
LA PLATA



COUNTY
sustainability.
opportunity.
community.

LA PLATA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

GUIDING PRINCIPLES, VISION, GOALS AND STRATEGIES



La Plata County
Colorado

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PLANNING COMMISSION
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
DURANGO, CO

DRAFT

Community Draft #1a: July, 2010

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I. INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive plan is a policy document that describes what county residents want the community to be in the future. It serves as the foundation for decisions about community services and land use. In the State of Colorado, comprehensive plans are a powerful policy document authorized by state statute to guide investments and decisions related to community development. Most people know that a comprehensive plan is used by planning staff, the Planning Commission, and County Commissioners to inform decisions about future development. However a comprehensive plan also guides other department decisions on infrastructure investments, community programs, and social services. Finally, the comprehensive plan is the foundation for development of a land use development code.

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II. COMMUNITY PROFILE/HISTORY

The purpose of the *La Plata County Community Profile* is to assemble economic, demographic, land use, planning regulations, and other information that can help the community understand where it stands today and how it has arrived here. The narrative running throughout the community profile is written with the intent of spurring ideas in the reader, not to convince them of one particular interpretation of the data. Where the data was available, long term trends were charted, going back as far as 1970. This long view back in time will help the community look decades into the future in developing the community comprehensive plan.

HISTORY OF PLACE¹

Southwest Colorado has a rich and long standing cultural tradition. The remains of people attributed to Archaic (7500 B.C.-500B.C.), Basketmaker (500 B.C.-750 B.C.) and Pueblo periods have all been found here. The Utes have been in the area at least since the 1500s.

The region lured many explorers in search of gold, silver and other opportunities for wealth. In 1776, Fathers Dominguez and Escalante traveled through the area in search of a route from Santa Fe to the California missions. Much of their route later became the Old Spanish Trail, which was used between 1830 and 1840 by Santa Fe traders on their way to California. The area was part of Mexico until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican War in 1848, and the United States claimed jurisdiction. The Colorado Territorial legislature created La Plata County in early 1874. Encompassing present day La Plata, San Juan, Montezuma, and Ouray Counties, this massive region soon proved unmanageable and was redrawn in 1876 to include the equivalent of modern day Montezuma and La Plata Counties. The county further reduced to its current size in 1889, when Montezuma became its own county.

Ownership Patterns-Living Legacies in the County

In 1874 the Brunot Agreement between the Utes and the United States opened land to non-natives. Under the terms of the agreement, the Utes would receive annual payments of \$25,000 in exchange for 3.5 million acres of their land, including all of present day La Plata County. Congress ratified the Agreement on April 29, 1874, and went about its usual course to establish a federal presence in the area through Indian agencies and military posts. The U. S. Government built the Los Pinos Indian Agency near present day Ignacio in 1877. The Fort Lewis military post moved from Pagosa Springs in 1880 and operated for ten years from a site on the La Plata River, about 11 miles south of present day Hesperus.

In 1891, Congress passed the Hunter Bill, which allowed the Utes to choose land that tribal members could individually own and to hold some lands in common. The Mouache and the Capote Ute Bands (now the Southern Ute Tribe) accepted these terms and tribal members selected allotments in 1896. The Weeminuche Band (now the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe) opted to continue to retain their lands in common. The available lands, located in a 15-mile wide band stretching across the southern one third of the county, became known as the 'Ute Strip'. Remaining unallotted lands were opened to homesteaders in May 1899 and created a small homesteading rush. Mormon settlers and others established town sites on the west side of the county. The towns of Kline, Redmesa and Marvel were thriving by 1916.

¹ Jill Seyfarth, *Cultural Resource Planning*, Oct 2009

Unclaimed lands (about 200,000 acres) were returned to the Southern Ute Tribe in 1938. The mix of Ute Tribal, individual Ute and individual non-Ute ownership in the southern 1/3 of the county is the legacy of the Ute Strip. Federal actions related to Ute agreements created other lasting legacies. The 6,000-plus acre military reservation established for Fort Lewis is now owned by the State of Colorado. The old military fort was turned into an Indian School and then into a public school that evolved into a college that moved to Durango in 1956. Fort Lewis College is tuition-free to Native Americans, a stipulation of the transfer of the old military reservation from federal ownership to the

State of Colorado. Ignacio was eventually founded near the Los Pinos Agency, and two large federal water projects (Vallecito Lake and the Animas-La Plata Project) have been developed to address irrigation issues and to meet historic Ute water claims.

Homesteaders and prospectors flocked to the region north of the Ute Strip. The first prospectors followed John Moss from California to the mouth of La Plata Canyon in 1873.

Since they were there before the Brunot Agreement had been signed, Moss negotiated an agreement with Ute Chief Ignacio that allowed the miners to use a 36 square mile area in exchange for numerous blankets, livestock and gifts. The miners worked their way up La Plata Canyon with varying amounts of success over the years and leaving a series of privately owned claims within the canyon. A large gold strike in the 1930s brought one last flush of prosperity to the La Platas. The region never enjoyed access from a railroad and the small, isolated mining camps that had been established near the mines faded away.



The fertile valleys of the lower Animas and Pine Rivers attracted the county's very first farmers and ranchers. Other early claims were filed in modern day Hay Gulch and Thompson Park. Later homesteaders settled on the mesa tops and developed irrigation ditch systems to bring water to their lands. Frank Hall noted in his 1895 *History of Colorado* that within the first 30 days after the ratification of the Brunot Agreement "...every acre of available land in the (Animas) valley had been located and staked off in ranch claims."

The northern, higher-elevation claims along the river drainages were mostly used as "summer range" for sheep and cattle. The northern one third of the county had few homestead claims, but was used for livestock and logging. Alarmed by the growing desecration of unregulated logging and grazing on public lands in the west, Congress passed the Forest Reserves Act in 1891. The act empowered the President to withdraw designated lands from the public domain. The withdrawn lands, called reserves, could then be managed to protect their natural resources, including timber and grasses. In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt signed legislation to create the San Juan Forest Reserve (now the San Juan National Forest). The legislation placed more than 3.7 million acres in Southwest Colorado under federal conservation programs. About forty percent of La Plata County is in federal ownership, much of which was the land located within the designated forest reserve.

Towns, Transport and Industry

Several early towns sprang up to serve the early settlers, including Hermosa (1876), Animas City (1876), Los Pinos Indian Agency (1877) and Pine River (1877/1878). Wagon roads connected the area from Tierra Amarilla, Del Norte (via Silverton) and Rico (via Rockwood). No one had even mentioned the word railroad in this very remote country.

The arrival of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) in 1881 and its subsequent connection to Silverton in 1882 brought accelerated and intensive change by providing easy (for the times) transportation and freighting, as well as access to the outside world. The D&RG also invested capital and created the City of Durango. The D&RG was instrumental in establishing a smelter in Durango to process the ores from the mines, almost guaranteeing a prosperous community. When the Ute Strip opened for homesteading, farmers and land speculators filed for homesteads and carved new towns along the railroad including Tiffany, Allison, Oxford (first known as Grommet) and Falga (formerly called Griffith). A second railroad, the Rio Grande Southern, arrived in 1890, providing connections to the mines around Rico and Telluride. In 1905, the Denver and Rio Grande added a Farmington branch connecting Durango to Farmington, New Mexico. By 1892, the railroad operations, coal mining, agriculture and the smelter were major county industries, followed by lumber and the precious metal mining in the La Plata Mountains. Tourism was a small but steady part of the economy. In the 1890s the D &RG advertised a four day 1,000-mile-loop rail excursion through scenic southwestern Colorado. An exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 of the Mesa Verde's Ancestral Puebloan ruins drew new groups of sight seers as well.

The Depression of the 1930s devastated La Plata County, but was somewhat assuaged by the prolific New Deal programs and the federal support of operations on the county's extensive federal land holdings. One of the New Deal's greatest improvements in rural life came from the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). Under this program the La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) formed to build transmission lines to deliver electricity to the rural areas in the county. By 1939 LPEA had obtained REA loans and constructed 188 miles of line to serve 350 people. Most rural areas received electricity in the mid 1940s. Other federal involvement occurred during World War II when Durango was the home of a radioactive ore processing site that provided some of the uranium for the Manhattan Project; after the war Durango had a vanadium production plant that employed a large percentage of the local workforce.



A new industry brought growth and money into the county after World War II. The Southern Union Gas Company made a significant find in 1945 at the Barker Dome in northern New Mexico and southern La Plata County. The Stanolind Oil and Gas Company (Standard Oil of Indiana) soon followed with a major find on Southern Ute Lands with their "Ute Indian No. 1" well that had potential to produce 15 million cubic feet of gas per day. In 1956, sixteen major oil production firms had offices in La Plata County. Over 800 new homes were built in the county between 1955 and 1960. After five years of investigation and speculation and no new strikes, the oil companies sent their professionals elsewhere. While field operations continued, the influx of well paid administrative professionals was over by the mid 1960s. Another series of gas wells was initiated in the 1970s along with processing plants to remove liquids from the gas.

The gas field development contributed to an already developing road system in the county. The railroad had been the dominant form of transportation into the 1920s but the rising popularity of the automobile demanded better roads. By 1951, passenger traffic on the train was down to a trickle. The D&RG discontinued service to Alamosa in 1951, as did the Rio Grande Southern Railroad. The Colorado State Highway Department, now known as the Department of Transportation, initiated a series of expanded and realigned roads that have left a lasting legacy in La Plata County. Highways 160 and 140 were realigned in many places, bypassing small communities. Highway 550 through the Animas Valley was moved east from what is now known as County Road 203 and placed down the middle of the valley. A new community hospital district was formed, providing an alternative to Mercy Hospital which also expanded and remodeled in the 1950s. The community hospital district functioned until the late 1980s. After a very lengthy process, the state-mandated public schools consolidation was completed and all rural one-room school houses were closed in favor of larger regional elementary schools. Junior high and high schools were located in Ignacio, Bayfield and Durango.

Although the county lost its sole remaining rail freighter, it realized a gold mine in the form of visitors coming to ride the train. Part of a general rise in tourism after World War II, rider ship numbers on the Silverton train began to rebound. The train between Durango and Silverton survived because of a prevailing American sentimentality about the old west that was also a boon for the numerous “dude” ranches operating in the county in the 1950s. Tourism’s strong foothold in the economy, bolstered after the completion of Vallecito Lake in 1941, expanded further with the opening of the Purgatory Ski Area in 1965. Year-round recreation and sightseeing anchor the local tourism industry, as it has for over 100 years. No longer attracted by the opportunities to live off the land, new pioneers came to mine La Plata County’s recreational and scenic opportunities. Starting in the 1960s, the surge from the cities to the suburbs took on its own character in La Plata County, where people with no interest in farming or ranching sought acreage in the country. Ranchers and farmers found themselves with a new opportunity to sell off parts of their land to these new settlers and long held land ownership patterns began to change.

Historical Population Growth

La Plata County enjoyed continuous growth. The population figures below show the fivefold increase between 1880 and 1890 when the trains arrived. A more modest but still remarkable 27% increase occurs from 1890 to 1900 and continues at a very healthy rate after the opening of the Ute Strip and into the 1910s. In the 1890 census about half of the County’s population lived in Durango, but after 1900, the county population remained more rural until sometime in the 1950s.

