

Ground Rules
La Plata County Comprehensive Plan Update Working Group
June 2009

Authority

1. The Working Group is convened by the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners.

Purpose

2. The purpose of the Working Group is to bring together a representative committee of people and stakeholders to act as an advisory body who will assist the consulting team in identifying and developing appropriate planning solutions in order to update the La Plata County Comprehensive Plan.

The Working Group has been designed to promote constructive exchange of information and ideas.

The goals of the Working Group are to:

- Allow participants to gain a better understanding of ideas and concerns of others.
- To identify common themes and areas of agreement with regards to land use planning in La Plata County
- Through consensus, work towards developing goal and strategy recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan elements.

The scope of their work includes:

- To understand the planning processes, policies, and regulations currently used by the County for land use planning.
- To identify key interests and needs that should be addressed during the review of county land use planning documents.
- To identify areas of agreement and disagreement among community stakeholders and the working group with regards to county planning solutions.
- To identify areas where additional information will be needed in order to make an informed decision regarding the comprehensive plan update.

- To generate options that will receive broad community support and identify areas where agreement can be reached.

Areas of agreement and promising solutions will be incorporated into the comprehensive plan drafts. Where there are intractable areas of disagreement, working group members will help to develop recommended solutions that go as far as possible in addressing group and stakeholder concerns.

There is not an expectation during this comprehensive plan update that people will give up deeply held values or change their minds on critical issues, rather, it is hoped that people will emerge with:

- a better understanding of the variety of concerns that are held,
- the various needs that must be addressed,
- and work sincerely towards county wide solutions that might address these needs.

Process for Problem Solving

3. The Working Group will:

- Learn about the issues
- Identify the problems
- Understand the issues and problems from each other's perspective
- Develop and refine options
- Draft recommendations

Committee Decision Making

4. **Consensus.** The Working Group will make its decisions and recommendations based on consensus of its participants. The Working Group will reach consensus on an issue when each participant can honestly say:

- I believe that the other participants understand my point of view;
- I believe I understand other participants' point of view;
- Whether or not I prefer this alternative, I support it because it was arrived at openly and fairly, and it is the best solution for us at this time.

5. The *Degrees of Consensus* will be used to get participants to this point. The Degrees of Consensus are:

- Endorsement: **"I like it!"**
- Endorsement with a minor contention: **"Basically, I like it."**
- Agreement with reservations: **"I can live with it."**
- Formal Disagreement: **"I want my disagreement noted, but I don't want to stop the process and/or be involved in the implementation."**

- Block: **“I veto this proposal.”**
6. The first four will constitute consensus. Formal Disagreement allows for the proposal to be accompanied by a formal minority report summarizing the disagreement.
 7. Only in instances where consensus cannot be reached because of a block, the Working Group will have these alternatives:
 - a. A statement defining areas of disagreement as well as agreement and the pros and cons of the decision/alternative will be summarized. The statement will include a recommendation(s) for resolution utilizing any of the alternatives below (b-e).
 - b. If critical information is lacking for a decision, the Working Group will identify areas requiring further research, identify who should do it, and articulate how the information will be used in reaching a decision.
 - c. Seek a recommendation from a government official or independent expert on how they would resolve the issue and use that recommendation as the solution.
 - d. Vote of the Working Group with resolution requiring a super-majority vote (75 percent).
 - e. Let the County officials impose a final decision.
 8. The recommendations and decisions made by the Working Group will be incorporated into the drafts of the Comprehensive Plan and once completed as final documents will be sent to the Planning Commission and to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval and adoption.

Committee Decision Behavioral Guidelines

9. **Legitimacy and Respect.** Participants of the Working Group are representative of a broad range of interests, each having concerns about the outcome of the issues at hand. All parties recognize the legitimacy of the interests and concerns of others, and expect that their interests will be represented as well. Thus:
 - Personal attacks will not be tolerated.
 - The motivations and intentions of the participants will not be questioned.
 - The personal integrity and values of participants will be respected.
 - Stereotyping will be avoided.
 - Commitments will not be made lightly and will be kept.
 - Delay will not be employed as a tactic to avoid undesirable results.
 - Disagreements will be regarded as “problems to be solved”, rather than as “battles to be won”.
 - Participants will try to attend all meetings. This is critical to developing shared understanding of the issues and preventing repetitive discussions and battles.

