

This document is meant to act as a catalyst for strategizing at the ideas forum at the Durango Recreation Center from 9am - 3pm on Saturday February 27, 2010. This document serves two main purposes:

1. Provide some background on economic development groups at work in La Plata County.
2. Summarize the strategy-level comments and discussion that has occurred in comprehensive plan meetings focused on economic vitality so far.

Who is working on economic development?

There are several entities working to enhance economic vitality in La Plata County. This may be incomplete, feel free to inform planning team members of missing entities. Following is a catalogue of these entities and a brief recitation of their philosophies.

Fort Lewis College Small Business Development Center

Mission: Provide small business assistance, training, information, and leadership in activities which foster the successful growth and development of small businesses.

Services: Provides complimentary one-on-one counseling, consulting and training for small businesses throughout Southwest Colorado.

- Business plans and cash flow projections,
- identifying financing options,
- business health 'checkups',
- marketing advice,
- and business management training.

Ignacio Chamber of Commerce

Mission: The Ignacio Chamber of Commerce supports the economic health of local businesses by working together for community success, advancing economic development and networking with citizens, governments, business and education organizations to achieve common goals.

Services:

- Intergovernmental coordination,
- Visitor information,
- Networking and information for businesses,
- Economic development planning
- Market local events.

Durango Chamber of Commerce

Services:

- Networking, Personal & Professional Development,
- Advertising/Publicity;
- Buy-local support
- Customer/vendor referrals,

- Logistical assistance for businesses considering locating in La Plata County.
- Logistical assistance for businesses struggling to stay in La Plata County.

Durango Tourism Office

Services

- Tourism marketing
- Central reservations
- Events promotion
- Networking for tourist businesses
- Leadership for tourism economic development efforts

Bayfield Chamber of Commerce

Services:

- Tourism promotion,
- Visitor information,
- Networking and information for businesses,
- Market local events.

Region 9 Economic Development

Services:

- Financing and grants to assist small business retention, expansion and job creation.
- Administers the Colorado Enterprise Zone tax credit program.
- Provides economic development and transportation planning for local governments and communities.
- Provides technical assistance and information for businesses.

LEAD

Mission: The Mission of La Plata Economic Development Action Partnership (LEAD) is to set the direction and oversee the implementation of ongoing economic development in La Plata County that achieves the community vision for sustainable quality of life and the overall prosperity for the greatest number of citizens. *Goals:*

- Diversify the economy and further expand the economic base of La Plata County.
- Retain and create quality jobs with livable wages for the citizens of La Plata County.
- Ensure availability of adequate infrastructure and services necessary to accommodate desired economic growth.
- Enhance the quality of life and build wealth

Durango Business Improvement District

Mission: To help all types of businesses in the District by assisting with marketing special events, providing research on topics of concern to the District (facilities, special events, best practices), planning & development of new facilities and providing capital budget for equipment that helps support business in the district.

Services:

- Downtown planning
- Downtown marketing
- Event promotion
- Capital improvements
- Visitor information
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Durango Industrial Development Foundation

Develops land for business purposes, specifically for businesses that will diversify La Plata County's economy.

Colorado Workforce Center

Workforce Centers provide a variety of free services to assist employers and job seekers alike. These include: job listings, computer & internet access, career counseling & training for job seekers; and recruitment of workers, pre-screening & referral services, tax credits, and training reimbursement for employers.

Summary of Strategy-Level Comments and Discussion at Comprehensive Plan Meetings Focused on Economic Vitality

County Land Use and Regulations

- ▶ Allowed land uses in the county need to offer options for where each type of business can locate.
- ▶ The county needs zoning to facilitate business decisions and reduce uncertainty for investments. Several participants indicated that they would give-up perceived flexibility offered by lack of zoning in favor of the certainty offered by zoning.
- ▶ It would be a good idea to cluster businesses in areas where they are allowed to expand (legally).
- ▶ The community needs a place (such as a light industrial park) where small businesses can stage their operations. Currently people are doing it out in the county illegally.
- ▶ Ideas for places to locate businesses: Airport Business Park, 3 springs, Grandview, La Posta.

- ▶ Need a fast-track process for land use applications for business developments.
- ▶ The county planning/building departments need to provide customer service for applicants and should approach it with "let's try to help you make this work".
- ▶ We need to settle on some economic indicators, because what you measure tends to define what is successful.
- ▶ Develop a recycling/green business center.

Infrastructure

- ▶ County needs to take a leadership role in generating support for "good" infrastructure projects, such as high-speed internet and domestic/rural water systems. Leadership would entail convening the players and helping develop public support for the projects. Also, county rights of way and other hard assets may be useful for infrastructure improvements.
- ▶ We need rural broadband communications infrastructure to stimulate lone eagles, and other telecommuting businesses.
- ▶ County should support formation of improvement districts.

Cooperation With Other govts./agencies

- ▶ We need better cooperation among local governments and the tribe.

Big Box

- ▶ The advantage of having a Target, and/or Lowes is avoiding leakage to Farmington. Downtown businesses can adapt to big box competition while the Walmart center has five locally-owned businesses in it, showing that big box can anchor small businesses.

Research and Education

- ▶ Establish a "think tank" that would be a La Plata County version of the Aspen Institute.
- ▶ Natural and cultural assets and Fort Lewis College make this a perfect place for academic seminars.

Business Development

- ▶ Continue to improve Ft. Lewis College and link the college to the business community.
- ▶ Establish a partnership between Mercy Medical and the Community College to develop the medical workforce.
- ▶ Develop an entrepreneurial center at the college.
- ▶ Develop a recruitment strategy

- Target a certain type of entrepreneur (one that wants to live here and has a mobile business or skill set)
- Reach out to specific companies that have people who can run businesses out of Durango.
- Target tourists and visitors, they might be in mobile businesses.
- Think about income levels in recruitment strategies because our housing is expensive.
- ▶ Start a wildland firefighting school, it is in demand and it fits the local lifestyle.
- ▶ Develop a database of local businesses and organizations and map the relationship and possible enhancements of regional cooperation.

Strategies-Level Contents in the District Plans

Ft Lewis Mesa

Vision for the future: Business development emphasizes our rural and agricultural focus with small value-added processing facilities, markets, and retail food outlets all locally controlled and sustained.

Bayfield

One objective states the intent to restrict commercial development outside of Bayfield and Gem Village to that which is in keeping with the rural characteristics of the area."

Florida Mesa

To preserve agriculture and other rural open lands, the plan encourages future commercial, light industrial, and mixed-use development to be channeled to several "growth centers" in the district, naming Grandview, Elmore's Store and Sunnyside as possible commercial growth areas and the areas around the airports and portions of Koshak Mesa as industrial areas, all of which already contain "some degree of such use".

North County

One policy encourages "small businesses that will benefit the community: country-tourist land uses and cottage industries that provide services and jobs for local residents."

West Durango

Commercial development objectives seek to keep commercial development near other commercial development and in designated areas only, with proposed future development "clustered near population centers".