2021-2031)

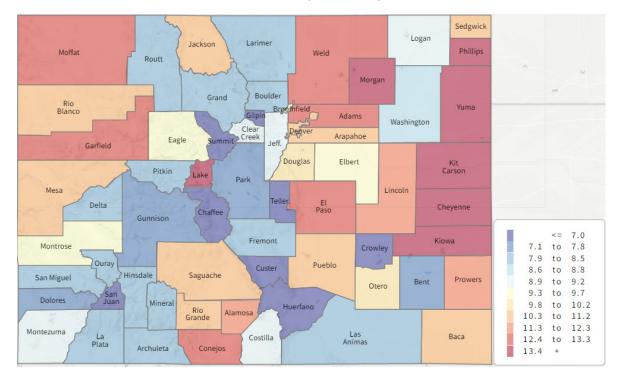
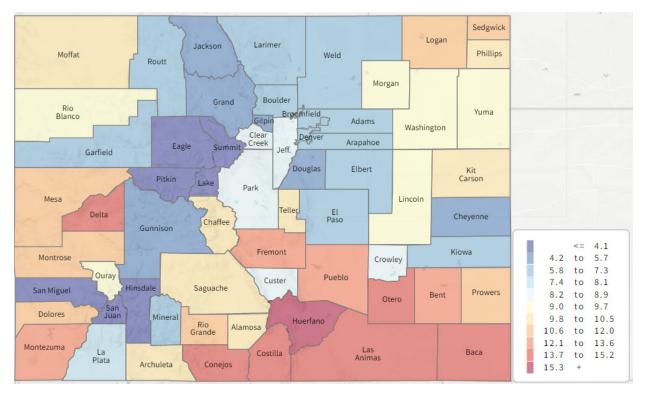


Figure 13: **Death Rate (2021-2031)** 



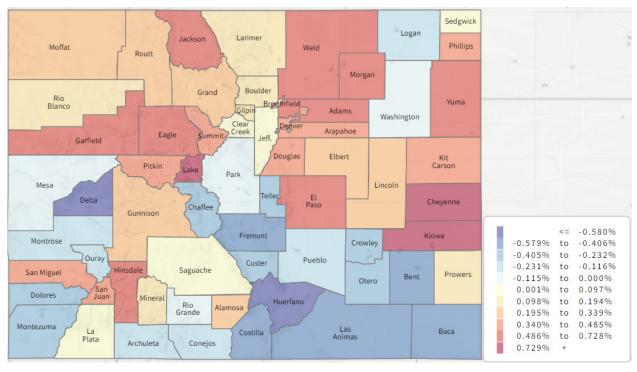
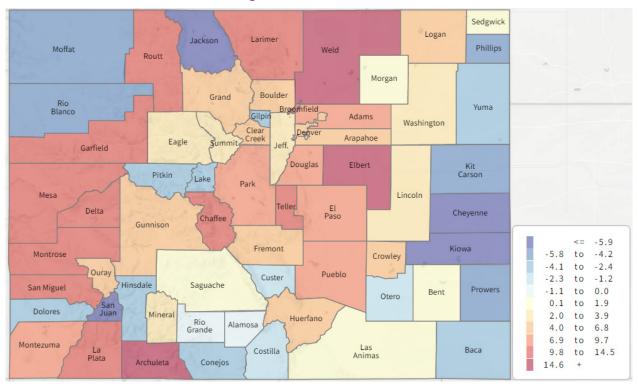


Figure 14: Rate of Natural Increase (2021-2031)

Figure 15: Migration Rate (2021-2031)



#### Delta County Employment Trends

Q1 2023 QCEW data shows gains in jobs and wages year over year. Healthcare, which has lost jobs in several counties over the last two years showed a gain in jobs and a large gain in wages. Largest job gains were in administrative and waste services (68) and finance and insurance (57). There were no significant job losses year over year, which is a great sign. Healthcare maintains the top spot as the largest wage contributor, with retail trade and public administration coming in second and third. Education is omitted due to limited responses to the QCEW survey.