10. **Active Listening and Involvement.** Listen to understand, not to debate. Participants commit to listen carefully to each other, recognize each person's concerns and feelings about the topic, ask questions for clarification, and make statements that attempt to educate or explain. Participants should not assume that any one person knows the answer.
11. **Responsibility.** All participants take responsibility for getting both individual needs met and for getting the needs met of other participants. Participants commit to keeping their colleagues/constituents informed about the progress of these discussions. Everyone shares responsibility for the success and failure of this process as well as for the enforcement of these ground rules.
12. **Honesty and Openness.** Constructive candor is a little used but effective tool. Participants commit to stating needs, problems, and opportunities, not positions.
13. **Creativity.** Participants commit to search for opportunities and alternatives. The creativity of the Working Group can often find the best solution for the County as a whole.
14. **Commitment.** Participants agree this effort is a priority in time. Participants will try their best to attend all meetings. This is critical to developing shared understanding of the issues. If a participant is representing an organization, the person can provide the name of an alternate. The alternate may attend in the absence of the participant as long as the facilitator is notified in advance. It is the responsibility of the participant and alternate to keep each other up to date.
15. **The Rumor Mill.** Participants agree to verify rumors in a meeting before accepting them as fact.
16. **Freedom to Disagree.** Participants agree to disagree. The point of this process is to foster open discussion of issues; in order to facilitate this we need to respect each other's right to disagree.
17. **Freedom to Leave.** Participant agree that anyone may leave this process and disavow the ground rules, but only after informing the Group why and seeing if the problem(s) can be addressed by the Working Group.
18. **Dispute Resolution.** Participants agree that in the event this effort is unsuccessful; all are free to pursue their interests in other forums without prejudice.
19. **Subcommittees.** The Working Group may find it necessary to create committees of its own participants or from others for detailed study or discussion. Any subcommittees will be created by consensus and present back findings and/or work to the entire Committee.

20. **Transparency.** Information will be shared with the Working Group as a whole in order to build trust and an open and fair process.

Roles

Comprehensive Plan Consulting Team

21. The Comprehensive Plan will be completed by a project team. The core planning team consists of three members of the consulting team as well as Jason Meininger of the County Planning staff:

- Charlie Deans, Principal in Charge, *CommunitybyDesign*
- Marjo Curgus, Master Facilitator, *The Sonoran Institute*
- Gabe Preston, Planner, *RPI Consulting*

Supporting personnel will provide additional expertise on specialized topics:

- Howard Ward, GIS Analyst, *TerraSystems Southwest*
- Clark Anderson, Planner, *The Sonoran Institute*
- Paige Winslett, Community planner and permaculturalist
- Sarah Ijadi, Community planner and land use code specialist
- Curt Lueck, Transportation and mobility planner, *Curt Lueck & Assoc.*
- Kate Hildebrand, Housing specialist, *Consensus Builder*
- Robert Odland, Sustainable code and renewable energy specialist, *Robert Odland Consulting*
- Barbara Green, Land use attorney

The consultant's role is to update the comprehensive plan. The consultant will work with all participants to ensure they feel the plan is consistent with their recommendations. The consultant will have the following responsibilities:

- Review all existing planning documents.
- Draft the plan.
- Prepare drafts for review.
- Prepare final draft and work with the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners on adoption.
- Provide guidance on best practices.
- Identify legal, fiscal, and/or physical constraints with recommendations.
- Facilitate the Working Group and public engagement process.

Meeting Master Facilitator

22. This process will be facilitated by various members of the project team at different times. However, Marjo Curgus, of the Sonoran Institute, will be primarily concerned with the

overall public process. If necessary, additional facilitators will be brought in to assist with the management of the process. The facilitator's role is to develop a public process that is fair, open, and constructive. The facilitator will work with all participants to ensure they feel the process meets these goals. The facilitator(s) will have the following responsibilities:

- Work with the project team to prepare the agenda for Working Group and public involvement meetings.
- Preparation of materials for meetings.
- Preparation and distribution of meeting summaries.
- Organize and facilitate Working Group meetings.
- Verify consensus decisions of Working Group.
- Ensure ground rules are adhered to by all parties.
- Assist with the development and delivery of educational forums and information on best practices for land use.
- Facilitation of public meetings.
- Develop and guide overall public engagement process.

