

Working Group (WG) Meeting #7 Summary

November 2, 2009

Durango Recreation Center

4 – 6:30pm

NEXT MEETING DATE & AGENDA

November 16

4:00 pm -7:30 pm NOTE EXTENDED MEETING TIME. MEAL WILL BE PROVIDED!

Durango Recreation Center

AGENDA:

- Review and complete drafting of Natural Environment Goals (30 min)
 - Geologic/Floods/Debris flows
 - Water/Air quality
- Initiate review of proposed draft Healthy Communities and Housing Element Goals (60 min)
 - Affordable housing
 - Healthcare/Social Services
 - Recreation/Community Facilities
- Review first draft of clean Guiding Principles and Plan Elements Vision Statements and Goals (90 min)
- Review Community Workshops schedule and WG's next meeting date: 12/14 or 12/21? (30 min)

SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER 2 MEETING

Meeting Participants:

Staff/Consultants: Jason Meininger, Charlie Deans, Robby Overfield, Tracie Hughes, Gabe Preston, Kate Hildebrand

Working Group: Jennifer Lopez, Barbara Jefferies, Travis Craig, Brian Kimmel, Sally Bellerue, Jack McGroder, Dick White, Wade Moore, Peter Tregillus, Peter Butler, Dick Norton, Scott Brinton.

Guests: Christi Zeller, Kellie Hotter

Discussion:

Jason Meininger provided an update regarding the visioning update release to the public and the upcoming forum schedule.

Charlie discussed the guiding principles and explained there would be an opportunity at the next meeting to work on the guiding principles, and again after the public has had a chance to comment on them. Barbara Jefferies discussed the wording and felt they were more wordy than when we started. Wade Moore commented he liked the version Charlie presented but with Dick White's recommended changes for water. Discussion followed, and it was decided that the work group would be using Charlie's proposed version for now.

Discussion began in the Sustainable development element goals. Charlie commented we do not want to write goals that LPC can't achieve, and that the LPC Comprehensive Plan needs to only apply to private lands within the County. Comments were made on the debate over existing Federal/State control of water and shift to place more local control government control on water resources. Peter Butler commented there may be a bigger role for the county on water quality in the future. Peter offered to submit a white paper on the Water situation in LPC (included as an attachment with this summary). There was discussion on how the term sustainable is defined. It was acknowledged we have had lengthy discussion on this term at a previous meeting. A broad definition proposed at that meeting was: "*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*". The Visioning process provided this statement: "*La Plata County will prosper socially and economically, while preserving the ability of our natural environment to support a high quality of life for current and future generations.*" Charlie suggested that the definition will get more specific as strategies are defined for implementing the goals.

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Discussion began on the historic preservation goals, and whether “reuse” was a good word. It was also discussed whether to delete number 10, but because it helped to address prehistoric resources and cultures, number 10 was kept in order to address cultural heritage. Number 9 added language regarding prehistoric sites.

Discussion began on the transportation goals. The idea of adding the language without harming the environment was brought up. The group felt this language could be added to all of the goals, and should not be added.

Christi Zeller presented information regarding oil and gas development. She commented on visioning statement and content in the community profile.

Discussion began on the wild land urban interface goal. Some felt there should be stronger goals, and address watershed quality as related to wildfires. Discussion ensued over whether the county should be required to go out and create defensible space and whether it was feasible to use selective harvesting as mitigation occurred. It was suggested that a goal limiting development in the WUI area could be an effective measure.

Discussion began on the Natural Environment element goals. Discussion followed on a goal encouraging restoration and reuse of natural resource extraction activities. The discussion focused on the wording of the goal and whether the goal was appropriate considering these activities were on private land and potential conflicts with use of private lands. Discussion also followed on whether this goal was intended to provide incentives for placing renewable energy systems on already disturbed land, specifically gas well pads.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT- REVISED GOALS

The WG reviewed the previous meetings draft goals and made revisions as follows:

1. Support the enhancement of local food, fiber and forest production systems (growing, processing, marketing, consumption).
2. Support the enhancement of renewable natural resource production systems (forest products, fisheries, wildlife).
3. Promote access to healthy, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and sustainably produced food, sourced as locally as possible.
4. Promote a resource-efficient growth and settlement pattern.