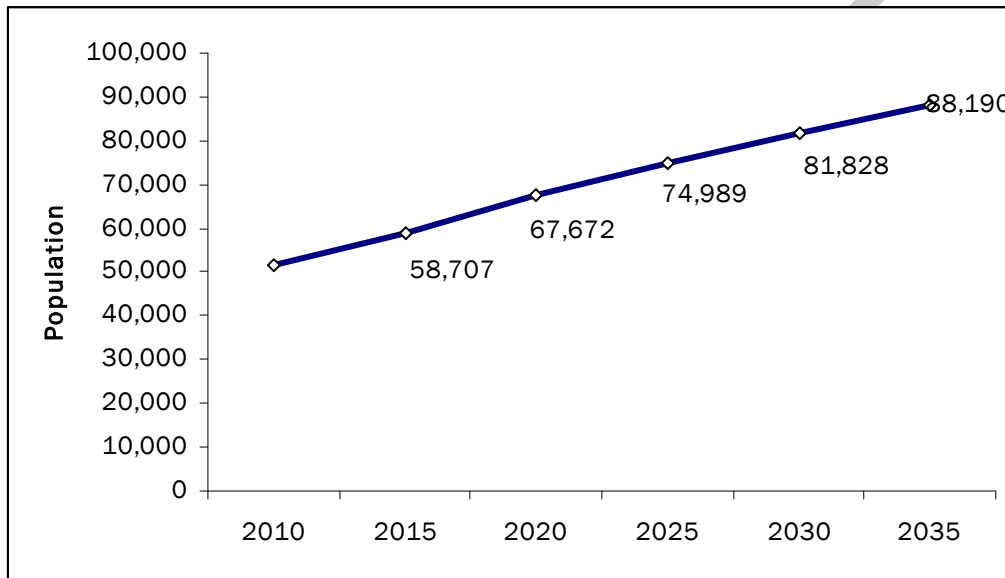
Population of La Plata County From 1880 to 1960 Per U.S. Census Data

Year	County	Durango	Bayfield	Ignacio	Colorado
1880	1,110				194,327
1890	5,509	2,726			412,198
1900	7,016	3,317			541,483
1910	10,812	4,686	227		799,044
1920	11,218	4,116	267	290	939,191
1930	12,975	5,400	277	464	1,035,791
1940	15,494	5,887	372	555	1,123,296
1950	14,880	7,489	335	526	1,325,089
1960	19,225	10,530	322	609	1,753,947

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Colorado Demography Section provides population forecasts for the entire county (includes the municipalities Durango, Bayfield, and Ignacio). Population forecasts are not available for individual municipalities. The Demography Section forecasts are derived using a seven-step methodology that begins with economic forecasts provided by the Center for Business and Economic Forecasting. The economic forecasts are used to generate labor force supply and demand forecasts, which are then used to derive net migration. Net migration and birth and death rates are combined to produce the forecast summarized in Figure 1.

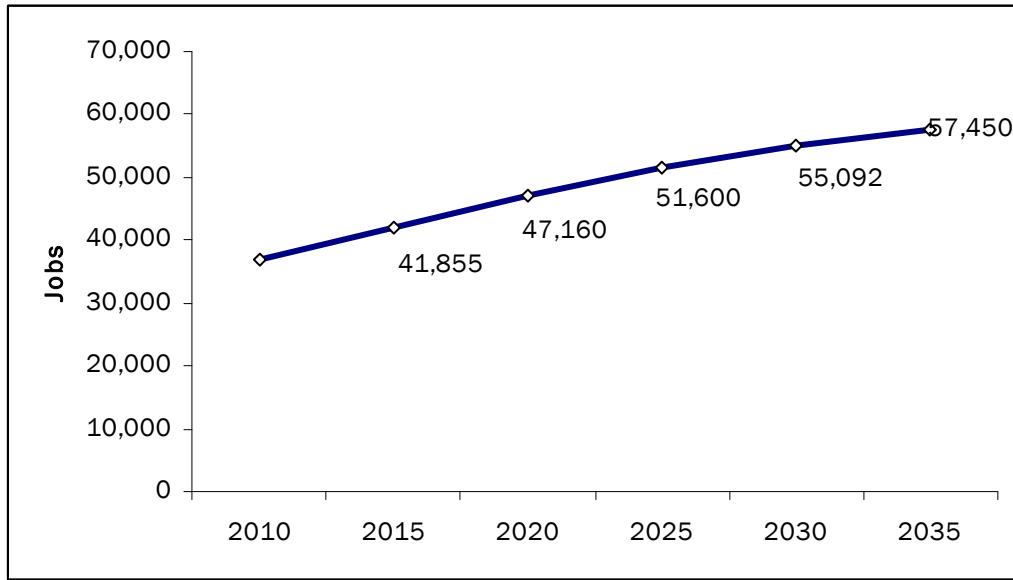
Figure 1 – La Plata County Population Forecasts



Source: Colorado Demography Section http://www.dola.state.co.us/dlg/demog/pop_totals.html

Demographers and state economists are projecting continued growth in jobs, wealth, and population in La Plata County. While the estimates from the 2007 show that the population hovers around 1.4%-1.6% annual growth from 2000-2010, the forecasts show annual population growth rates edging up to 2.6%-2.9% through 2020 and continuing at just over 2% through 2025. In comparing the parallel trajectory of the jobs forecast to the population forecast, the underlying assumption behind the demography section's projection methodology that jobs drive migration and population growth is visible.

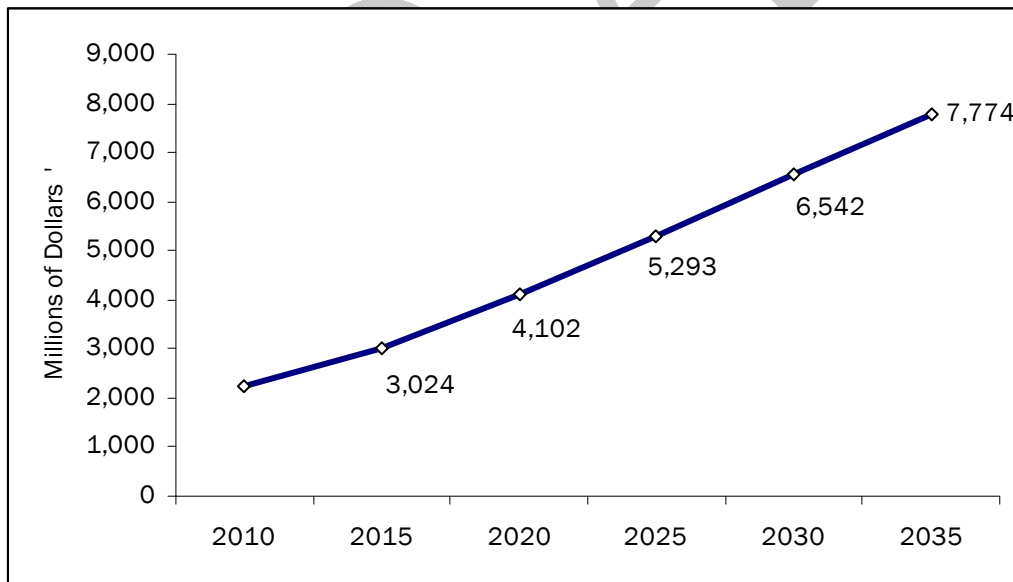
Figure 2 – La Plata County Employment Forecast



Source: Colorado Demography Section http://www.dola.state.co.us/demog_webapps/jobs_cbef

Personal Income is also expected to keep growing, with forecasts (also provided by the Center for Business and Economic Forecasting) predicting that the amount of wealth flowing into La Plata County will more than double between 2010 and 2025.

Figure 3 – La Plata County Total Personal Income Forecast



Source: Colorado Demography Section http://www.dola.state.co.us/demog_webapps/personal_income

La Plata County's demographics analysis must be broadened beyond estimates of the number of full-time residents because at any given time of year, there are thousands of people in La Plata County who are not full-time residents. To keep this characteristic of the county in the forefront, the demographic description breaks the population into segments: 1) full-time residents, 2) tourists 3) second home owners, and 4) college students.

Full-Time Residents

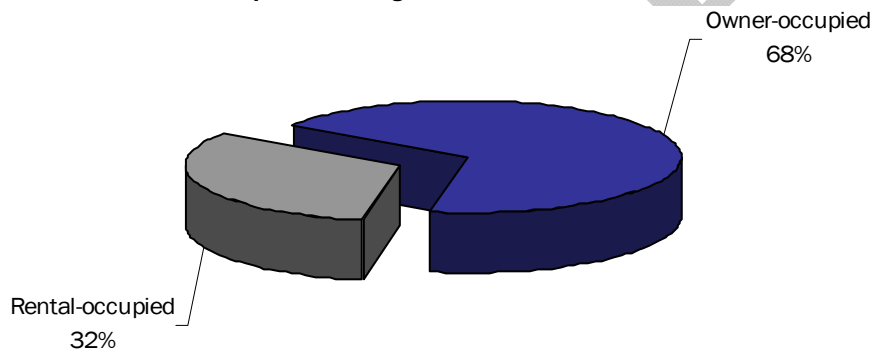
Almost two out of three La Plata County residents are part of the labor force. With a household size of 2.4 residents per dwelling unit¹, about one-third of the county households rent while two-thirds own their homes. La Plata County's per capita income ranks 47th highest of the 64 counties in the state, but falls short of the statewide per capita income of \$41,200, which is higher because of more prosperous, more populated metropolitan areas included in the statewide statistic.

Figure 4 - Latest Population Statistics

Population 2007	49,758
Labor Force 2007	29,956
Per Capita Income 2007	\$38,263
Housing Units 2007	26,045

Source: Colorado Demography Section

Figure 5 - Tenure of Occupied Housing Units



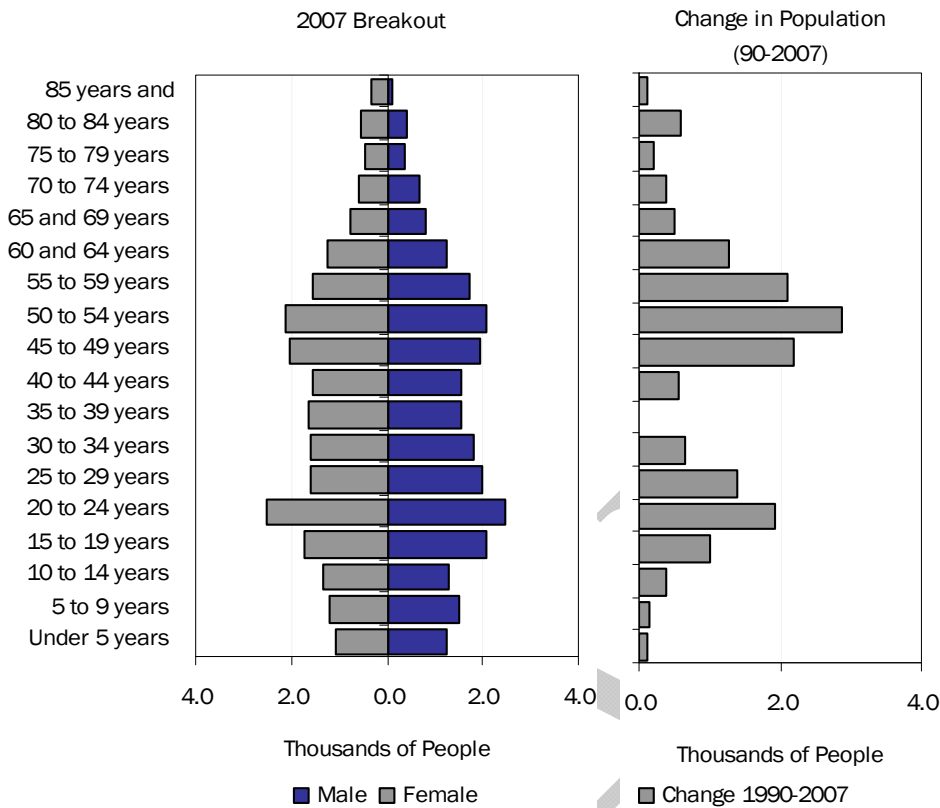
Source: 2000 Census

Looking at the age structure in 2007 (Figure 6), one immediate observation is that the baby-boomer generation has an obvious presence in La Plata County. Baby-boomers are currently age 45 to age 63 and form a distinct bubble in the upper reaches of the population pyramid. By looking at how the population changed between 1990 and 2007, it is obvious that the baby-boomers were moving into La Plata County, and probably are still moving here as they continue to reach traditional retirement age. In 2000, 18% of the population in La Plata County fell into the baby-boomer generation.

The population pyramid also shows a distinct swell of population in the 15-24 year old range, which is relatively constant for La Plata County, not moving up the pyramid between 1990 and 2000 like the baby boomers. One possible explanation for the swell in this age group is that Ft. Lewis College students and others who initially come because of Ft. Lewis College stay for other reasons. One other possibility is that the growth in construction jobs have made it possible for younger residents to move into the county. The swell in the 15-24 year age group is not reflected nationally, where the population pyramid shows a dip in this same age group.