Table 3:

Sector	Average Employment	Total Quarterly Wages	Average Weekly Wage	Total Wage Change	Total Employment Change
Total, All Industries	8,328	\$92,020,673	\$850	\$11,831,571	306
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,609	\$19,195,224	\$918	\$1,811,802	49
Retail Trade	1,184	\$11,084,303	\$720	\$715,722	-8
Public Administration	760	\$9,865,833	\$999	\$1,030,453	32
Construction	490	\$6,277,564	\$985	\$493,824	-4
Manufacturing	543	\$5,966,636	\$846	\$613,348	7
Finance and Insurance	272	\$4,817,054	\$1,361	\$1,504,175	57
Administrative and Waste Services	342	\$3,822,346	\$859	\$1,610,006	68
Accommodation and Food Services	670	\$3,654,745	\$420	\$584,532	35
Professional and Technical Services	222	\$3,646,294	\$1,262	\$1,005,345	19
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	327	\$3,593,343	\$846	\$668,145	26
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	277	\$2,740,272	\$760	\$601,925	19
Wholesale Trade	122	\$1,638,080	\$1,036	\$348,810	-8
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	147	\$1,623,311	\$849	-\$112,301	-7
Transportation and Warehousing	118	\$1,561,594	\$1,015	\$269,808	-3
Information	115	\$1,543,295	\$1,032	\$295,050	-1
Utilities	47	\$921,132	\$1,497	-\$2,575	-3
Management of Companies and Enterprises	30	\$542,731	\$1,376	-\$80,173	3
Mining	11	\$198,887	\$1,391	\$71,313	2
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	33	\$173,810	\$409	\$59,427	6

SOURCE: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (QCEW). The most recent quarterly data available is reported.

#### Table 4: Farm and Sole Proprietor Employment

BEA Data	2021	2020	2019	2018	% change from 2020
Farm Employment	1,266	1,259	1,257	1,263	0.6%
Sole Proprietors (non-farm)	5,573	5,247	5,542	5,673	6.2%

Figure 16: Total Wage Change from Q1 2022 to Q1 2023

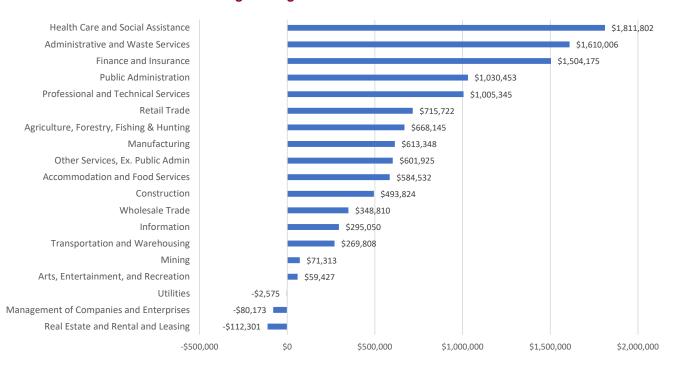
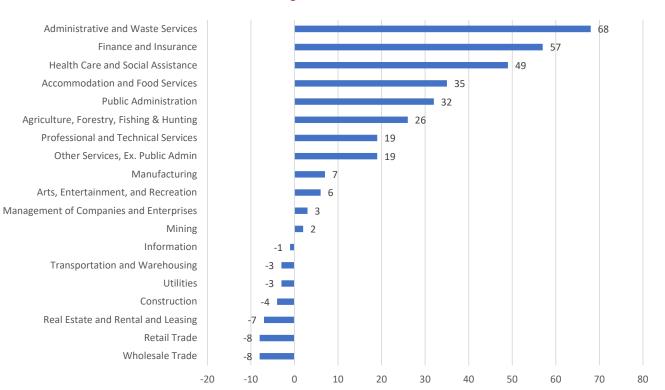


Figure 17: Total Jobs Change from Q1 2022 to Q1 2023



### LOCAL REAL ESTATE

Q2 2023	Q2 2022	% change since last year
138	109	26.91%
164	209	-21.53%
106	133	-20.30%
\$380,000	\$377,167	0.75%
\$463,719	\$425,371	9.02%
115.67	79.33	45.80%
4.40	2.37	85.92%
15	20	-25.00%
4	2	100.00%
6.57%	5.35%	1.22%
7.20%	6.11%	1.09%
	138 164 106 \$380,000 \$463,719 115.67 4.40 15 4 6.57%	138     109       164     209       106     133       \$380,000     \$377,167       \$463,719     \$425,371       115.67     79.33       4.40     2.37       15     20       4     2       6.57%     5.35%

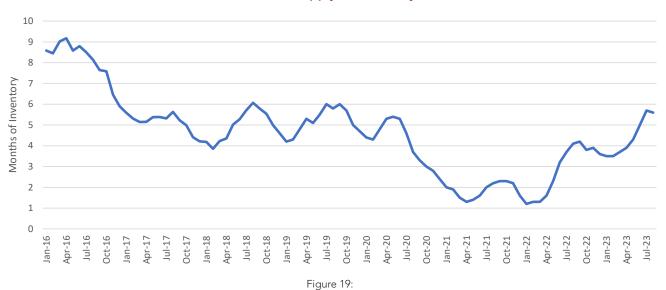
SOURCES IN ORDER OF LISTING: Real Estate Data: Colorado Association of Realtors; Building Permits and Valuation: City of Delta and Orchard City totals; Foreclosure Filings and Sales: Delta County; Mortgage rates: Freddie Mac.