~~5. Development will be aligned with the CEAP (Peter will wordsmith this for the next meeting).~~

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

~~6. LPC support the availability of adequate water supplies in the future for social and economic purposes.~~

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

~~*Encourage energy production and mineral development that minimize impacts on health and the environment.*~~

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9. Promote historic and pre-historic preservation to enhance heritage tourism and increase restoration and reuse of these sites.

10. ~~La Plata County acknowledges the v~~Protect alue of historic and prehistoric cultures and resources.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS ELEMENT DRAFT GOALS:

The WG made the following revisions to the Natural Environments goals:

1. Protect, mitigate & enhance the native bio-diversity in the county.

2. Preserve and restore wildlife corridors, wetlands and riparian habitats.

3. Reduction eof wildfire hazards, ~~in wildland urban interface areas.~~

4. *Address the risk of climate change to our natural environment and long-term water supply by appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures.*

~~5. Collaborate with La Plata Electric Association and local gas production companies to explore and implement a program to deploy solar photovoltaic panels on land already disturbed by oil and gas development.~~

~~6-5.~~ *Reduce the upwind emissions of carbon dioxide and conventional air pollutants that enter the local airshed.*

~~7-6.~~ *Minimize light pollution, light trespass, and glare from future development and encourage retrofit of existing lights.*

~~8-7.~~ *Work with residents, businesses, and other agencies to develop energy infrastructure to generate sufficient energy locally to meet future needs without net energy imports.*

9-8. Encourage ~~Ensure the restoration~~restoration or reuse of lands impacted by ~~natural~~ resource development, or ~~else conversion to continued productive use.~~

~~10-9.~~ *Preserve and improve local air quality.*

11-10. *Preserve access to the natural night sky by minimizing light pollution, light trespass, and glare.*

Goals need to be established for geologic/floods/debris hazards.

Water Availability for Development in La Plata County

DRAFT 11/4/09

General Water Use

La Plata County has four rivers running through it; Pine, Florida, Animas and La Plata. This water is used for agriculture, domestic use, municipal use, industrial use, recreation and environmental purposes. Generally, water is diverted from rivers and streams for the first four uses. A portion of that water is consumed through evaporation, transpiration, or deep percolation to groundwater that is not readily available for use. Groundwater may not readily available for use if it is too expensive to extract or is of poor quality. Water that is diverted or withdrawn from streams and is not consumed is considered return flow because it is available to use again.

Domestic, Municipal, and Industrial Use

The largest, non-agricultural water division in the county is for the City of Durango. In the middle of summer, Durango might divert up to about 14 cubic feet per second (cfs) – almost 9 cfs from the Florida and the rest from the Animas. Durango diverts approximately one acre-foot (a-ft) of water per year for every 5 people it serves. That is a higher per capita use than one would expect around much of the county because it includes commercial use, tourists, and park watering where potable water is used.

In La Plata County, with a population of approximately 50,000 residents, it is reasonable to assume domestic and municipal water use (diversions) is around 10,000 a-ft per year. This corresponds well with the Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) report from 2004 which projected annual domestic, municipal, and industrial use in the county at 11,300 a-ft in 2009. For comparison purposes, the average annual volume of the Animas River is about 550,000 a-ft and the minimum flow in the Animas River in Durango during drought is about 100 cfs.

There are approximately 70 water systems (public, private, and community) permitted under the Safe Drinking Water Act in La Plata County, many of which are quite small including summer camps, campgrounds and small developments. The five systems that each serve at least a 1,000 people (Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio, Animas Water Company, Lake Durango) serve about 27,000 people. Roughly, 60-65% of the county population is connected to permitted water supply systems, 7-12% haul water, and 25-35% are on individual or shared wells.

