

Working Group (WG) Meeting #5 Summary

October 5th, 2009

Durango Recreation Center

4-6:30 p.m.

NEXT MEETING DATE & AGENDA

October 19, 2009

4:00 pm -6:30 pm (Note time extension)

Durango Recreation Center

AGENDA:

1. Review and complete draft Guiding Principles revisions (15 min)
2. Review and complete draft Sustainable Development Goals (15 min)
 - Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation
3. Review draft Transportation Goals (30 min)
 - Roadways, nodes, and transit
 - Multi-modal corridors
 - Aviation and rail
4. Initiate drafting of Natural Environment Goals (90 min)
 - Wildlife/Riparian habitat
 - Wildland-Urban Interface
 - Geologic/Floods/Debris flows
 - Water/Air quality
 - Restoration of Oil and Gas Lands

MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Participants

Staff/Consultants: Jason, Tracie, Robby, Julia, Charlie, Curt Lueck, Cheryl Radner

Working Group: Jack Llewellyn, Travis Craig, Peter Tregillus, Wade Moore, Jeanine Justice, Barbara Jefferies, Dick Norton, Dick White, Roy Horvath, Peter Butler, Scott Brinton

Review of Vision Draft, Advertisement, Outreach Strategy

The meeting began with an update on the status of the draft community vision and the official release scheduled for 10.9.09. The draft vision is currently available on the CCP website, as well as in electronic form; it will be emailed to the WG and other community members 10.6.09. The deadline for community response to the draft vision is November 6, 2009.

There was also a group discussion centering on the involvement of La Plata County Planning staff in the drafting of goals. The WG agreed staff needs to be involved during the initial development of goals, as well as during further refinement. Staff will participate if there are deficiencies or disagreement about the goals and strategies as proposed by the WG.

Review of Draft Guiding Principles (see attached for the revisions per the meeting)

Group discussion about the Comprehensive Plan Guiding Principles focused around the size, location, climate change and associated tradeoffs with satellite or nodal development. In addition to nodal development there was discussion and debate about the necessity of wildlife corridors, green belts and the natural location of wildlife movement patterns.

Draft Goals for Sustainable Development

The WG made the following revisions and additions to the Sustainable Development Goals:

1. LPC will support the enhancement of local food, fiber and forest production systems (growing, processing, marketing, consumption). ~~_ though agricultural enhancements.~~
2. LPC will support the enhancement of ~~Support~~ renewable natural resource production systems (forest products,

Meeting Summary #5

fisheries, wildlife) ~~through enhancements.~~

3. Promote access ~~for everybody in the community that is to~~ healthy, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and sustainably produced food, sourced as locally as possible.
4. ~~LPC aims to p~~Promote a resource-efficient growth and settlement pattern.
5. Development will be aligned with the CEAP (Peter will wordsmith this for the next meeting).
6. ~~LPC s~~Supports the availability of adequate water supplies in the future for social and economic purposes.
7. Encourage the efficient use of energy and materials.
8. Encourage energy production and mineral development that is environmentally friendly

The WG will continue working on goals for the subtopic of *Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation* at the October 19 meeting.

Transportation Element

Curt Lueck began the discussion with a broad overview of transportation and the issues that need to be addressed. There was discussion about the future of transportation in the county including county roads, state highways and how to transport the next 35,000+ people. General discussion points were:

- Roadway nodes and transit
- Multi-Modal corridors
- Aviation & rail
- Interconnectivity of multi-modal transportation

Draft Transportation Goals

1. Promote development that is accessed with multiple modes of transportation.
2. ~~Develop~~Encourage an integrated interconnected network of public streets that promote multi-modal transportation options.
3. Encourage the use of the most efficient known/proven transportation technologies.
4. Promote the use of telecommunications as a substitute to daily commuting and travel.
5. Encourage land use patterns that reduce per-capita average daily trips (ADT) & vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
6. Promote the expansion of aviation services (number of flights, frequency, destinations) for the County, and support viable passenger rail connectivity to major rail hubs.

(Post-meeting revisions suggested by Curt Lueck)

HEALTHY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

VISIONING PROCESS

The comments are a synthesis of all of the comments for Changes

Reduce Pollution and Improve Air and Water Quality

- Cumulative effect of non-energy efficient and toxic- buildings
- Protect LPC air quality from internal and external sources (coal plants)
- Less train smoke. Technology is there?
- Limit future wells. Use directional drilling. Monitor water quality especially as it related to fracking.
- Monitor water, air quality. Protect water and air.

Manage Ecosystem Health

- Protect all water from pollution, from being used for sprawl, from being overused and not left for wildlife and river health
- Ecosystem services valued higher.
- Better weed control.
- Wildlife protection/conservation
- Fire hazard
- Increase environmental education and money to protect and promote
- CO2

Maintain Resources that Contribute to Quality of Life

- Keep quality of life e.g. dark skies, clean air, clean water, public health, community infrastructure.

Natural Resource Stewardship and Degradation

Natural Resource Protection

- Use of water, land, and natural resources
- Environmental/natural resources protection
 - Natural resources for power
 - Natural resources
- Protect Animas River, La Plata Mountains

Oil and Gas development

- Oil companies, private property intrusion, fracking
- Reclamation of wells/well sites after use is complete
- Air quality, coal plants, and gas drilling.
- Lack of oversight of oil and gas with respect to homeowners rights

Air Pollution

- Air pollution, coal, diesel
- Air quality being compromised by power plants in NM
- Noise pollution

Light Pollution

- Light pollution
- Decline of dark skies

Loss of Wildlife

- Loss of wildlife corridors
- loss of wildlife habitat
- Wildlife safety/accommodation
- Increase invasive species (weeds/mussels)

Sustainability

- Energy sustainability

Healthy Natural Environment Vision Statement

Plata County supports the protection and enhancements of a healthy natural environment on a local, regional and global scale. We are a leader in environmental management and a model community for our proactive 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 oil and gas development in the San Juan Basin declined, we have successfully reclaimed degraded lands.