#### Local Real Estate Indicators

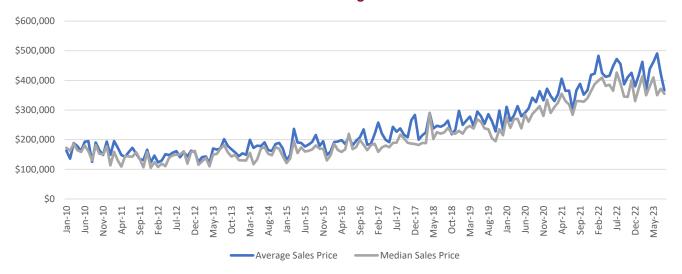
Delta County real estate data shows a housing market that is being impacted by rising interest rates. Interest rates in September averaged 7.2%, pushing 8% in early October. This is due to 10 year treasury bond prices falling, causing yields (interest rates) to increase drastically. This change in the 10 year treasury bond has several explanations, including a response to Federal Reserve policy and its impact on raising short term rates, the Fed's absence in purchasing 10 year treasury bonds, stagnating inflation, and rising U.S. treasury debt.

The Delta County real estate market continues to slow, with inventory rising from the lows of 2022. As inventory rises and as interest rates continue to make homes unaffordable, the median home price has moved horizontal, unable to show any momentum due to affordability. There is of course some volatility due to the size of the county. This can be seen with an increase in the average price year over year, however, if you look at figure 19, the trend is also horizontal for average price. The important metric for price is months supply of inventory. This has risen quite drastically in the last year (figure 18). The general rule of thumb is that when months supply of inventory gets to 5 or 6, prices lose momentum and can even fall. For the quarter, months supply of inventory averaged 4.4, but the most recent data point shows a months supply of inventory at 5.6 (August), which means if inventory accumulates, prices could actually start to fall. Foreclosure filings actually fell from the same time last year, but graphically are on an uptrend since hitting the lows of early 2020.

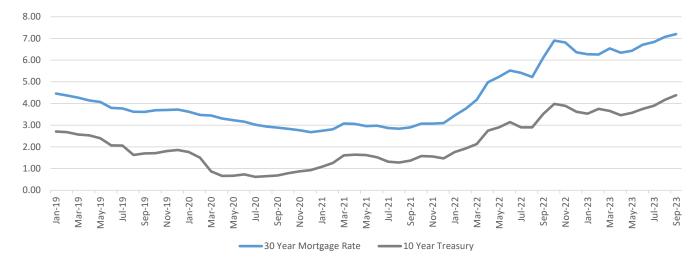












## **Regional Energy**

	Q2 2023	Q1 2023	Q2 2022	% change since last quarter	% change since last year (comparable quarters)
Energy Prices					
WTI Crude Oil	\$73.54	\$75.93	\$108.83	-3.15%	-32.43%
Henry Hub Natural gas	\$2.16	\$2.65	\$7.48	-18.49%	-71.12%
Retail Gasoline Price	\$3.46	\$3.29	\$4.33	5.04%	-20.20%
Drilling Permits	2023 (YTD, August 9th)	2022	2021	2020	
Drilling Permits (Mesa County)	23	0	0	1	
Drilling Permits (Rio Blanco County)	61	40	40	33	
Drilling Permits (Garfield County)	21	139	133	127	
Drilling Permits (Moffat County)	0	3	4	1	
Total Permits (Mesa, Rio Blanco, Garfield, Moffat)	105	182	177	162	
Total Permits (Colorado)	199	1,005	805	1,543	
Local Rig Count	Oct-23	Jun-23	Nov-22		
Rig Count (Western Colorado, Mesa, Rio Blanco, Garfield, Moffat)	3	3	3		
Delta/Gunnison Coal Industry	2022 (YTD)	2021 (YTD)	% Change		
Delta/Gunnison Average Monthly Em-	295	255	15.79%	•	

Delta/Gunnison Average I	Monthly Em-	295	255	15.79%	
ployment for Coal Mining					
Delta/Gunnison Coal Proc	duction (tons)	260,973	385,626	-32.32%	

SOURCES: All energy prices: Energy Information Agency; All permit data from Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC); Local Rig Count: Baker Hughes Rig Count; Coal: Colorado Division of Reclamation and Safety.

