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County to use TV for latest master plan

Officials want residents to take active role in updating document

by Decker Schott-Noonan
Herald Staff Writer

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La Plata County is taking its latest plan to rework the master planning document to television, where residents can get a glimpse on what lies ahead.

"We're not going into this with some preconceived notions of what the end products should be," said Jason Meininger, a planner with the county who appears on the DCAT talk show hosted by Chris Hall. "We're coming in and saying, 'We're opening this up to the community.'"

More information

The DCAT TV spot on the county update for the comprehensive plan can be viewed either on its Web site at www.dcat.tv/talkvideos.php or on the DCAT station, public access channel 22, at 9 a.m. Saturday and at 9 a.m. Tuesday.

The old Comprehensive Community Plan was completed in 2001, but never adopted. County commissioners scrapped the land-use code in February because it conflicted with the "La Plata County Compass," a strategic plan created in 2007 by the county that underpins the master plan.

The latest attempt to update the plan is expected to take 16 to 22 months and will cover the 10 planning districts in the county. The districts have their own sets of rules and policies for land use; the latest planning efforts will attempt to unify the districts.

"A lot of the stuff that is in the district plans is really good, a lot of hard work went into those," Meininger said. "But a lot of that information, that direction, that policy, really belongs at the county level."

One example is denser development in some areas, he said, to help alleviate traffic pressure. "Thirty percent of the population doesn't drive, but our current plan forces you to drive."

The new Comprehensive Community Plan also will address the difficulty and frustration landowners face when trying to develop that land, he said. Additionally, it will develop "neighborhood plans" that will apply to small areas, only a few square miles, which require denser housing, transit hubs and commercial centers.

"In the last big growth and development building surge that we had, you had a lot of the same types of homes, 2,000 to 3,000 square foot, on about three acres, and that's really not attainable for a lot of people," he said.

County Commissioner Joelle Riddle praised Meininger's efforts.

"He has set very lofty yet achievable goals, which are all in line with our community's ideals," Riddle said in a phone interview. "I think that when this process is completed, we're going to have plans that really fit together. They feed into each other."

In addition to the television broadcasts, regular meetings about the plan will begin after the official June 29 kickoff, Meininger said.

"We hope for a tremendous amount of community involvement," he said. "We want to take what we hear at those meetings, develop a plan based on that, and then take it back to the community for approval."

Decker Schott-Noonan is an intern at the Herald for May.

He can be reached at herald@durangoherald.com

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