¹ 2000 Census

Figure 6 - Age Structure

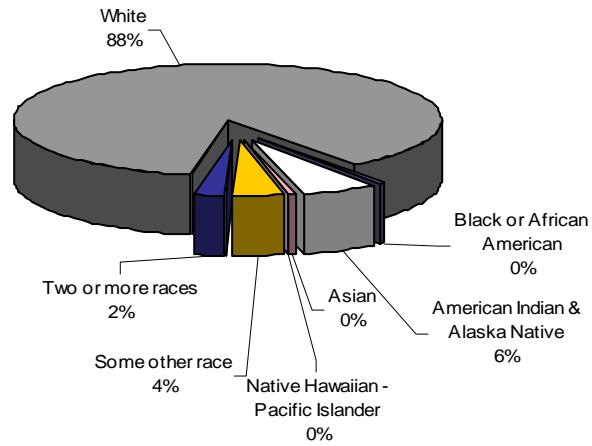
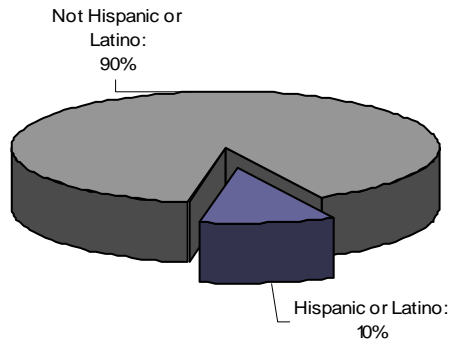


Source: US Census 1990, American Community Survey 2007

The upside-down pyramid shape of the younger age cohorts could spell decreasing enrollment in area public and private schools without migration of families with school-aged children into the community.

American Indians are increasing slightly as a share of the total population, up from 4.9% of the population in 1990, while the White population percentage of the total declined to 87.3% down from 90% in 1990. Most of the American Indian population lives on reservation lands.

Figure 7 - Population by Race, and Hispanic/Non-Hispanic 2000 Census



Source: 2000 Census

Tourists

Lodging data provided by the Durango Tourism Office² provides some idea of the overnight capacity of the county. Assuming double occupancy for the busy nights, hotel and motel rooms have an upper-end capacity for almost 3,500 people per night, with private camping able to handle another 2,200 people per night. Between guest ranches, short-term rental condos or houses, and cabin rentals, there are over 50 establishments renting additional lodging units (# of units not published). Given this inventory it is a reasonable estimate that accommodations inventoried by the Durango Tourism Office appear to accommodate over 6000 people per night. The Durango Tourism Office conducted this inventory over most of the county but it did not include Durango Mountain Resort or any of the campgrounds on USFS or BLM land.

Figure 8 - La Plata County Lodging Inventory

Hotel and Motel Rooms	1,770
Bed and Breakfasts	11
Private RV-Camping Spots	1,103
Guest Ranches	4
Establishments Renting Cabins	20
Establishments Renting Condos or Houses	27

Source: Durango Tourism Office "Trip Planner" 2009

The Durango Tourism Office conducted an informal survey to estimate overnight use in the Durango Area and estimates that there are roughly 750,000 room-nights (1 person, 1 room, 1 night) annually in the La Plata County area. They estimate that an additional 250,000 annual day-trip visits bump the annual visitation up to roughly one million visitor days. The San Juan Public Lands 2007 Annual Report³ estimates that for the whole unit, including Archuleta, La Plata, San Juan, Montezuma, and Dolores counties 1.9 million people visited USFS lands while 660,000 visited BLM lands in 2006. Given that La Plata County accounts for most of the tourist activity in the region, these two estimates of total tourist activity appear to agree with one another.

Figure 9 - Latest Tourist Visitation Statistics

Estimated annual visitor-days 2007	1,000,000
Estimated annual room-nights 2007	750,000
Low estimate of lodging and private campground nightly capacity 2009 (people)	6,000
Durango Mountain Resort skier-days 2007-2008	270,000
Train Ridership 2008	144,687

Source: Durango Tourism Office, Four Corners Quarterly <http://soba.fortlewis.edu/FCEQ/fceq/index.html>

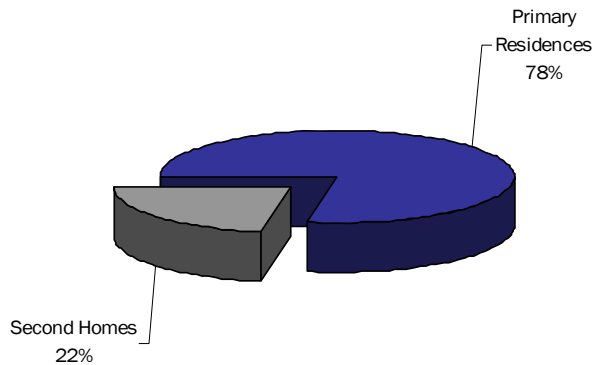
² <http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/durango/otp08/> Data does not include Durango Mountain Resort

³ <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan/about/>

Second Home Owners

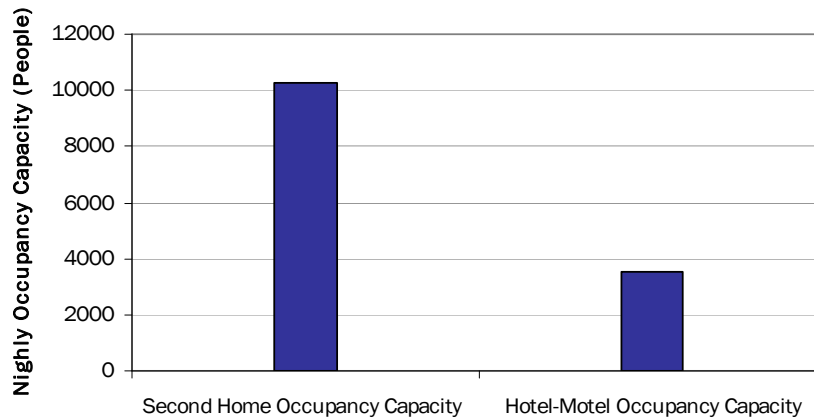
A 2008 report entitled *La Plata County Economic Drivers* conducted for Region 9 Economic Development summarizes a study that estimates the number of second homes in La Plata County at 4,102 units, or 22% of the 18,743 total housing units in 2006 (consultants to Region 9 were Lloyd Levy Consulting and Donna Graves Information Systems). This ratio is much lower than the intensively developed resort areas further north, such as the neighboring Town of Telluride and San Miguel County with 55% second homes or Pitkin County and the mature resort towns of Aspen and Snowmass Village which host over two-thirds second homes.

Figure 10 - Ratio of Second Homes to Primary Residences in La Plata County



Still, with 4,100 second homes in the county accounting for 22% of the housing stock, second homes do not go unnoticed here in La Plata County. Were all the second homes occupied at once with the Colorado statewide household occupancy of 2.5 people per unit (Census 2000), the total second home occupancy would exceed ten thousand people. That's almost twice the estimated occupancy of the county's private overnight accommodations (excludes Durango Mountain Resort and USFS campgrounds). Second homes have the potential to affect peak population more dramatically than any other land use, including hotels and motels.

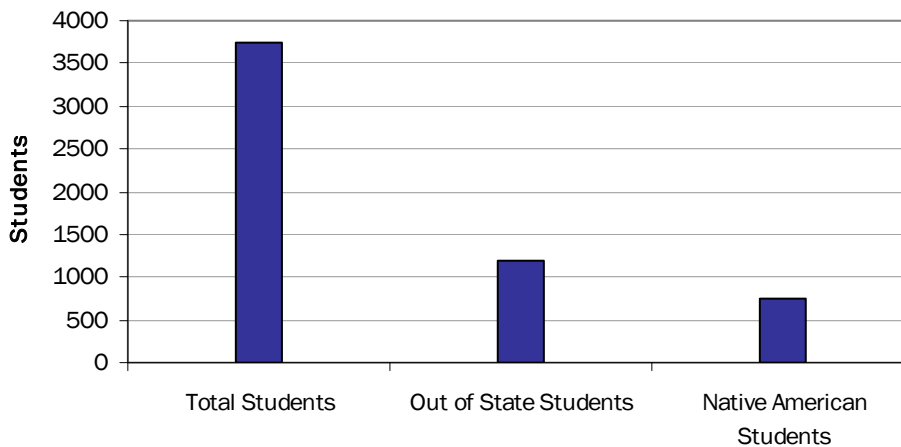
Figure 11 - Comparing Maximum Second Home Occupancy to Hotel Motel Occupancy



College Students

With over 3,700 students enrolled in fall of 2008, Fort Lewis College contributes significantly to the population and the economy in La Plata County. Pueblo Community College, now Southwest Colorado Community College, although much smaller, also adds to the population and economic activity in the county. The Fort Lewis College student body lends to the diversity in the county by adding young people to the population mix, employing a field of highly-educated professors and staff, and drawing nearly 800 Native American students and over 1000 out-of-state students to Durango at any given time.

Figure 12 - Fort Lewis College Enrollment

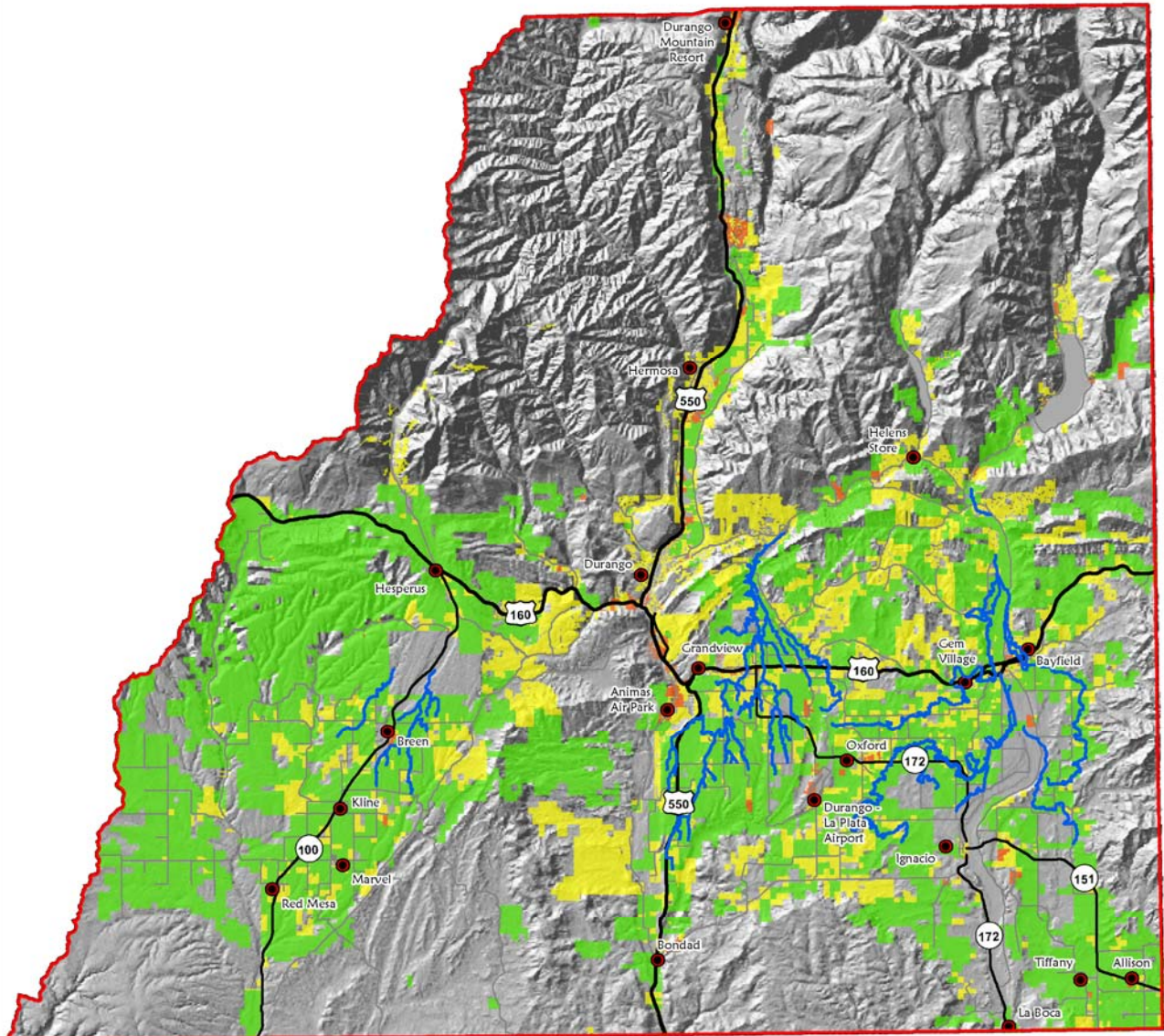


Source: Four Corners Quarterly <http://soba.fortlewis.edu/FCEQ/fceq/index.html>

The complete Community Profile, which provides extensive background information and existing conditions for each of the six Plan elements, is available on the Comprehensive Plan's website at www.laplatacountyplan.com.