Figure 21: Oil and Natural Gas Prices

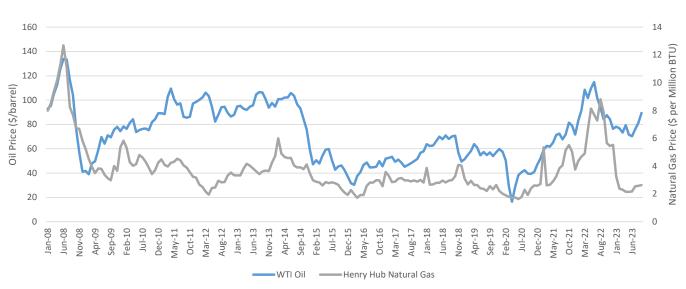


Figure 22: Delta/Gunnison Coal Production and Employment

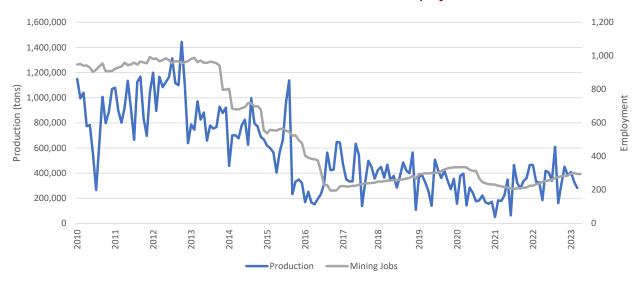


Figure 23: Mining and Oil and Gas as a Percentage of GDP for Delta County



#### Western Slope Energy

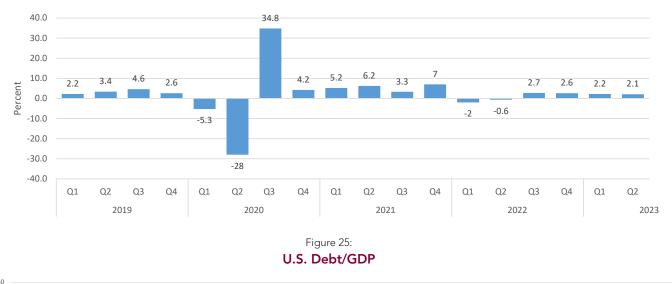
WTI oil prices fell from a peak of \$114.84 in June 2022 to a recent low of \$70.25, rising every month since, with September at \$89.43. Natural Gas prices went on the same roller coaster, peaking in the summer of 2022 at \$8.81, falling to \$2.15 in early 2023, and unlike oil, staying low, in September at \$2.64. The Energy Information Agency forecasts that U.S. natural gas exports will reach a record in 2023, as the U.S. is the largest LNG exporter in the world as of early 2023. Oil prices are expected to rise due to further Saudi Arabia crude oil production cuts through the end of 2023. The EIA forecasts Brent crude oil prices at \$96 per barrel by early 2024.

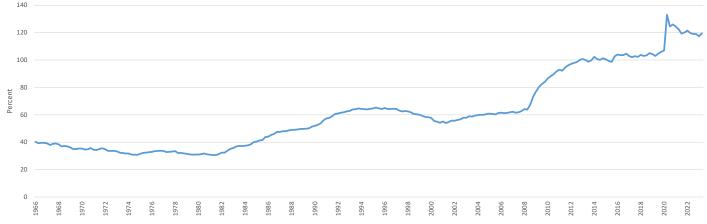
Coal mining employment in the nearby West Elk Mine has increased year over year from 255 to 295. However, at the same time coal production has fallen 32%.

