



DENVER AUDITOR
TIMOTHY M. O'BRIEN, CPA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Jan. 2, 2025

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Denver continues to risk overpaying for airport renovation projects

DENVER – Renovations at Denver International Airport’s Great Hall are expected to reach \$2.1 billion in costs, and the city remains at risk for overpaying for future construction work, according to a follow-up report on a 2023 audit from Denver Auditor Timothy M. O’Brien, CPA.

“It is critical that Denver International Airport manage its construction work costs for a project of this size and scope,” Auditor O’Brien said. “With so much work yet to complete, the airport needs better oversight to prevent spending more than what is necessary.”

Denver International Airport’s Special Projects Division manages and oversees the Great Hall renovations, which are expected to continue into 2028. In our original 2023 audit, we found a lack of supporting documentation in the procurement process for all Great Hall construction projects, including expedited projects. We recommended the airport improve this process. Since our audit, two “fast-tracked” projects have occurred. One of them was missing key supporting documents. If documents are inconsistently managed, it may result in noncompliance with city requirements and airport standards.

A separate unimplemented recommendation from the original audit also involved concerns with documentation. Denver International Airport was not requiring contractors to submit documentation of actual costs that could be validated and reconciled with project allowances, which limited the airport’s ability to ensure it was not overpaying for work. Meaningful documentation includes invoices and time sheets. If detailed documentation is not collected, the airport cannot determine whether these costs are reasonable or allowable.

“It is encouraging to see the airport make some improvements to its documentation processes, but more is needed for the public to have confidence that contractors are not overcharging the airport,” said Auditor O’Brien.

Denver International Airport did not agree to implement multiple other recommendations from the 2023 audit, which still present several lingering risks. The airport was not following procurement procedures or documenting and maintaining records for decision-making processes, which may reduce the airport’s ability to show its processes are fair, reasonable, and competitive. Failing to have these policies and procedures to ensure subcontractor work is awarded fairly limits the city’s ability to ensure it receives quality construction work and

reasonable costs for subcontractor work. Without proper oversight of multi-tiered subcontracted work, the airport could not ensure contract terms were followed. This could result in overpayments.

Our follow-up report found the airport has developed and implemented a process to ensure managers and staff use a risk-based approach to select a construction project's delivery method. It also developed and implemented policies and procedures addressing the unique risks for the construction manager and general contract project delivery methods.

"Given the importance and public interest in airport renovations, if we see continued risks, we may conduct future audits to ensure the city takes appropriate corrective action," Auditor O'Brien said.

[Read the Follow-Up Report](#)
[Read the Audit](#)

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About the Auditor's Office

Denver's Auditor is publicly elected and answers to the voters. The role of the Auditor is to help minimize risks, improve internal controls, maximize efficiencies, and strengthen accountability.

About Auditor O'Brien

Denver Auditor Timothy M. O'Brien, CPA, has more than 40 years of auditing and accounting [experience](#). Auditor O'Brien strives to bring greater clarity, transparency, and accountability to Denver's city government for its residents. Elected in 2015 — and reelected in 2019 and 2023 — Timothy O'Brien is distinguished from his predecessors as a professional auditor.

Auditor O'Brien and his office have won many national awards for their work, including seven Knighton Awards from the [Association of Local Government Auditors](#):

- 2023 Knighton Distinguished Award — "[Homeless Encampments](#)"
- 2022 Knighton Exemplary Award — "[Residential Trash, Recycling, and Compost Services](#)"
- 2021 Knighton Distinguished Award — "[Airport Parking Shuttle System](#)"
- 2020 Knighton Exemplary Award — "[Neighborhood Sidewalk Repair Program](#)"
- 2019 Knighton Distinguished Award — "[Denver Preschool Program](#)"
- 2018 Knighton Distinguished Award — "[Affordable Housing](#)"
- 2015 Knighton Exemplary Award — "[Rocky Mountain Human Services](#)"

Auditor O'Brien also received the [David M. Walker Excellence in Government Accountability Award](#) in 2022 from the National Intergovernmental Audit Forum and the [ADA Access Award](#) from the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition in 2018 for his work on behalf of people with disabilities. Auditor O'Brien received the [2017 Outstanding CPA in Government Impact Award](#) from the [American Institute of CPAs](#). He was honored with the [2016 Jonathan Holtzinger Award of Excellence](#) by the Colorado Chartered Financial Analyst Society for demonstrating the highest standards as a financial and investment professional.

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