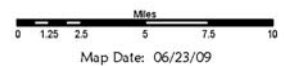
La Plata County Comprehensive Community Plan



Existing Land Use

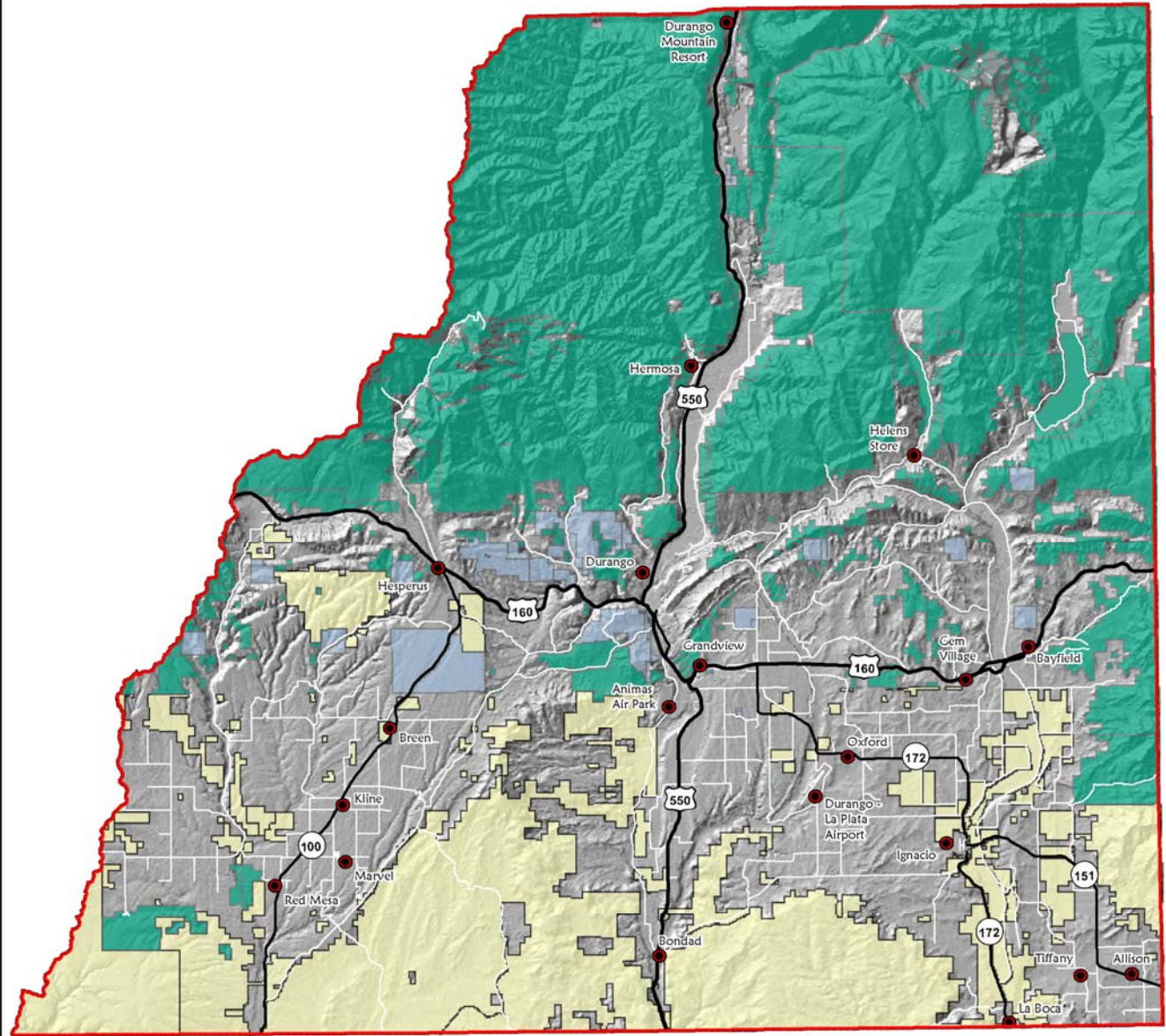
- AGRICULTURAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- OFFICE
- INDUSTRIAL
- Irrigation Ditches

- County Boundary
- Cities/Towns/Landmarks
- US Route
- State Route
- County Road





La Plata County Comprehensive Community Plan

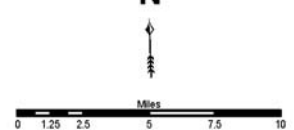


Land Ownership

- Land Ownership
- Federal
 - State of Colorado
 - Tribal Lands

- County Boundary
- Cities/Towns/Landmarks
- US Route
- State Route
- County Road

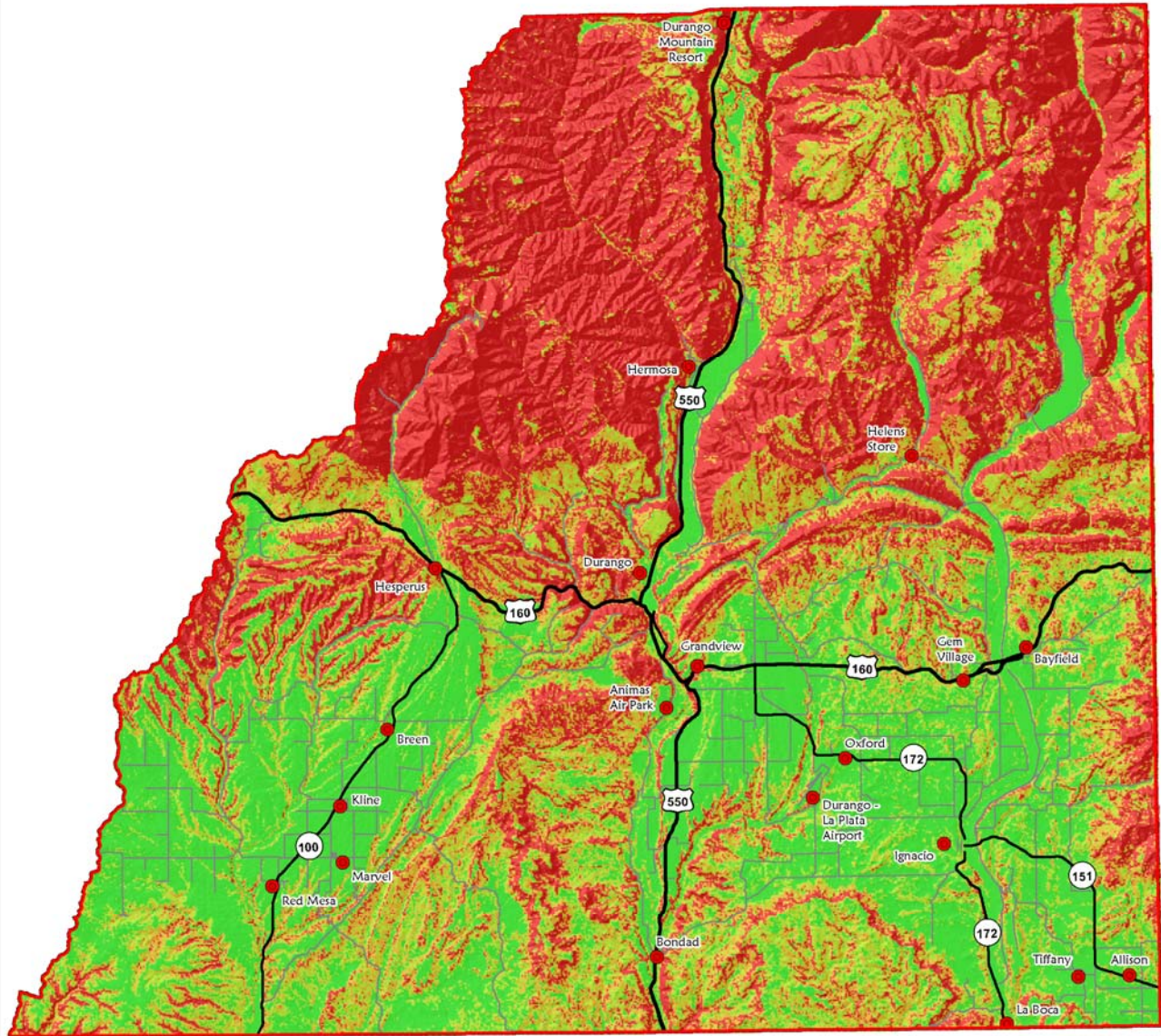
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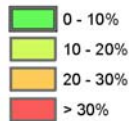


La Plata County Comprehensive Community Plan

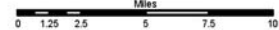


Slope

Percent Slope



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County Boundary

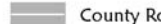
Cities/Towns/Landmarks



US Route



State Route



County Road

III. PLANNING FRAMEWORK

La Plata County is a unique and special place. We all treasure the beauty, diversity, and high quality of life that exist here. Our community has demonstrated our ability to be good stewards of where we live.

However, we have some serious issues facing us that require we take action. Our population has increased 13.3% since adoption of our last comprehensive plan (2001). By 2030 we expect the county population to increase by another 37,258 people. While the national economy has impacted us, there are local trends we also need to consider including declining tourism, future reductions in oil and gas revenues, and loss of agriculture. While development contributes to our economy, it also requires careful consideration of where it occurs, how community services are provided, and its impact on our limited resources such as water and revenues. La Plata County is increasingly unaffordable for families, our roads are becoming more congested, and ranchers are facing increasing pressure to sell their lands. Unfortunately, our current planning framework, developed between 1990 and 2001, is both inefficient and inadequate to successfully address these complex issues.

We now have an opportunity to build upon recent successes and collaboratively plan for our future, before decisions are made for us. La Plata County recently adopted a new strategic plan, *the County Compass*, developed with assistance from community members, which provides direction on how to appropriately focus our resources. More recently, community members participated in the development of the *Children, Youth, and Families Master Plan*. This plan articulates goals and strategies for building healthy vibrant communities and families. These two plans, along with recent transportation studies, provide a solid foundation and framework upon which to build a new comprehensive plan. The new comprehensive plan will reflect the Compass goals and articulate clear strategies for *Economic Vitality, Sustainable Development, Transportation, Natural Environment, Healthy Communities and Housing, and Organizational Excellence*.

The process for creating an effective comprehensive plan included approximately four (4) steps:

1. The **Visioning** process included many opportunities for the public to develop a future vision based on commonly held values. The result of the community input was the development of a community vision statement.
2. The **Comprehensive Plan Development** refined the community goals and developed strategies to reflect overarching principles the community identified through the visioning process. The result was a set of goals and strategies for each plan element.
3. The **Future Land Use Plan** began by utilizing computer generated analyses and growth scenarios to show the implications of various development patterns. We analyzed land use suitability and sensitivity and created a Future Land Use Plan proposing land use intensities and settlement patterns that are appropriate to the land, water availability, and community character.
4. The **Land Use Development Code** is the implementation tool and will provide regulations for how and where future land development may occur in La Plata County. The land use development code is the regulatory and legal framework for achieving the goals and strategies articulated in the comprehensive plan.

The Plan is developed for the unincorporated areas of the County, and does not have authority over incorporated areas such as Durango, Ignacio, or Bayfield. However, the County is working in coordination with the other jurisdictions to ensure there is predictability and consistency throughout the county.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

2001 LA PLATA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Intended to guide the growth and long-term development of the community the existing County Comprehensive Plan is an advisory planning document that addresses policies related to Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Agriculture, Environmental Resources, Public Safety, Extractive Resources, and Parks, Recreation and Trails. The Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the County Planning Commission in December 2001 but was not adopted by the BoCC.

DISTRICT PLANS

The original 7 district plans were adopted in 1996 & 1997 (North County, Florida Road, Vallecito, Junction Creek, West Durango, Florida Mesa, Bayfield) but the Ft. Lewis Mesa plan was adopted in 2007 and is different from the other district plans in its organization and contents. The plans all contain typical comprehensive planning headings: issues statements, vision statements, goals and objectives, guiding principles. The 1996 and 1997 plans are accompanied by mapped land use classifications and narrative for any one of over 20 land use classifications.

The planning process was initiated in the mid-1990s because the case-by-case performance based approach to planning in La Plata County was resulting in some contentious outcomes, particularly dispersed commercial and industrial uses in the unincorporated county. There was a call for a more holistic approach that would result in some degree of predictability. Some participants in the district planning process were fundamentally opposed to zoning regulations. The district plans were adopted by the planning commission, but the key elements making way for an acceptable level of support by the community was that they were 1) advisory and 2) that they maintain flexibility. The district plans were intended by many to be used "temporarily" as advisory guidelines during the development review process, then overtime the plans would be fine-tuned and formal development regulations and zoning would be developed.

The fact that the plans were initiated to address the deficient land use code has resulted in an ambitiously wide array of policy guidance, some of which is typically contained in a comprehensive plan, some of which is typically contained in a land use code, and some of which would more likely belong in a governmental strategic plan. The result is a difficult-to-navigated set of plans containing dispersed pockets of guidance for development review and an assortment ideas for long range planning.