La Plata County Planning Staff

23. An administrative committee of the conveners (County) will help the project team and have the following responsibilities:

- Logistic support of the Working Group (times, locations, invites, etc.)
- Provide advice to the facilitator on all matters related to the comprehensive plan update such as agendas, resources, outreach, strategies, county history, meeting locations, county policies, issues, etc.
- Provide support to the Working Group as needed.
- Identify legal, fiscal, and/or physical constraints with recommendations developed by the Working Group and planning consultants.
- Assist with facilitation and outreach for public engagement strategies.
- Provide technical planning assistance to the planning consultants.

This committee shall include:

- Jason Meininger, Comprehensive Plan Project Coordinator, La Plata County Planning Department
- Tracie Hughes, **Title**, La Plata County Planning Department
- Robby Overfield, **Title**, La Plata County Planning Department
- Julia Stantic, **Title**, La Plata County Planning Department
- Erick Aune, Planning Director, La Plata County Planning Department

Working Group

24. The Working Group is composed of citizens of La Plata County.

25. The Working Group will assist the project team members with identification of the issues, identification of areas of agreement/disagreement, and development of planning recommendations.
26. Participants will observe the behavioral guidelines and processes outlined in these Groundrules.
27. It is recognized that some Working Group members are associated with agencies/organizations and have obligations to make management decisions and to take actions. Those participants will advise the Working Group of pending decisions that affect Committee activities unless such prior disclosures would jeopardize the decision.
28. It is the responsibility of the Working Group participants to keep their constituents current on Working Group activities and decisions. Before a decision is requested on any matter, sufficient time (to be defined by the Working Group) will be provided for participants to seek advice from constituents or to request that additional information be provided to the Working Group. Technical advisors or resource people may be invited to provide information (to be coordinated with the facilitator and approved by the Working Group as a whole) to constituents on request.
29. Legal rights or remedies are not abrogated by virtue of participation in the Working Group. However, if litigation and/or legislative action is taken that will affect Committee activities; participants taking action will notify the Working Group.

Structure of the Working Group

30. The Working Group will follow the following structure:
 - One Board of County Commissioner representative will be assigned to oversee the Comprehensive Plan update process. The Commissioner will attend both public and Working Group meetings as an observer. The Commissioner can comment on County decision making processes, political climate, and express the desired outcome for the comprehensive plan update process of the Commission. The Commissioner will be responsible for representing to the entire Board of County Commissioners the intent and outcome of the entire Working Group and public involvement process. The Board of County Commissioner representative is:
 - XXX
 - Two Planning Commissioner representatives will be assigned to the Working Group as full participants and be expected to adhere to all rules set forth in the Groundrules for participants. The Planning Commissioners can comment on County decision making processes, political climate, and express the desired outcome for the comprehensive

plan update process of the Planning Commission. The Planning Commissioners will be responsible for representing to the entire Planning Commission the intent and outcome of the entire Working Group and public involvement process. The Planning Commissioner representatives are:

- XXX
- XXX
- A minimum of twelve citizens will be appointed by the Board of County Commissioners to the Working Group. While these participants are individuals, they are expected to represent countywide interest as well as constituent interest. To do so, they are expected to communicate with constituency throughout the process and express the views of the entire Working Group equally. The Citizens are:
 - XXXXXX