Agricultural Use

Approximately 95% of the surface water diversions in county are for agriculture. In some cases water may be diverted more than once such as when the return flow from one diversion reaches a stream before the next diversion. Except for Lake Nighthorse, the vast majority of water stored in the county is for agricultural purposes. The biggest reservoirs have the following capacities: Vallecito – 130,000 a-ft; Lake Nighthorse – 120,000 a-ft; and Lemon – 40,000 a-ft.

Much of La Plata County has more good agricultural land than available irrigation water, at least at a reasonable cost. Except along the Animas River, many irrigators run short of water at least during some years. In some locations, there is a perpetual shortage of irrigation water, especially where there is no water storage such as in the La Plata River Basin.

Recreation and Environmental Use

These uses generally do not include water diversions and there are no estimates as to how much water is used for these purposes.

Water for Future Development

Groundwater

There are no known large, deep aquifers in the county with good quality water. The most viable supplies of groundwater exist in riparian and irrigated areas which recharge aquifers. Thus, development based upon groundwater will migrate to these areas.

In many parts of the county, irrigators have been increasing their efficiency of water use by reducing ditch seepage and water percolation below the root zone. In addition, some irrigated areas have been taken out of production. It is possible that some locations, wells dependent on groundwater recharge from irrigation will eventually go dry.

A couple of years ago, the County Commissioners adopted very strict rules for basing subdivision development of greater than five lots on groundwater. Significant studies must be conducted to show that water withdrawals do not exceed groundwater recharge *excluding* recharge from irrigation. Those rules also allow for development based upon water hauling under extremely limited circumstances. The county does not allow for development based upon produced water from gas development because that water is only temporarily available.

Surface Water

There are substantial sources of surface water available for development, but they are located in only certain areas and that water is very expensive to distribute around the county. Those sources could be diminished depending on the external factors discussed below.

The biggest source of water for development is Lake Nighthorse. The Animas-La Plata Project is designed to supply southwest Colorado with almost 82,000 a-ft (diversions) of municipal and industrial water each year. Out of that amount, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe have been each allocated 33,000 a-ft (enough for 165,000 people). So there is plenty of water available for development on tribal land.

Originally, the Animas-La Plata Conservancy District has been allocated 5,200 a-ft from the Project. Of this amount, Durango has an option to buy 3,800 a-ft for future development (enough for 19,000 more people), and the La Plata West Water Authority is interested in 1,400 a-

ft (7,000 more people) for domestic water supplies in the La Plata River basin. Durango also still has unused water rights on the Animas River as well.

The State of Colorado has been allocated 10,460 a-ft (enough to double the current population of the county) which has not been contracted to any entity. In a few years, the state will need to reimburse the federal government for this water (current estimates are about \$27 million) or the water will revert to the Tribes. The La Plata-Archuleta Water District has expressed an interest in some of this water.

There are other sources of water for development as well. The County has water rights for 9 cfs, and the County and the Southwestern Water Conservation District jointly have water rights for 20 cfs from the Animas River and tributaries for future development upstream of Durango's water park. These water rights were a result of a stipulation underlying the city's recreational in-channel diversion water right. The Pine River Irrigation District has discussed providing 3,000 a-ft from Vallecito to the La Plata-Archuleta Water District. In addition, water rights may be converted from agricultural use to municipal and domestic use, especially where agricultural land is converted to development.

There are two proposed rural water districts which would distribute water around large parts of the county. The La Plata-Archuleta Water District would like to supply water to the southeastern part of the county from the Animas River to the eastern edge of the County and from just north of Highway 160 to the New Mexico border, excluding areas around Bayfield, Durango, and Ignacio. The La Plata West Water Authority would like to supply water to the La Plata River drainage from Hesperus south to the border. The estimated cost of full build out of each system is around \$85-\$100 million.