The *District Plans Evaluation*, prepared by RPI Consulting in 2009, shows a "high degree alignment" of values and strategies between district plans on several topics, such as

- Sustaining Agricultural Land Uses
- Wildlife
- Scenic Resources and Unique Landscapes

Alignment on other planning topics in the district plans is more moderate, but still signals the potential for county-wide agreement given a comprehensive planning community process. One would surmise that many of the values expressed in the 10+ year-old district plans are still in place today. Integrating new values, ideas, and strategies will be of central importance in developing the comprehensive plan and future land use plan. Still, the values, goals and strategies that are common between district plans and with which the community still agrees will be part of the platform upon which the county-wide comprehensive plan is built. The entire "District Plans Evaluation" is available on the Comprehensive Plan website at www.laplatacountyplan.com

LA PLATA COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING ALLIANCE FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

RHA's five point action plan, adopted in 2007 by the BoCC and RHA Board, began laying the framework for new housing services in the region. The Regional Housing Alliance's Action Plan for 2007-2011 has five components: (1.) Fair Share Programs; (2.) La Plata Homes Fund; (3.) Land Banking and Development; (4.) Homebuyer Assistance; and, (5.) RHA's Policy Agenda. These programs, when implemented, can help communities in La Plata County create at least 500 new affordable housing opportunities over five years.

COMPASS STRATEGIC PLAN

La Plata County achieved an important milestone 2008 — the completion of the County's first strategic plan, called the *La Plata County Compass*. This document is the "road map" to our community's vision of the future. It has been well received by county residents, as it reflects what the Board of County Commissioners heard from all of you about your hopes and dreams for La Plata County. The County Compass is our touchstone, and decisions made by the Board are measured against their alignment with the core strategies and objectives of the strategic plan. The Compass Strategic plan serves as the foundation for all the County's policies. The La Plata County Comprehensive Plan is organized around the Compass Plan elements. Finally, the County's land use development code will be created to implement the vision and goals articulated in these plans.

LAND USE CODE

The La Plata County Land Use System (referred to as the "land use code") is the permitting system by which development is regulated in La Plata County. It identifies three levels of land use activity that require permits, 1) administrative activities, 2) Class I activities, and 3) Class II activities. Land use permits are required for subdivisions and minor subdivision exemptions. The land use code is a hybrid of two types of permitting systems. On one hand permits are evaluated against a set of performance standards, some of which are "required" and others of which are "encouraged". On the other hand, the code contains traditional zoning districts covering the Animas Valley, Crowbar Creek, and part of Gem Village. The land use code does not address overall density or locate possible commercial or industrial land uses for most of the county that is not covered by zoning districts. Among other details the code covers water, sewer, access, buffering, compatibility, easements, fencing, fire, floodplain, geologic hazards, lot design, school land dedication, utilities, and other nuts and bolts of site planning.

2010 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles serve as a basis of reasoning and action; a set of beliefs that lead, show the way and direct the decisions of the plan. They are the fundamental basis for any decision. They will shape the solution and define the way strategies are developed. Guiding principles define the ground rules for the process and development of the plan. La Plata County will embrace these Guiding principles in the development of the Comprehensive Community Plan:

- County officials and residents honor the importance of private property rights, respect the applicable provisions of the Colorado and United States Constitutions, and acknowledge that all county citizens share equal rights with respect to representation and opinion.
- Tourism remains an important component of our economic base and vitality.
- Growth and change will continue to occur in the future and will likely continue to alter our rural/agricultural landscape.
- Growth can create great places to live and work if the community crafts a vision and sets standards and reasonable codes for development that express how and where it wants to grow or change.
- An integration of developed land uses such as housing, retail, work places, schools, parks, and civic facilities are important to the daily life of the residents, and when conveniently located are components of achieving better places to live.
- A variety of commercial land uses accommodates business growth and supports economic diversity.
- A diversity of housing types and densities are available to a wide range of income levels, age groups and abilities are essential to creating real and healthy communities.
- Greenbelt/wildlife corridors help define growth communities.
- Communities are desirable places to live when they include a system of connected streets, infrastructure, pedestrian paths, and bike routes to commercial, educational, recreational, and residential destinations.
- Land use planning integrated with a larger transportation network encourages a variety of transportation choices and modes.
- Agricultural land and agricultural production are important to the local economy and security.
- Agricultural lands, open space, and critical natural areas are important to the local character and the community's quality of life.
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy production industries at the local and regional levels provide the basis for a sustainable economy.
- Conventional energy production is one of the pillars of the local economy.

- A prudent community uses water through the most efficient means practical.
- Growth and development standards and decisions that are clear, predictable, consistent, fair, timely, and cost effective serve the community and build confidence in local government.
- Fundamental roles of the county are to maintain fiscal soundness and protect community health and welfare.
- Land use planning with an engaged public remains relevant as the community evolves.



IV. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND VISIONING

OUR VISION 2030

Our vision is of a community that is a model of collaboration, partnerships and innovation. We have achieved a balance among economic and social development and environmental stewardship. Our communities are neighborhoods that are connected physically and socially to each other. We have a strong sense of community and work together for the county as a whole. We honor and celebrate our diversity and heritage and honor the constitutional rights of private property. Our community is a caring place that supports residents' effort to achieve their full potential. Our efforts make us one of the best places in the nation to live and raise a family.

TO ACHIEVE THIS VISION WE WILL:

Protect Our Community Treasures

As a community we treasure our strong sense of community and community spirit. We are civically engaged and involved. We have a willingness to engage in respectful debate with a diversity of opinions. Our community is very friendly and we are full of interesting and eclectic people. We have a diverse multi-ethnic population that is a keystone of our identity. We have old timers with deep roots in the county who we learn from.

Our great towns and communities are distinct, each with unique characteristics that make them real. La Plata County is a place where we say hello to our neighbors and feel safe outside our homes. All of our communities are friendly places that make them great places to raise a family. They have small town feel, are beautiful, and while quaint, not too fancy. The county is geographically blessed with proximity to towns, forests, deserts, mountains, and lakes. We are fortunate to have both rural and urban qualities in our county without negatives like interstates and metropolitan traffic congestion.

In our county, we have tremendous access to a wide variety of culture and recreation that contribute to our high quality of life. We have Ft. Lewis College and Southwest Community College that contribute to a learning environment. Our communities host great arts, music, and cultural events. Our towns provide good entertainment and activities through both civic and business assets such as our historic downtown districts, farmers markets, and libraries. We appreciate our local community and economic assets that enable us to thrive such as: an airport that provides outside access, the train, and a regional hospital. Our abundant open spaces and recreational activities provide activities year round. We can bike, play in the river, ski, walk, watch wildlife, ride horses, and hunt. We love our healthy active lifestyle facilitated by easy access to public lands and trails.

Our county is blessed with high quality natural assets and is a beautiful place to live. We all enjoy the peace and tranquility experienced from being close to nature. We enjoy the clean air, water, and abundant wildlife that are a result of still healthy ecosystems. We love the scenic vistas of our diverse landscape including the mountains, forest, canyons, and rivers. Our county is defined by our blue skies, night sky, year round sun, colors of four distinct seasons, and a wonderful climate. Where we choose to live can provide privacy and a feeling of isolation despite our proximity to neighbors and towns.

Our county respects and values its heritage. Agriculture is a solid component of our community. We have large agricultural properties, an active 4-H, and local farmers and ranchers. We work

together to maintain community agriculture and ranching viability. Our historical sites and towns connect us to our past.

Heed Lessons from Our Past As We Plan Our Future

La Plata County is a creative, resilient, and proactive community. In 2009, we recognized that our population would continue to grow due to a continuing national demographic trend. Learning from our past, we choose to shape the inevitable changes which impact our community's development and ability to be long-lasting. We will learn from other places the best strategies to create our desired future. As a result of a long history of boom and bust, we will create more sustainable economic cycles by diversifying our economy. To ease the transition from fiscal dependence on non-renewable energy development, we will invest in new economic drivers that help create a more balanced economy. We will wisely plan for the finite natural resources upon which our community depends. When threatened with growth degrading our high quality of life, we will come together to determine how and where we need to grow. We will work to foster collaborative community dialogue, invest in leadership, and create a more equitable and affordable community. Finally, we will maintain a connection to our past by preserving our heritage and community treasures.

Consider Internal and External Factors As We Plan

We recognize we can influence the following factors that impact our community's development.

We can:

- Work together to overcome our differences.
- Plan for growth.
- Balance personal and community benefits.
- Cooperate on a regional level with other governments, including the Tribes.
- Manage our water resources.
- Promote alternative energy.
- Promote a healthy local economy.
- Balance community affordability and housing choices.
- Develop and support quality educational opportunities.
- Plan for our transportation and infrastructure.
- Plan for the decrease in oil and gas revenues.

We recognize that we can have less influence over the following factors that impact our community's development.

- The national economy will continue to affect us, but we can diversify to minimize downswings.
- There will be people who put their personal benefit over the benefit of the community.
- The San Juan Basin fossil energy resources will be exhausted in the future.
- People will want to move here and community members will have families. Our population is going to increase.
- Changes in energy supplies will affect the costs of living.

VISION PROCESS

A community vision statement provides a compelling picture of what the County aspires to be in the future. In July and August 2009, residents from throughout La Plata County, from both incorporated and unincorporated communities, participated in visioning activities to create a community vision statement.

Participants in the vision process answered:

- 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?
- What would be the worst possible scenario for La Plata County in the future?
- What are the internal factors (possibly in our control) and 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 La Plata County Comprehensive Plan visioning outreach included a full day vision summit, six vision open houses in locations throughout the county, almost two dozen outreach events, a youth survey, and a community survey. Feedback on the community vision was gathered first through the distribution of an online community feedback form followed by additional opportunities for revisions in seven community outreach meetings where the public was invited to develop and refine goals.

As much as possible, the vision utilized the specific language provided by participants and themes that reoccurred with frequency. More than 500 people from throughout the County participated in the creation of this community vision for La Plata County. The demographic representation of visioning participation was about 56% from the Durango area (both incorporated and unincorporated areas around the City) and 46% from the rest of the county. The results and outcomes of the Visioning process are available on the Comprehensive Plan website at www.laplatacountyplan.com.

An important part of the comprehensive plan community process was the establishment of a citizen-based Working Group (WG). The WG was approved by the County Commissioners and represents a broad cross section of the community including real estate interests, ranchers, environmentalists, housing, transportation, water, social services and finance. There is also a representative of the County Planning Commission on the WG. The group has met tirelessly twice a month over the last 10 months in establishing direction and reviewing draft materials prepared by the staff, consultants and community. The summaries of all of the WG meetings are available on the Comprehensive Plan website.



V. ECONOMIC VITALITY ELEMENT

ECONOMIC VITALITY VISION STATEMENT

Our local businesses are prosperous, our economy is diverse, and our county is fiscally healthy. We approach our economic development with a long term view and seek cooperative, integrated, and creative solutions to foster regional economic growth. Our county is renowned for entrepreneurial spirit, green industries, local food production, education, and cultural, recreational and heritage tourism. We recognize there is a balance between economic and social development and environmental protection and we achieve this balance by promoting our assets while encouraging sustainable business development. Our reliable and fast internet and well educated community attract knowledge based industries. We are a national leader in conventional and renewable energy industries. Our agricultural industry is thriving as a result of both increased local markets, mineral development, as well as innovative programs in the county that support agricultural viability without regulations that diminish land value. Our county is a vibrant and exciting destination that shows off our natural assets, rich heritage, and diverse cultures. The county's economy provides opportunities for all people, young and old to stay as they grow their families, advance their careers and continue to be productive members of the community. Economic vitality is supported by infrastructure investments, learning opportunities, access to health and childcare, and a balance between cost of living and wages.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- 1. Develop incentives for economic activities that promote business sustainability and diversity.**
 - a) Expand buy-local programs in partnership with local governments, agencies, and non-government organizations and increase the local preference percentage in county procurement policies.
 - b) Reduce the time and steps required in the permitting processes (planning, building, road and bridge).
 - c) Support a business incubator and commercial kitchen in partnership with local governments, agencies, and non-government organizations that also serves as a one-stop shop that focuses on business recruitment and retention activities.
 - d) Establish incentives for businesses to utilize sustainable practices based on a score-card of sustainability indicators.
 - e) Encourage development of renewable resources.
- 2. Actively collaborate with the municipalities, Sovereign Nations, State and Federal agencies, private sector, and non-profit entities to promote economic diversity and sustainability.**
 - a) Initiate a referendum to make La Plata County a home rule county.
 - b) Develop community and region-wide support for higher education advanced degree programs.
- 3. Support the development and management of infrastructure necessary for a sustainable local economy: water, energy, waste, communications, housing, and transportation.**
 - a) Provide assistance to property owners to create improvement districts in designated rural centers.

