

La Plata County Comprehensive Plan

Durango, CO Visioning Open House Meeting Summary

July 29, 2009

The La Plata County Comprehensive Plan visioning outreach included 1 full day vision summit, 6 open houses in locations throughout the county, a youth survey, and a community survey. All participants in the vision process answered the same four questions.

- *What do you treasure about La Plata County that you do not want to see change?*
- *What concerns do you have about La Plata County for the future?*
- *What would you like to see different or change in La Plata County in the future?*
- *What do you want La Plata County to be like in 20 years?*

Vision open house participants responded to an additional four questions that survey and vision workshop participants were not asked. Those questions were:

- *What would be the worst possible scenario for La Plata County in the future?*
- *What are the internal factors (possibly in our control) that are going to be affecting La Plata County's future that we need to consider in our vision?*
- *What are the external factors (outside our control) that are going to be affecting La Plata County's future that we need to consider in our vision?*

The comments here are from the Durango open house held on July 29, 2009.

1. What do you TREASURE about La Plata County that you do not want to see change?

People

- The old timers with deep roots in the county

Natural Resources

- Yet undisturbed natural and native environment
- Diversity of ecosystems
- Clean air

Open Space and Scenery

- Aesthetics – how to keep the scenery
- Open spaces

Agriculture

- Large agriculture properties

Community Character

- The rural character of the region
- Small community feeling

Heritage

- La Plata Canyon/La Plata City
- Historic towns

2. What CONCERNS do you have about La Plata County for the future?

Growth and Development

- Development and growth without planning and integration into the overall county
- Water districts without land use plans/regulations/standards
- Self-sustaining economic base in balance with natural resources.
- Urbanization
- Sprawl
- Autocentric strip-type development
- Huge inventory of undeveloped platted lots currently on the books
- Further speculative subdividing of large acreages
- Development that does not accommodate historic, cultural, and natural resources

Economy

- Lack of affordable space for new business
- Lack of economic diversity

Infrastructure

- Lack of road maintenance

Energy and Environment

- Reclamation of wells/well sites after use is complete

Community Coordination

- Lack of coordination with federal agencies

3. What would you like to see DIFFERENT/CHANGE in La Plata County?

Economic Changes

- Economic and monetary incentive for choices/decisions that are better for the community.
- Allowances for small business, entrepreneurs-affordability. Need a commercial cul de sac or business incubator

Growth and Development Changes

- Developed interpretations and understanding of the county's history.
- I would like to see the county impose an excess use tax on large residences (e.g. greater than 5,000 sq ft)
- Development based on carrying capacity
- Development based on watersheds

- Growth directed towards existing towns/villages
- Priorities established based on what is best for a human, not the automobile
- Land use decisions based upon established comprehensive plan and associated policies

Community Collaboration Changes

- Integration of all community/government services (schools, social services, economic development, etc.) into comprehensive plan.

4. What do you want La Plata County to be like in 20 years?

- Property values are more closely tied to local economy
- Strong sustainable economy
- More small “ru-urban” hamlets/villages
- Villages with big lots (35+ acres) comprising the other areas
- High density residential surrounded by agriculture
- Small towns like Bayfield, Ignacio, something near Purgatory, Hesperus, Marvel are self sufficient with basic services and small labor pool.
- Localized commercial/business areas
- Multigenerational agricultural sites are still here
- Better interaction and unified sense throughout the county
- Appreciation and knowledge of cultural legacy. Prehistoric and historic resources, ethnic histories, local landmarks
- Natural environment and integrated self sustaining community and economy are celebrated

5. What would be the worst possible scenario for La Plata County in the future?

- Lack of tourism – helps through the tough economic times, is responsible for growth boom, and is a cleaner industry
- Reduction of gas production – loss of tax base
- Only affordable for wealthy, not the local working class. Become a second home community.
- Economic stratification – rich and poor don’t relate to each other
- All homes on 3 acre lots throughout the county on well and septic
- Sprawl
- Every one of the existing 2009 lots is developed
- Becoming like Pagosa where developers rule
- Loss of cultural and historic identity

6. What are the internal factors (possibly in our control) that are going to be affecting La Plata County’s future that we need to consider in our vision?

- Economic development that complements the local community
- Big boxes and leakages, better promote local business
- Local economy vs external companies
- Gas field decline
- Transportation – lack of
- Decline of water for wells

- Educated local leaders
- Interagency cooperation
- Processes affecting how decisions are made. Past decisions making trends vs community benefit

7. What are the external factors (outside our control) that are going to be affecting La Plata County's future that we need to consider in our vision?

- Economy of other states and natural disasters elsewhere that seem to send people here
- Immigration
- Increased population and places to live
- Boomers with less money retiring
- Rising costs of food/transportation/goods
- Health care
- Limited resources – clean water, quantity