## NATIONAL ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	Q2 2023	Q1 2023	Q2 2022	% change since last period	% change since last year (comparable quarters)
Business Cycle Indicators					
Real GDP	2.10%	2.20%	-0.60%	-0.10%	2.70%
Personal Consumption Expenditures	0.80%	3.80%	2.00%	-3.00%	-1.20%
Gross Private Domestic Investment	5.20%	-9.00%	-10.60%	14.20%	15.80%
National Consumer Confidence	62.4	64.6	57.9	-3.41%	7.77%
Industrial Production Index	102.8	102.6	102.8	0.16%	0.01%
Initial Weekly Unemployment Claims (4 week MA)	240,077	215,708	214,885	11.30%	11.72%
Non Farm Payroll Change (in thou- sands)	666,667	965,667	1,197,333	-30.96%	-44.32%
Unemployment					
Unemployment Rate-U3-SA	3.60%	3.50%	3.60%	0.10%	0.00%
Unemployment Rate-U6-SA	6.70%	6.70%	6.90%	0.00%	-0.20%
Interest Rates					
Federal Funds Rate	4.98%	4.50%	0.75%	0.48%	4.23%
10 Year U.S. Treasury	3.59%	3.65%	2.93%	-0.06%	0.66%
30 Year U.S. Treasury	3.81%	3.75%	3.04%	0.06%	0.77%
Inflation Measures					
Inflation Rate (CPI)	4.05%	5.77%	8.56%	-1.72%	-4.50%
Core Inflation Rate (All Items Less Food and Energy)	5.24%	5.56%	6.01%	-0.32%	-0.77%
Inflation Rate (Shelter)	7.97%	8.07%	5.40%	-0.09%	2.58%
Producer Price Index (PPI)	-6.62%	2.22%	21.90%	-8.84%	-28.52%
Employment Cost Index	4.54%	4.86%	5.11%	-0.33%	-0.58%
Stock Prices					
S&P 500	4,206	4,000	4,106	5.15%	2.45%
Dow Jones Industrial Average	33,643	33,219	32,688	1.28%	2.92%
Trade Balance and Debt					
Trade Balance (% of GDP)	-806.093	-825.687	-1025.567	-2.37%	-21.40%
Federal Debt (% of GDP)*	117.3%	119.0%	121.5%	-1.7%	-4.1%

SOURCES: GDP, Consumption, Investment, and Trade Balance: Bureau of Economic Analysis; Consumer Confidence: University of Michigan; Industrial Production, Interest Rates and USD Exchange Rate: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; Weekly Unemployment Claims: U.S. Employment and Training Administration. Non-Farm Payroll, Unemployment Rates, Inflation Measures: Bureau of Labor Statistics; Stock Prices: S&P Dow Jones Indices, LLC.; USD Exchange Rate: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve; Trade Balance: BEA; Federal Debt: U.S. Office of Management and Budget. \* Indicates data is lagged by one quarter. Regional CPI data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Yield Curve from the Federal Reserve Board. Figure 24: Real GDP for U.S.





#### **Economic Growth**

U.S. GDP growth for Q2 2023 was 2.1%. The previous quarter's growth was initially 1.3% but it was then revised upwards to 2.2%. The Atlanta Federal Reserve's GDPNow estimates 5.4% growth for quarter 3, which is a huge growth rate.

The unemployment rate remains low at 3.8%. The labor market remains tight, although seems to be slowing. Wages are starting to fall as seen in figure 29, which is one of the Federal Reserve's goals, as rising wages contribute to inflation.

#### Inflation and Interest Rates

Inflation for October came in at 3.7%, rising from the previous month's number that was closer to 3%. Shelter still remains high, at 7.2%, while food is at 3.7%. Energy prices have fallen from the previous year but are expected to contribute to higher inflation in the coming months.

The biggest story the last few months is the rise in long term interest rates, specifically the 10 year treasury bond. The 10 year treasury bond is important because it is what mortgage rates are based on. Figure 30 shows the yield curve, and specifically illustrates the 10 year treasury minus the 2 year treasury. Normally, a 10 year bond will have a higher yield or interest rate than a 2 year bond, but when the yield curve becomes inverted, this reverses. This has been a signal for recession, and a quite accurate signal. Normally, short term interest rates fall to cause the yield curve to revert back to its normal shape. This time, short term yields are not falling, it's long term yields that are rising, which is pushing the yield curve back to its normal shape.

As discussed in the real estate section, there are several things pushing yields higher: Inflation, U.S. treasury debt rising, lack of Federal Reserve purchasing of bonds, etc. Specifically, U.S. debt levels jumped since 2020 (figure 25), and with higher interest rates the servicing on this debt becomes expensive. High interest rates combined with debt now make U.S. debt servicing a larger part of the Federal budget, which will limit spending options in the future. The Federal Reserve will likely pause interest rate hikes because there is a lagged impact to monetary policy on inflation, and with long term yields rising on their own, the Fed does not have to be as aggressive.