- b) Determine the feasibility of creating a water and sewer authority or other similar entities as a means of financing infrastructure.
 - c) Encourage sustainable use of locally generated materials and energy.
- 4. Preserve and enhance our cultural landscape, scenic resources, recreational opportunities, and county-owned assets for residents, tourists, and businesses.**
- a) Build and operate recreational facilities that stimulate the local economy- funded through voter approved financing- and implement user fees that help cover the operating costs.
 - b) Develop incentives to encourage the dedication of unique open space, scenic resources and public trails in future subdivisions and other development projects.
- 5. Stimulate economic vitality by designating an adequate supply of land for businesses and industries and attracting and expanding businesses and industries that strengthen our community and provide livable wages.**
- a) Designate rural centers in existing rural communities where future non-residential and residential development will be encouraged.
 - b) Establish an expedited county permitting process for development in designated rural centers and business parks.
- 6. Support agricultural innovations and sustainable technologies; promote and stimulate local markets as well as export markets for locally-produced agricultural products; encourage development of facilities for value-added products.**
- a) Provide fee discounts or waivers for activities directly associated with agricultural operations, such as application fees, building fees, plumbing and mechanical fees, planning permit fees, impact fees, and road and bridge inspection fees.
 - b) Support processing and distribution for locally grown food and remove regulatory barriers to value-added production of agricultural products.
 - c) Exempt county sales tax on locally grown food.
 - d) Support the development of agricultural infrastructure which supports and increases the capacity of local agriculture and food supply (e.g., distribution center, commercial kitchens, etc).

VI. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VISION STATEMENT

Our community develops on principles that respect and protect our private property rights and our natural, cultural, and heritage assets that contribute to our high quality of life. Our community takes a big picture view in planning for the sustainable development of our county. We employ effective principles to achieve our desired development pattern that creates and enhances the development of community. La Plata County guides development in a way that is symbiotic with local municipalities, sovereign nations, neighborhood communities and property owners. To protect our rural lifestyle, our County has grown around designated centers integrating new and old neighborhoods while supporting agricultural lands. These centers are serviced by a well-planned infrastructure and multimodal transportation system. Our agricultural system is an important provider of food to our community and the world and agriculture is supported through innovative local programs that ensure its viability. Our community is appreciative and is knowledgeable about our treasured cultural legacy, historic resources, and scenic assets which we strive to maintain. We recognize water is a finite resource and plan based upon that understanding. We are proactive in addressing impacts of drought and potential water shortages. Our planning takes into account the unique characteristics and needs of each watershed and ensures a reliable water supply for all users. La Plata County promotes domestic water conservation and reuse to reduce our water consumption. As a community, we planned for higher conventional energy prices by investing in new technologies. Thus, our County is renowned for its energy independence and as an exporter of conventional/traditional and renewable energy. Locally we have reduced energy demand through efficiency, conservation, and design.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- 1. Support the enhancement of local food, fiber, and forest production systems (i.e. growing, processing, marketing, and consumption).**
 - a) Support development of a resource guide that summarizes agricultural organizations and programs available in county.
 - b) Explore the feasibility of financing tools to support farm and agricultural organizations and land acquisitions projects.
- 2. Promote access to healthy, affordable, culturally-influenced, and sustainably produced food, sourced as locally as possible.**
 - a) Investigate the use of agricultural cooperatives and value added agricultural products and provide the findings to the community for education and information.
 - b) Promote local food production and agriculture uses during the development review process.
 - c) Educate the community of the value of agriculture and encourage community gardens.
 - d) Encourage greenhouses to extend the local growing season.
- 3. Promote resource-efficient growth and settlement patterns.**
 - a) Adopt a future land use plan and county wide zoning that designates future growth areas supported by the provision of new or enhanced infrastructure or utilization of existing infrastructure.

- b) Identify rural centers throughout the county that can provide neighborhood and agricultural-related retail services.
- c) Identify future commercial and employment centers in urban growth areas with sufficient existing or proposed infrastructure and traffic capacities.
- d) Determine through analyses the projected development build-out for the county and allocate growth to minimize future sprawl.

4. Meet local energy and materials needs as much as possible through efficiency and with locally or regionally renewable resources.

- a) Encourage the locations of solar and wind farms and private co-generation.
- b) Support local harvesting and processing of wood products in appropriate locations.
- c) Maintain access to gravel that reduces transportation distance.
- d) Provide education, incentives, and/or regulations to enhance energy efficiency and incorporate renewable energy in new construction and major renovations.
- e) Create development regulations or policies that encourage community-scale renewable energy systems and waste water systems that allow for rural village centers.
- f) Encourage energy efficiency in all buildings.
- g) Encourage development of renewable infrastructure.
- h) Educate the community, particularly youth, about the benefits of using energy and material efficiently and on using local and regional resources.

5. Support investment in adequate and sustainable water resources for social, environmental, and economic purposes.

- a) Educate the community about practicing efficient water distribution and irrigation techniques without compromising water rights.
- b) Advocate for legislation to create agricultural water-banking to protect water rights and promote conservation.
- c) Promote the use of water harvesting, gray water systems, and reclaimed water, and increase the use of permeable surfaces.

6. Protect historic and prehistoric sites and promote cultural preservation to enhance heritage tourism and increase restoration of these sites.

- a) Provide education about state and federal incentives to developers and property owners to voluntarily retain historic structures, trails, and ditches.
- b) Support a property tax incentive for preservation of cultural resources.

7. Promote and encourage retention of agricultural lands.

- a) Create an Agricultural Advisory Group to work with the La Plata County Commissioners on local, state, and federal policy reforms that benefit local producers and maintain the 35 acre subdivision exemption.
- b) Develop land subdivision, zoning, and conservation incentives for agricultural land owners that maintain the integrity of productive agricultural lands while allowing for other forms of development.
- c) Amend the development code to incentivize agricultural production to remain viable by providing clear and simple regulatory processes.
- d) Utilize County tax policy to support and enhance agricultural production viability (e.g., agricultural inputs, acquisition fund, etc.)
- e) Adopt a Right to Farm/Ranch ordinance including content of Colorado's revised statute 35-3.5-101: Nuisance Liability of Agriculture Operations.

VII. TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

TRANSPORTATION VISION STATEMENT

La Plata County has an efficient multi-modal transportation system that complements our land use strategies. Walking, cycling and equestrian routes connect our neighborhoods, towns, and employment. We have an efficient countywide public transportation system. Roads and public transportation networks are well planned to enable people of all ages and abilities to get around safely, efficiently, and conveniently through the county. Our airport connects us to the rest of the world contributing to our economic vitality.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- 1. Promote development that is accessed with multiple modes of transportation.**
 - a) Adopt and implement zoning that promotes higher density development nodes.
 - b) Prepare a comprehensive “multimodal development planning checklist” for use by developers when preparing applications and for staff during the review process to encourage inclusion of multimodal elements.
 - c) Implement a range of process-based and financial incentives for developers to meet multimodal goals, such as additional staff support, faster review turn around, lower review fees, and possible tax incentives.
 - d) Prepare a community-based transportation plan concurrently with the future land use plan and develop metrics and use them to review policy effectiveness.
 - e) Create a Multi-Modal coordinator, through reassigning an existing position or with a new position, to integrate with community and state transportation efforts to effect multi-modal planning and improvements.
- 2. Prioritize a road and transportation network that connects new and existing developments and promotes multi-modal transportation options.**
 - a) Update street standards and interconnectivity requirements, and provide incentives and road maintenance agreements, so that under certain conditions the County can accept existing sub-standard private roads and pathways that will interconnect neighborhoods.
 - b) Ensure adequate and safe emergency access through all new developments and promote interconnectivity with existing developments.
 - c) Design and plan an interconnected multimodal network of streets, paths, and trails.
- 3. Promote a regional public transportation system that includes communities beyond the state and county boundaries.**
 - a) Assess support of a La Plata/Durango Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), and possible funding source(s) for transportation services and improvements.
 - b) Formalize and enhance coordination and communication between La Plata Co, Southwest Council of Governments, Farmington Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Northwest New Mexico Regional Planning Organization.
 - c) Evaluate intercity transit as a means for transporting goods as well as people to minimize vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- 4. Minimize conflict between traffic and animals, both wildlife and livestock.**
 - a) Adopt a Best Management Practices plan for wildlife control and crossings.
 - b) Recognize historic rights of livestock passage on and across county and state roads.

- 5. Encourage the use of the most efficient, safe and environmentally healthy transportation designs and technologies.**
 - a) Adopt and implement a “Complete Streets” policy and Safe Routes to School (SR2S) plan that addresses the cumulative effects of traffic.
 - b) Formalize collaboration and partnerships with CDOT and municipalities.
 - c) Encourage low-emission transportation options.

- 6. Support the use of telecommunications infrastructure as an alternative to daily commuting and travel.**
 - a) Conduct an analysis to determine areas with poor internet service levels, and foster private provision of internet services in those areas.
 - b) Support Internet service in areas where fully-private service is not attainable.

- 7. Encourage land use and work patterns that reduce per-capita average daily trips, congestion, and vehicle miles traveled.**
 - a) Implement a park-and-ride infrastructure plan.
 - b) Collaborate with oil and gas industry to minimize service traffic.
 - c) Encourage flexible work hours.
 - d) Identify and locate activity nodes that support transit and multimodal transportation choices.

- 8. Promote the expansion of aviation services (number of flights, frequency, destinations) and support viable rail connectivity.**
 - a) Explore the feasibility of railroad connectivity.
 - b) Retain and expand air service at La Plata County/Durango Regional Airport with all willing partners.
 - c) Support improvements at the Animas Airpark facilities.

VIII. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ELEMENT

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT VISION STATEMENT

La Plata County supports the protection and enhancement of a healthy natural environment on a local, regional and global scale. We are a leader in environmental stewardship and a model community for our proactive and balanced approach to conserving natural resources. We enjoy a healthy environment with clean air and water, and dark night skies. Wildlife corridors connect natural areas throughout the county creating ecosystem linkages and improving wildlife vitality. Our community members continue our legacy of land stewardship engaging in activities on their land that enhances land health. Damage from invasive weeds has been reduced and our native species are thriving. As extractive industries develop and decline, disturbed lands are successfully reclaimed.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- 1. Protect and enhance healthy ecosystems.**
 - a) Develop a resource management plan for keystone species and programs to monitor health of various ecosystems throughout the county.
 - b) Support educational and interpretive programs to connect residents from urban and suburban communities to the natural environment.
- 2. Encourage preservation and restoration of wildlife corridors, wetlands, and riparian habitats.**
 - a) Map wildlife corridors, wetlands, and riparian habitats in collaboration with federal, state, and tribal agencies.
 - b) Provide incentives to land owners who implement restoration and preservation guidelines on the portions of their property that are identified as wildlife corridors, wetlands, and riparian habitats.
 - c) Develop conservation, zoning, and subdivision tools that provide incentives for protecting critical resource lands including habitat, wetlands, and riparian areas while allowing for other forms of development.
- 3. Reduce wildfire hazards.**
 - a) Educate the public about insurance incentives available for reducing wildfire hazards around structures and ways to reduce fire hazard through defensible space and thinning operations.
 - b) Develop guidelines for property owners on fire-wise house design, location and fuel management of the site.
 - c) Develop wildfire management overlay zones for high risk areas that control new development regarding density, building location and design and fuel management.
- 4. Address risks to our natural environment and long-term water resources by appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures.**
 - a) Advocate to the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) to adopt legislation requiring the oil and gas industry to inform county of any chemicals used in the extraction or production processes, and test for chemicals in ground and surface waters.
 - b) Incorporate best management practices for protecting natural drainage systems and aquifers.

