

# Advocates want voters to have final say in Denver Winter Olympics bid

*Connatix*

DENVER -- The idea of Denver -- and Colorado as a whole -- hosting a winter Olympic Games has a long history and draws strong opinions.

Sunday night in Denver's RiNo neighborhood, a crowd discussed why voters should have a final say in the matter.

"We just don't think public money should be spent towards that," said Let Denver Vote organizer Brandon Rietheimer.

The grassroots movement stems from [recommendations](#) Denver's Winter Games Exploratory Committee [made in June](#), suggesting Denver should pursue a bid for the next available games.

The 2022 games will be held in Beijing and the 2026 host city will be announced in September 2019, with no U.S. cities being considered.

The CEO of the United States Olympic Committee, Scott Blackmun, has said Denver, Salt Lake City and Reno, Nevada, are cities that could be considered for bids as early as 2030.

The report also recommends holding a statewide vote, even though it's not required if the cost to host the games is entirely privately funded, which is another committee recommendation.

"We should have a say, especially when we're taking on -- potentially -- one of the most financially risky mega-projects that exists," said Tony Pigford, citing past Olympic Games that have had unintended consequences for communities, including environmental impacts and gentrification.

The committee estimates the games would cost about \$2 billion to host, and it is hoping funding would come through corporate backing, sponsorships, licensing, ticket revenue, merchandising and more.

Still, Let Denver Vote is calling for more transparency and is worried about the other effects of hosting the games.

"We don't need more people moving blindly into Denver," said former Gov. Dick Lamm.

When Lamm was a state senator, he led the effort to famously reject a bid Denver won for the 1976 Winter Olympics, citing similar concerns of congestion and environmental impact.

Denver remains the only city to reject a bid in the history of the games.

The committee recommends a statewide vote as early as 2020.

Gov. John Hickenlooper and Denver Mayor Michael Hancock are supporters of a potential bid, citing economic and social benefits, along with benefits for infrastructure and housing.

"We've seen cities where they've built housing, we've seen where they've built better transportation. If we had some kind of alternate method to the mountains, I think that would be beneficial," Rietheimer said.

Ultimately, the Let Denver Vote movement wants to ensure the public is well informed on the details for any potential bid, calling for a transparent and fiscally responsible process, and to let the voters have a final say.

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