Figure 26:
CPI (Inflation) Release from the Bureau of La-
bor Statistics (reproduced from BLS.gov)

	Seasonally adjusted changes from preceding month							Un- adjusted
-	Mar. 2023	Apr. 2023	May 2023	Jun. 2023	Jul. 2023	Aug. 2023	Sep. 2023	12-mos. ended Sep. 202
All items	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.4	3.7
Food	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	3.7
Food at home	-0.3	-0.2	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.1	2.4
Food away from home1	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.4	6.0
Energy	-3.5	0.6	-3.6	0.6	0.1	5.6	1.5	-0.5
Energy commodities	-4.6	2.7	-5.6	0.8	0.3	10.5	2.3	2.2
Gasoline (all types)	-4.6	3.0	-5.6	1.0	0.2	10.6	2.1	3.0
Fuel oil <sup>1</sup>	-4.0	-4.5	-7.7	-0.4	3.0	9.1	8.5	-5.1
Energy services	-2.3	-1.7	-1.4	0.4	-0.1	0.2	0.6	-3.3
Electricity	-0.7	-0.7	-1.0	0.9	-0.7	0.2	1.3	2.6
Utility (piped) gas service	-7.1	-4.9	-2.6	-1.7	2.0	0.1	-1.9	-19.9
All items less food and energy	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	4.1
Commodities less food and energy								
commodities	0.2	0.6	0.6	-0.1	-0.3	-0.1	-0.4	0.0
New vehicles	0.4	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	-0.1	0.3	0.3	2.5
Used cars and trucks	-0.9	4.4	4.4	-0.5	-1.3	-1.2	-2.5	-8.0
Apparel	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2	-0.8	2.3
Medical care commodities1	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.6	-0.3	4.2
Services less energy services	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	5.7
Shelter	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.6	7.2
Transportation services	1.4	-0.2	0.8	0.1	0.3	2.0	0.7	9.1
Medical care services	-0.5	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-0.4	0.1	0.3	-2.6

1 Not seasonally adjusted

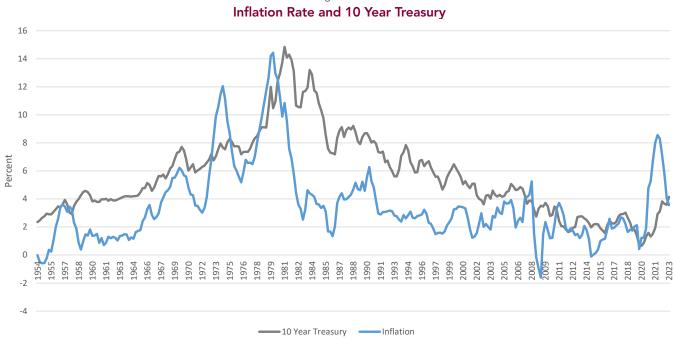


Figure 27:

Figure 28: Unemployment Rate

Figure 29: Employment Cost Index

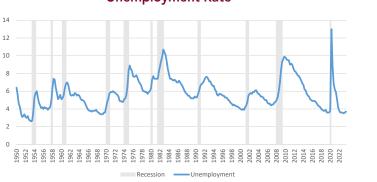
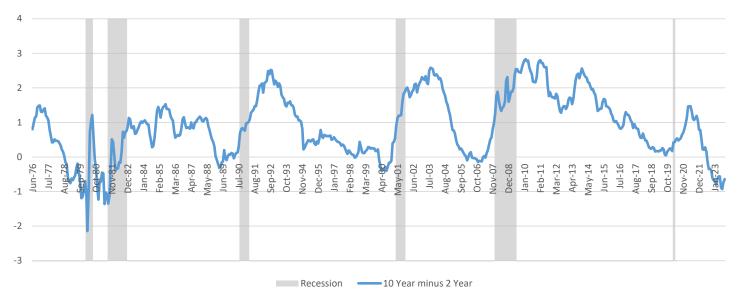
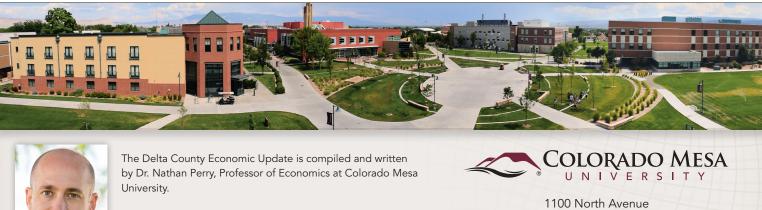




Figure 30: Yield Curve: 10 Year Treasury minus 2 year Treasury





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