La Plata County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

La Plata County, Colorado is home to 46,468 residents and 21,946 housing units, and is situated in the southwest corner of Colorado. The county encompasses 1,692 square miles with 1.08 million acres, and is a region with stunning landscapes ranging from high alpine peaks and meadows in the north to arid plateaus, sage plains and mesas in the south. Over 3,300 new lots were created by major and minor subdivisions from 1993 to 2001. Newcomers from all over the world find the environs of this place desirable for home building in vegetation which, in most parts of this county, is at high risk for catastrophic wildfire. The population of La Plata County is growing at an average rate of 3.6% each year (1990 - 2000) which is considered a high growth rate. Much of this growth is happening in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) which is defined as: ...areas extending 1½ miles from the boundary of an at-risk community defined by the USFS and BLM's inventory and which lack emergency access routes; are in poor proximity to water sources; have areas with steep slopes; have high risk vegetation types; and/or that are in close proximity to fuels on public lands.

Goals in the CWPP

- Reduce Risk in the wildland-urban interface (WUI)
- Increase Public Involvement in Wildfire Prevention and Education
- Reduce Ignitability of Structures
- Increase and strengthen the tools for local governments and fire departments to encourage Firewise policies and practices.
- Increase the number of fuel reduction projects on federal lands in the WUI and other priority areas.

BACKGOURND INFORMATION FROM COMMUNITY PROFILE

Wetlands and Riparian Areas.

Wetlands are lands where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. Riparian areas are linear areas along lakes and waterways which support interaction between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Both wetlands and riparian areas are of high biological significance and support a diverse variety of plants and animals. The *Survey of Critical Wetlands and Riparian Areas in La Plata County* identified at least 32 major wetland/riparian plant communities in the county. Wetlands and riparian areas help protect water quality, store floodwaters and enhance biodiversity. These unique ecosystems are especially susceptible to off-site activities which impact water quality and hydrologic systems. These complex ecosystems are used by more than 70% of wildlife species.

Geologic

- ▶ **Geologic Hazards include:** Steep/unstable slopes, Avalanches, Rock fall, Soil shrink/swell, Debris flows/mud flows
- ▶ **District Plans:** Many of La Plata County's district plans steer new development away from geologic hazards by allowing more density in new subdivisions if geo-hazards are avoided.
- ▶ **The land use code** encourages avoidance of geologic hazards in its scoring system for class II land use permits that go to the planning commission and BOCC and requires a professional hazards analysis on prone sites.
- ▶ **Slopes:** The code specifies that slopes over 30% are "critical lands" but is vague on the applicability or importance of this categorization. This is a typical threshold in Colorado, but some argue that anything above 20% is too steep for development. In the La Plata development review process, development is usually kept off greater than 30% slopes.

Floodplain

- ▶ **District Plans:** Many of the district plans discourage development in the Federal Emergency Management Agency 100 year floodplain. In practice, development plans are sometimes approved with platted development in the floodplain.
- ▶ **The land use code** justifies its "floods" regulations as a matter of "public health, safety and general welfare." The statement of purpose focuses on taking personal responsibility and avoiding damage to "others" when developing in an area affected by flooding by not causing more flooding or diverting floodwaters and not polluting with sewage.
- ▶ **FEMA:** The land use code rests on FEMA standards and the 100 year floodplain and the floodway on paper FEMA maps. The code allows structures that are 1 foot above 100 year floodplain subject to other standard mitigation.
- ▶ There is a **50 ft. stream-bank setback** for all development.

Restoration of oil and gas lands

- ▶ **Gas and oil wells have a limited life**, rarely producing economically viable amounts for more than 30 years.
- ▶ **Measures are in place for reclamation**, but these are site-specific requirements that may lack a comprehensive approach.
- ▶ **Reclamation regulatory process:**
 - La Plata County and COGCC: Interim reclamation - Required after construction, before production
 - Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission only: Final reclamation- Occurs after the well is plugged and out of production and before surface management is returned to the land owner.

Water quality

- ▶ **Regulatory structure:** La Plata County plays a relatively narrow role in the regulation of water quality. There are 7 State agencies and 2 federal agencies that set policy and regulate water quality in La Plata County. Thanks Peter Butler for help revising the water quality regulatory structure diagram in the community profile (attached).
- ▶ **Threats:** Mining Pollution, Roads, Sewage, Contamination, Gas and Oil Development, Gravel Mining/Processing
- ▶ **Development patterns:** 7,600 structures, about 20% of the total structures in the county are within 1/4 mile of a river or 1st order stream. This has implications on ISDS pollution, sediment, and other pollutants.

Air quality

- ▶ **Air moves around:** Because air travels, air quality is a regional issue that is controlled mostly by state and federal authority.
- ▶ **Class 1 areas:** Mesa Verde and the Weminuche Wilderness are both federally designated class 1 areas under the Clean Air Act, providing local teeth for federal protection of regional air quality. San Juan Public Lands is an active participant in protecting air quality, participating in scientific monitoring and engaging at the federal and state level.
- ▶ **Regulatory structure:** La Plata County has even less direct authority to regulate air quality than it has for water quality, but does play a role in the context of regulating dust and in its influence on driving patterns. See the regulatory diagram in the community profile for an at-a-glance perspective.
- ▶ **Threats:** Power plants, oil and gas development, wildfire, Durango-Silverton train, homes, businesses, automobiles
- ▶ **Linkage to other Comprehensive Plan topics:** Transportation and Sustainable Development (amount of driving-related pollution)).

