

# Living in Springs a bargain, national survey suggests

Dec 3, 2005

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Declining apartment rents helped send the cost of living in Colorado Springs, when compared with the national average, to a 14-year low.

Local living costs were 6.1 percent below the national average during the third quarter, according to a quarterly survey by ACCRA, a Virginia-based group that surveys prices for goods and services ranging from housing to pizza in nearly 300 cities.

During the previous quarter, local living costs were 5.3 percent below the national average, and a year ago they were 4 percent below the national average. It's been 14 years — since the third quarter of 1991 — since local living costs were further below the national average.

The index of overall costs is dropping mostly because its housing component, which measures the cost of renting an apartment or buying a home, is down sharply in the past year. ACCRA found that local housing costs were 14 percent below the national average as of Sept. 30.

The group found that the cost of renting a two-bedroom unfurnished apartment in the Springs fell 5.3 percent from a year ago to \$687 a month.

"It's not so much that local prices are going down as much as it is prices elsewhere going up much faster," said Fred Crowley, senior economist for the Southern Colorado Economic Forum.