- c) Identify contingency measures for prolonged drought.
- 5. Minimize noise and light pollution, light trespass, and glare from future development and encourage retrofit of existing sources.**
- a) Identify best management practices for light and noise control.
 - b) Adopt noise and light regulations that consider specific land uses such as agriculture.
- 6. Develop energy infrastructure to generate sufficient energy locally to meet future needs.**
- a) Adopt renewable energy dividends (LPEA).
 - b) Implement renewable energy tax districts.
 - c) Incentivize the use of renewable energy for buildings and energy efficient building designs through the building code.
 - d) Encourage hydropower generation from water projects.
- 7. Encourage the restoration or reuse of lands impacted by resource development.**
- a) Require reclamation plans for natural resource development.
 - b) Provide incentives and/or remove obstacles for establishing renewable energy infrastructure on impacted lands.
- 8. Restrict development in the floodplain and significant geologic hazard areas.**
- a) Complete and update county mapping of geologic hazards and the 100 year floodplain.
 - b) Develop a ranking system that identifies geologic hazards that pose a tangible risk to public health and safety and focus county regulation on those significant hazards.
 - c) Require development to be located outside of the floodplain and significant geologic hazards except on properties where there are no feasible development sites outside of the floodplain or outside of significant geologic hazards; where floodplain or significant geologic hazards cannot be avoided, mitigation standards will be implemented to minimize risk to public health and safety.
- 9. Protect and improve air and water quality and manage noxious weeds through collaboration with federal, state, Sovereign Nations, and local agencies.**
- a) Require notifications be sent to landowners when public right of way or well pad is sprayed with herbicide.
 - b) Require a 50 ft or greater setback from watercourses for on-site wastewater systems.
 - c) Revise the land use code so that erosion and sedimentation control standards are effective in minimizing runoff and disturbance of adjacent properties.
 - d) Work in partnership with the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission to continue monitoring water quality as part of the oil and gas permitting process.
 - e) Enforce the La Plata County Weed Code and implement the La Plata County Weed Management Plan.
 - f) Work in partnership with state and federal land management agencies and Sovereign Nations to prevent further proliferation of invasive plant species in La Plata County.
 - g) Work in concert with other agencies to enforce air quality standards in and near La Plata County.
- 10. Reduce, reuse, and recycle material resources.**
- a) Develop a County wide comprehensive recycling program that results in an increase in the types of materials (including appliances) that can be recycled and identifies convenient locations for drop-off and collection.

- b) Create a composting program that would allow for the city/county to compost waste and promote composting by individuals.
- c) Provide tax incentives to businesses and individuals who recycle and re-use material resources.
- d) Collaborate locally and regionally on a "zero waste" effort.

11. Support the enhancement of renewable natural resource systems (forest and range products, fisheries, wildlife).

- a) Promote forestry operations that are economically and environmentally sustainable.

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IX. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING ELEMENT

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING VISION STATEMENT

La Plata County is a great place for multigenerational families. The County strives to maximize the quality of life, well-being and potential of all citizens. The County has taken an active leadership role in affordable housing by encouraging free market development, so that citizens are able to live and work in the county. There are ample housing choices for all income levels. Through programs and organizations, citizens are provided the support they need to reach their personal potential. Childcare is widely available and affordable. Our community promotes an active and healthy lifestyle. The County supports quality recreational and park facilities that enhance public health. Our community members have access to quality and affordable health care. Community members are viewed as assets and are encouraged to be involved community members. They have the opportunity to continue to live here. Our community provides opportunities for lifelong learning and development for every individual.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- 1. Encourage and take an active role to increase the supply of affordable/attainable/workforce and senior housing.**
 - a) Prepare and implement a countywide housing plan aimed at increasing the efficient use of resources for housing development and related supportive services.
 - b) Analyze ways that land could be made more affordable for development through public sector policies and programs.
 - c) Provide financial support for subsidized housing developments that serve populations in need.
 - d) Provide incentives and technical assistance for affordable/attainable housing development near jobs and services.
 - e) Explore the potential of using manufactured housing to provide affordable housing opportunities.
 - f) Require properties that receive subsidy through the County to remain affordable over the long term.
 - g) Support a locally funded county-wide housing investment fund.
- 2. Integrate a mix of housing types near employment and services.**
 - a) Provide incentives for residential and commercial land uses, such as accessory dwelling units and commercial/residential mixed use projects in appropriate locations.
 - b) Create policies and incentives for development of higher density housing near to employment centers where multi-modal transportation routes exist or are planned.
- 3. Encourage the design, construction, and renovation of buildings to be safe, healthy, and energy efficient.**
 - a) Facilitate/develop guidelines to lower the life-cycle costs of buildings.
 - b) Provide incentives for rehabilitation of rental and owner-occupied buildings.
 - c) Provide incentives to attract local housing production for modular/manufactured housing, and/or housing components.
 - d) Implement in partnership with LPEA special districts for financing renewable energy.
 - e) Provide incentives for resource-efficient design and buildings.

- 4. Encourage life skills and lifelong learning opportunities.**
 - a) Identify joint or multiple use facilities for educational, cultural, community and recreational services.
 - b) Connect educational institutions and the private sector to achieve an integrated system of basic and career education, training and retraining for the community work force.
 - c) Improve and increase life skill resources and financial literacy through support of local programs.

- 5. Support access to affordable healthcare and to a variety of providers.**
 - a) Adopt programs that encourage enrollment in healthcare educational programs.
 - b) Provide resources and support for a 2-1-1 Program (a social service information phone number) and Bridge to Success website.
 - c) Support access to care for Medicare, Medicaid, underinsured, and uninsured residents.

- 6. Support a continuum of choices that helps seniors and disabled persons to thrive.**
 - a) Support the list of resources to connect people in need with each other.
 - b) Explore the adoption of an "Inclusive home design ordinance" to provide reasonable access in all new home construction.
 - c) Re-evaluate accessory dwelling unit standards that regulate smaller lots.
 - d) Support transit options for all, including seniors and disabled, connecting residents to critical destinations throughout the County.
 - e) Support the ongoing development of a dynamic, comprehensive, and coordinated system of uses/supports for seniors and disabled persons that enable them to live as healthy and independently as possible.

- 7. Promote healthy communities through neighborhood design, transportation networks, and public education.**
 - a) New subdivisions and commercial developments will include pedestrian and bicycle facilities and/or connections to public transportation.
 - b) Adopt a land use plan and zoning code that allows by right skilled nursing facilities, long term care facilities, group homes, includes higher density development nodes, and promotes multi-modal transportation options.
 - c) Regulate commercial and industrial uses regarding noise, water and light pollution levels on adjacent property.

- 8. Support quality care for children, elders and individuals with special needs in a manner that is widely available and affordable.**
 - a) Provide training and support, including tax credits, for individuals to provide child and elder care in their homes.
 - b) Evaluate and revise policies and regulations relating to child and elder care facilities to encourage availability of services county-wide.

- 9. Encourage dedicated access to public open space, recreation, and trails.**
 - a) Provide developers options for dedicating access to public open space, recreation, and trails.
 - b) Develop a plan for dedicated access to public lands in areas that are expected to experience significant new development.
 - c) Develop, adopt, and implement a county recreation plan, assess the feasibility of creating a County Parks Department, and identify funding strategies.

- d) Provide for public trails and recreation areas with adequate access, parking, restrooms, and wayfinding, and meet the needs of the elderly and disabled.

10. Support and encourage partnerships with local agencies and jurisdictions in the provision of recreational and community services.

- a) Team with schools, religious institutions, and community groups and organizations, to share facilities for recreational, educational, and community activities.
- b) Create "kid trails" within the county and encourage local schools to offer incentives to children for their use.
- c) Participate in efforts to provide residents of the County such basic human needs as food, clothing, and shelter.

11. Encourage intergenerational involvement within the community.

- a) Partner with organizations to hold an annual arts collaboration of youth and seniors.
- b) Encourage community non-profits, cultural organizations, and services to recruit volunteers and market their programs.
- c) Formalize an agreement with the school districts to use schools as neighborhood centers for community social and recreational activities and healthcare services.

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X. ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE ELEMENT

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE VISION STATEMENT

We have a strong sense of community; individuals, neighborhoods, and communities all work together to achieve common goals for the county as a whole. Communication and collaboration across the community is effective and citizens are confident in their county government. Respectful and informed dialogue to resolve community challenges results in effective solutions based upon multiple benefits. Groups work together to maximize scarce resources and people are aware of the various services available. Diversity in our community is valued and celebrated. People from different age groups, cultures, backgrounds, and interest frequently come together to participate in local activities, events, and projects. Within local government, La Plata County supports a work environment that values productive employees, innovative personnel practices, and continuous workforce development to ensure county services are delivered in an efficient, ethical and responsible manner.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

- 1. Provide citizens with user-friendly, consistent and efficient services.**
 - a) Utilize best management practices for customer service, such as providing checklists with submittal requirements for permits, instructions for permit applications, interactive user friendly website, and extended hours.
- 2. Collaborate with local governments, state and federal agencies, the Sovereign Nations, businesses and other organizations, to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.**
 - a) Establish a recurring forum for networking among social service agencies, state and local government agencies, and private and other non-profits to eliminate duplication of efforts and to fill gaps in service.
 - b) Formalize relations between the County government and Federal and State Public Land Agencies (NFS, NPS, BLM,) by designating a County planner as a Public Lands Liaison, who will provide monthly reports and/or updates to County Commissioner on regional public land activities and notify residents of possible impacts to private property.
- 3. Engage and inform citizens in local decision making and develop transparent public processes that encourage respect among all individuals and groups.**
 - a) Develop an interactive website that allows citizens to participate and provide input.
 - b) Conduct County Commissioner regularly-scheduled meetings at different locations around the county on a rotation basis.
- 4. Work towards excellence in all county practices.**
 - a) Annually review the outcomes of development decisions and submit report of findings to BOCC.
 - b) At least biannually (every two years) review the outcome of development decisions and submit report of findings to BOCC.
- 5. Ensure two-way interaction between citizens and their county government that includes easy access to information, transparency, and opportunities for citizen input.**

- a) Create county website for two-way communication between individuals & service providers.
- b) Implement a policy of "kids' day" at the county to expose students to daily operations.
- c) Provide an online forum for the public to communicate with public officials and County staff.

6. Align municipal and county goals, visions, and actions.

- a) Conduct joint public meetings between the municipalities and county on a scheduled basis and inform the public of the results of the meetings.

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These sections of the Plan are forthcoming following the community meetings on the strategies.

XI. IMPLEMENTATION

PRIORITIZED STRATEGIES

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

UPDATING AND AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessory Dwelling Unit: A self-contained residential unit that is either attached to a principal single-family dwelling or in a separate structure on the same property.

Activity Nodes: Compact pedestrian-friendly areas, usually with multi-modes of transportation, situated where the highest concentrations of residential, employment, retail and other uses are located.

Affordable Housing: Owned or rented housing costing less than 30 percent of a household's total gross income, assuming that this income equals the median for a county or an area.

Agriculture: The production, keeping or maintenance for sale, lease or personal use, of plants and animals useful to man including, but not limited to: forages and sod crops; grains and seed crops; dairy animals and dairy products; poultry and poultry products; livestock, including beef cattle, sheep, swine, horses, ponies, mules or goats, or any mutations or hybrids thereof, including the breeding and grazing of any or all such animals; bees and apiary products; fur animals; trees and forest products; fruits of all kinds and vegetables.

Aquifer: An underground geologic formation that contains sufficient saturated, permeable material to yield significant quantities of groundwater to wells and springs.

Best Management Practice: Programs, practices, policies and procedures, and structures or activities that have been shown to be effective in management and protection of a given natural resource.

Board of County Commissioners (BOCC): The three elected officials, each representing a geographic district, that govern La Plata County.

Bridge to Success: A program to enable people to respond to the changing job market by providing training in professionalism, finance management and computer technology.

Building Code: Code requirements that a building or construction site is legally obligated to follow. La Plata County has adopted the International Building Code with amendments, additions and deletions as the La Plata County Building Code.

Buy-local program: Programs to encourage retention and creation of locally owned, independent businesses, whose dollars provide a large portion of annual revenue critical to funding public resources and services. These programs promote meeting local needs through locally owned enterprises.

Co-generation: The simultaneous generation of electricity and the capture and use of heat, both from the same source. Also known as "combined heat and power" (CHP).

Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC): A state body that oversees the development of Colorado's oil and gas natural resources.

Complete Streets: Streets designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.

Comprehensive Plan: A statement of a community's desired future, intended to serve as the primary decision-making guide for growth and development in a county.

Conservation: The protection and management of resources and the natural environment to ensure the continued integrity of healthy, functioning ecosystems.

Compass or County Compass: La Plata County's strategic plan, which serves as the "guide" for the County's leadership in prioritizing new programs and initiatives, and evaluating existing ones.

Cultural Landscape: A visual demonstration of traditional interactions between humans and the natural environment over time.

Cultural Resources: An aspect of a cultural system that is valued by or significantly representative of a culture, or that contains significant information about a culture.

Defensible Space: The area between a structure and a potential oncoming wildfire where the vegetation has been modified to reduce the threat of ignition. This area provides an opportunity to "defend" the structure.