31. The Working Group will have the following responsibilities:

- A. Assist the consulting team with public engagement and outreach.
 - Provide the consulting team with additional support in identifying local norms, stakeholders, publicity outlets, venues, etc. as well as assist with recruitment of volunteer support for the various public process events.
 - Provide input on creation of flyers, posters, press announcements, newspaper announcements, and public service announcements.
 - Help identify, select and arrange sites for events.
 - Assist with development of simple presentation explaining the scope, purpose, outcomes of the planning process that can be delivered by Working Group, planning team, and staff to organizations, civic groups, neighborhood associations, etc. to promote the visioning process and garner additional input and involvement.
 - Assist with identification of formal stakeholder groups who need to be involved such as civic groups, chamber, PTA's, etc. that hold regular meetings.
 - Assist with identification of free radio and TV opportunities.
 - Assist with development of a strategy to include important stakeholders who might not attend a public meeting including: youth, elderly, immigrants, etc.
 - Assist with identification of informal citizen networks and opinion leaders who do not normally participate in informal groups and meetings but are essential to community opini
 - Review of a "process map" that identifies the dates, locations, and times for all the public involvement events.
 - Identify additional volunteers (if necessary) to be trained as facilitators for use during the public outreach sessions.
 - Participate as volunteers during public engagement events and workshops.
- B. Assist with forming appropriate subcommittees to accomplish Working Group goals and act as chairs and facilitators of subcommittees.

- C. Assist with development and distribution of the Community Profile.
 - D. Review the product of the visioning process including the Community Vision, Statement of Core Values, and Alternative Future Scenarios.
 - E. Assist with the development of community planning goals, strategies, and actions for the comprehensive plan and future land use plan documents.
 - F. Review drafts of planning documents as they are developed and provide feedback.
 - G. Act as transition committee from Comprehensive Plan Update Working Group to Implementation.
32. Sub-committees may be formed by consensus of the Working Group to address particular issues more appropriate for discussion by smaller Committees with broader representation. The Subcommittees will follow the following structure:
- The Subcommittee purpose and membership will be defined by the Working Group.
 - Recommendations from the subcommittee will be presented to the Working Group.
 - The facilitator and consultant will provide support to the subcommittee.
 - Once a subcommittee has completed a task it is dissolved unless another task is given to the subcommittee by the Working Group.
33. A current list of the Working Group and Subcommittees will be maintained by the facilitator to accompany these Groundrules.

Substitutes and Observers

34. For those not formally involved in the Working Group, meetings are open to the public for observation. Comments and questions of observers can be collected and answered at the end of each of the meetings.
35. If a Working Group Member cannot attend, a substitute may be sent. However, in order for the substitute to be eligible to participate in decision making, the Working Group Member must notify the Facilitator and Working Group in advance of the meeting. The Working Group must approve a substitute in order to allow the substitute to participate in decision making.
36. If a participant cannot attend a meeting and wants to send a substitute that is not already approved by the Working Group, the substitute can attend only as an observer.

Media

37. While all meetings will be open to the media, participants agree that to get maximum benefit from this process, a climate that encourages candid and open discussion should be created. In order to create this climate, participants agree to not attributing suggestions, comments, or ideas of another participant to the news media or non-participants. Formal statements should be made by an appointed media spokesperson. We encourage all media to utilize the given spokesperson (*Name to be determined.*) The spokesperson will work with the Working Group to ensure statements are correct.

Legal Parameters

38. While creativity is encouraged, the final Comprehensive Plan must adhere to Colorado State Statutes.

Meeting Logistics

39. Meetings will be held as agreed and scheduled.
40. Agendas will be developed in advance by the facilitator. Additions to the agenda will be considered at the outset of the meeting, however if time does not allow for adding to the agenda it will be postponed until either the next meeting or as appropriate for the schedule.
41. No audible cell phones/pagers in meetings.
42. Notice of all public meetings will be sent to appropriate, free, public access calendars where available.
43. Participants will be notified by email unless other means are requested at least one week in advance.
44. Materials presented during the meetings, as well as summaries of the meetings, will be put on a web site for public access.

Schedule and Deadline

45. The Working Group will develop final recommendations for:
- The Comprehensive Plan Draft to the Commissioners by December 31, 2009.
 - The Future Land Use Plan by *SSSS*
 - *The Final Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Plan by XXXX.*

Enforcement of Rules

46. It is the joint responsibility of the Working Group and Facilitator(s) to assure that these ground rules are observed. Participants are free to question, in good faith, actions of others that may come within the scope of these ground rules.