Development: Any human-made change to improved or unimproved land.

Development Node: A limited area that has experienced or is expected to experience development and a resulting growth in employment and/or population.

District Plan: Land use plans and/or mapping of land-use zoning districts for defined sub-areas of the unincorporated County that provide a framework for how development proposals relate to the planning district and to the County. Nine planning districts have been adopted by the Planning Commission and are currently used as advisory documents by the Board of County Commissioners.

Economic Vitality: A community's capacity to be economically competitive, resilient and attractive to private and public enterprise. Communities with economic vitality enable citizens to enjoy the satisfying economic activities (e.g., jobs) and the quality of life that sets the standard for long-term sustainability.

Ecosystem: The naturally interacting community of plant and animal species and their physical environment.

Element: A component or "chapter" of a comprehensive plan describing a set of related planning themes.

Erosion: The wearing away of soil and rock by weathering, mass wasting, and the action of streams, glaciers, waves, wind, and underground water.

Fire-wise Home Design: Preventing or minimizing the danger from wildfires through practices that address landscaping, building materials, and home design.

Floodplain: Any land area (typically adjoining a river, stream, lake, or other body of standing water) that is regularly subject to flooding, such as by a 100-year flood. A 100-year flood is a flood that has a 1 percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

Future Land Use Plan: A basic element of a comprehensive plan that designates the present and future location, form, class and extent (size) within a planning jurisdiction for residential, commercial, industrial and institutional (public areas and buildings) use or reuse. The future land use plan includes a map and a written description of the different land use areas or districts. The land use plan serves as the guide for land use decisions and is adopted by resolution.

Goal: A broad statement of desired outcomes to which effort is directed in order to bring a community closer to its overall vision of the future. It expresses the broad desired results of the plan.

Gray Water: Wastewater, collected separately from sewage flow, which originates from a clothes washer, bathtub, shower, or sink. Water collected from toilets is not gray water.

Greenbelt: An open area that is maintained in a natural state surrounding development, which is used as a buffer between land uses or to mark the edge of an urban or developed area.

Growth Area: An area designated to accommodate future growth and development.

Guideline: A statement of considerations that directs the decision-making process.

Habitat: The physical and biological environment where an organism lives. Often characterized by a dominant plant form or physical characteristic, habitat includes such components as cover, food, shelter, water, and breeding sites.

Heritage Tourism: Heritage tourism is traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic and natural resources.

Home Rule: The Colorado Constitution allows voters of a county to adopt a home rule charter establishing the organization and structure of county government. Home-rule counties are given their land use and other governing authority by the Colorado Constitution. Statutory counties' authority is limited to that given to them by the General Assembly. Home-rule counties derive their regulatory authority from the state constitution, and so have more flexibility to create their own rules than those established by the General Assembly.

Housing Investment Fund: A flexible source of funding that provides grants and loans to support affordable housing development. The fund may support a variety of activities including new construction, preservation, land acquisition, down payment assistance and helping to offset infrastructure costs through both loans and grants.

Impact Fee: A fee imposed on new development to help finance the cost of improvements or services necessary for the development.

Improvement District: A local unit of government (other than a city or county), authorized and regulated by statute, that is established for road improvements, water control, irrigation, fire, hospital, sanitary districts, and/or regional air quality control.

Inclusive Home Design: Design of single-family houses and town houses to meet at least the minimum standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Infrastructure: Public facilities and services needed to support and sustain industry, residence, commerce and all other land use activities. It includes transportation, water and sewer, energy, telecommunications, recycling and solid waste disposal, parks and other public spaces, schools, police and fire protection, and health and welfare services.

Invasive Plant Species: A plant species not historically found in the local area. When introduced into an area, these species proliferate, replacing native species and reducing biodiversity.

Irrigation: A means of providing water to agricultural or landscaped areas, typically involving a system of canals and/or pipes and sprinklers.

Keystone Species: Species that have a disproportionately large effect on other species in a community.

Land Use Development Code: The implementation tool that provides regulations for how and where future land development may occur in La Plata County. The land use development code is the regulatory and legal framework for achieving the goals and strategies articulated in the comprehensive plan.

Land Use System (Land Use Code): The permitting system by which the Land Use Plan and the Land Use Development Code are regulated in La Plata County.

Landscape: The unique patterns, structures, and features such as landforms, vegetation, soil, and waterways that distinguish one part of the earth's surface from another.

Life-cycle Housing: A housing supply designed to meet the needs of individuals and families as they go through different stages of life so they can, if they wish, remain in the same community throughout their lives.

Light Pollution: The wasted light from streetlights and other sources that is created by humans, which lights up the night sky unnecessarily and can disrupt ecosystems and obscure the stars at night.

Light Trespass: An undesirable condition where light is cast where it is not wanted.

Livable Wage: A wage that is high enough to allow a greater percentage of the population to qualify for housing.

Local Preference: An advantage in consideration for award of a project granted to a bidder by reason of the bidder's residence, business location or origin of product offered.

LPEA: La Plata Electric Association

Metrics: Means of measuring performance and effectiveness objectively.

Mixed Use: A development pattern where a variety of complementary land uses occupy buildings in close proximity to each other, generally including residential, commercial, civic and business accommodations.

Mode: The different ways used to transport people or cargo. Examples are walking, bicycling, automobiles, buses, trains, motorcycles, and trucks.

Multi-modal (also Multimodal): The movement of people and goods using more than one mode of travel, thereby providing users with the best choices of service. Multi-modalism considers how policies for a single mode affect all other modes.

Native Species: A species that originates and occurs naturally in a particular region or environment.

Natural Area: Public land set aside to conserve and protect natural resources.

Natural Environment: The system of plants, animals, soils, water, and air that supports ecological processes.

Noise Pollution: Any unwanted man-made noise that penetrates the environment and is irritating and potentially harmful to humans and animals, such as traffic noise or noise from heavy machinery.

Noxious Weeds: Any parasitic or foreign plant that can injure crops, other useful plants, agriculture, livestock, fish or wildlife resources, or public health; any plant on the Federal Noxious Weed List or the Colorado State Noxious Weed List.

Open Space: A primarily undeveloped landscape that provides scenic, ecological, or recreational values or that is set aside for resource protection or conservation; an area of managed production such as forestland, rangeland, or agricultural land that is essentially free of visible obstructions and incompatible uses.

Overlay Zone: A zoning district that imposes additional requirements above that required by the underlying zone.

Planning Commission: A five-member board in La Plata County responsible to make, adopt and revise, as may be necessary, a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory of the County; to develop, propose and recommend subdivision regulations and revisions thereto, as may be necessary, to the Board of County Commissioners; to develop, propose and recommend land use and environmental regulations and revisions thereto to the Board of County Commissioners; to conduct such review of land use requests and subdivision proposals as may be required by the land use and subdivision regulations duly adopted; to consult and cooperate with the planning commissions of incorporated municipalities within the County and to perform such joint planning functions as may be prescribed by directive of the Board of County Commissioners or by intergovernmental agreement.

Policy: A specific, guiding statement that outlines the process for achieving a goal.

Private Property Rights: The basic rights of individuals to the peaceful possession, control and enjoyment of the things they own as well as their rights to make contracts to rent, sell or give away all or part of their various ownership rights over these possessions (or these possessions' services) to any other people willing to accept the owners' terms.

(source: http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/private_property_rights)

Reclaimed Water: Wastewater that has been treated for reuse for purposes other than human consumption.

Renewable Energy: An energy source that is replenished continuously in nature or that is replaced after use through natural means. Renewable energy sources include the sun, the winds, flowing water, biomass and geothermal energy.

Renewable Resources: Natural resources that are capable of regeneration. Renewable resources are continuously produced (e.g., tree biomass, fresh water, and fish). The continued supply of renewable resources depends, in many cases, on proper management (e.g., tree biomass, fresh water, and fish).

Renewable Energy Dividend: A renewable energy dividend provides a fixed contract to the producers of renewable energy. The contracts afford the producer the ability to borrow against a guaranteed payment from their utility company and include long-term agreed upon prices that the utility company will pay the producers for the energy it buys. Also commonly known as a "feed-in tariff."

Renewable Energy Tax Districts: A district that borrows money through bonds or other means and then uses it to make loans to homeowners for energy efficiency and renewable energy; each participating homeowner repays the loan through a special property tax assessment. Also known as "property assessed clean energy" (PACE).

Resource Management Plan: A written document that addresses the existing resources of an area and provides future objectives, goals, and management direction.

Right-to-Farm/Ranch Ordinance: A local government ordinance protects farmers or ranchers from nuisance complaints for standard farming practices.

Riparian Area (also Riparian Habitat): An area surrounding a river or stream that supports an ecosystem of wildlife, vegetation, soils, and water.

Runoff: The portion of rainfall, snowmelt, or other water that flows along ground surface and eventually collects in basins or contributes to the flow of a stream.

Rural: An area that is defined by low intensity land uses and relating to the country, country people or life, or agriculture.

Rural Center (also Rural Village Center): A centralized, concentrated collection of residences and locally oriented commercial, public, and semipublic services and activities within a rural

area. In La Plata county, locations such as Gem Village or Hesperus would be considered rural centers.

Safe Routes to School (SR2S): Programs to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school. SR2S programs examine conditions around schools and conduct projects and activities that work to improve safety and accessibility, and reduce traffic and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

Scenic Resources: Landscape patterns and features that are worthy of preservation because they are visually or aesthetically pleasing with distinctive cultural, historic, natural, or other unique qualities that contribute affirmatively to the definition of La Plata County.

Species: Plants or animals grouped by common genetic attributes and assigned a scientific name. Species may also have common names.

Strategies: Statements that outline the approach or specific action to achieve a particular goal. A strategy is a short term action, policy, or regulation that is specific enough to be implemented.

Subdivision: A parcel of land that is divided into two or more parcels, separate interests or interests in common as defined in C.R.S. § 30-28-101, and requires certain development standards such as access, streets, and utilities. There is a subdivision exemption according to section 102-2 which can apply to parcel splits of greater than 35 acres.

Surface Water: Water found in lakes, ponds, and reservoirs or flowing on the earth's surface within a stream, wash, creek, or other natural drainage channel.

Sustainable, Sustainable Practices: Improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems.

Sustainable Development: Development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend; it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Tax Incentive: A tax benefit offered in order to encourage or discourage targeted activities.

Trail: A linear public-access route for recreation or circulation. A trail may be multiple-use or single-use.

Transit: A transportation mode that moves larger numbers of people than an automobile; generally refers to passenger service provided to the public along established routes with fixed or variable schedules at published fares.

Urban: A highly developed area that contains a variety of residential, commercial, industrial, and cultural uses; usually an area where access to infrastructure is readily available.

Urban Growth Areas: Areas where growth may be directed in the future and where basic services, such as schools, sewers, water facilities, and police and fire protection, can be provided economically.

User Fee: A charge to the user for the use of a product, facility, or service.

Value Added Products: Products, such as raw agricultural products, which have been altered or processed in such a way that their value, and therefore their selling price, is increased.

Vision: A description of a realistic and credible desired future for the county. A vision is a key part of a strategic planning process.

Vision Statement: A statement that concisely expresses the mutually agreed upon vision of the County's future, reflecting the aspirations of the residents.

Wastewater: Used water drained from homes, business, and industries; primarily sewage flow.

Water Banking: An alternative agricultural water rights transfer mechanism that supports the lease, exchange or loan of legally stored water

Water Conservation: Any beneficial reduction in water loss, waste, or use.

Water Harvesting: The collection of rain or snowmelt for retention and future use or recharge.

Water Right: A right to use, in accordance with its priority, a certain amount of water.

Water and Sewer Authority: An agency responsible for the collection, treatment, storage, and distribution of potable water from the supply source to the consumer and the collection and treatment of wastewater from the consumer.

Watershed: The land area that contributes runoff to a given stream, river, or reservoir.

Wetlands: Areas that are inundated often enough to support plants and animals adapted to saturated soil conditions.

Wildlife Corridor: An often limited or constrained area providing connectivity between larger animal habitats.

Zero Waste: A design principle that takes a 'whole system' approach to the vast flow of resources and waste by maximizing recycling, minimizing waste, reducing consumption and ensuring that products are made to be reused, repaired or recycled back into nature or the marketplace.

Zoning: The delineation of districts and the establishment of regulations governing allowable land uses; placement, spacing and size of land and buildings; intensity of development; and environmental, historic, and cultural resources.

Zoning Code: A set of legally binding provisions adopted by ordinance by the Board of County Commissioners to govern zoning. Along with the subdivision ordinance, the zoning ordinance is a component of the Land Use Development Code.