External Factors

Some external factors that could limit water use in La Plata County are the Colorado River Compact, climate change and endangered species. Under the Compact, Colorado is obligated to let a certain amount of water flow downstream to other states in the Colorado River system. Increased water use in other parts of Colorado, such as greater transbasin diversions from the Upper Colorado watershed to the Front Range or massive oil shale development in the northwestern part of the state would mean that more of Colorado's obligation could fall on the San Juan basin which in turn could limit local water development.

Climate change could cause a similar impact as the transbasin diversions. Colorado's obligation to downstream states doesn't change even if there is less precipitation. In addition, as has been seen over the past few years, drought reduces the availability of local water supplies.

The needs of endangered species can also affect water development. For example, endangered fish limited the size of the Animas-La Plata project. It is unknown if current endangered species will require more water to survive or if other species will make their way onto the endangered species list.

Water Quality

Groundwater

The quality of groundwater in the county varies greatly by location. In some areas it is very good; in others the water has high levels of total dissolved solids (salts) and frequently high levels of iron and manganese. It all depends on what type of geologic formation a well is drilled into.

There are pockets of poor water quality from other constituents as well. A selenium belt exists from around Oxford over to Sunnyside. There are elevated levels of fluoride east of Bayfield. Some water wells have methane particularly near the outcrop of Fruitland formation.

Surface Water

Generally, La Plata County has very good water quality in its rivers and streams with some modest exceptions. At times there have been elevated metals in the Animas River that have affected aquatic life. These metals come from San Juan County. Some people feel that nutrient levels in the Animas River from just north of Durango to the New Mexico border could become a problem. Areas of the La Plata drainage have some elevated iron levels that could affect aquatic life.

The main issue in local reservoirs is mercury which is generally thought to be coming from atmospheric deposition from coal-fire power plants. Vallecito has a fish consumption advisory because of mercury, as do a number of other reservoirs in southwest Colorado.

La Plata County Comprehensive Plan
First Draft of Guiding Principles/Vision Statements/Goals

I. 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. Each principle should be defined with a rationale that explains the principle's purpose and implications. 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:

- Growth and change will continue to occur in the future and will likely continue to alter our rural/agricultural landscape; it can either serve or not serve our community interests and values
- Growth can create great places to live and work if it is based on the community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow, by crafting a vision and setting standards and codes for development which respond to community values.
- An integration of 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 can accommodate business growth and support economic diversity.
- A diversity of housing types available to a wide range of income levels, age groups and abilities are essential to creating real and healthy communities.
- Providing a continuous system of greenbelt/wildlife corridors help to define identified 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 will be integrated with a larger transportation network that encourages a variety of transportation choices and modes.
- Agricultural land, open space, and critical environmental areas are important to the local character and improve the communities' quality of life.
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy production at the local and regional levels provide the basis for a sustainable economy.
- Communities will use water through the most efficient means possible.
- Growth and development standards and decisions should be predictable, consistent, fair and cost effective.

II. Community Outreach and Visioning

- **Community Vision**

Our vision is of a community that is a model of collaboration, partnerships and innovation. We have achieved a balance between economic and social development and environmental stewardship. Our communities are designed to create real 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. Our community is a caring place that supports people's effort to achieve their full potential. Our efforts make us one of the best places in the nation to live and raise a family.

III. Economic Vitality Element

- **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 economic growth. Our county is renowned for green industries, local food production, education, and cultural 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 including a sustainable ethos in business development. Our reliable and fast internet and well educated community attract knowledge based industries. We are a national leader in renewable energy industries. Our agricultural industry is thriving as a result of both increased local markets as well as innovative programs in the County that support agricultural viability. 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 young people to stay as they grow their families and advance their careers. Economic vitality is supported by infrastructure investments, learning opportunities, access to childcare, and a balance between cost of living and wages.

- **EV Goals**

1. A fundamental role for the county is to maintain fiscal soundness.
2. Regulations and policies for business and economic activities shall be fair, clear, predictable, and consistent.
3. Develop incentives for economic activities that promote business sustainability and diversity.
4. Actively collaborate with municipal, Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, private sector entities, and non-profits to promote economic diversity and sustainability.
5. La Plata County supplies and promotes development and management of infrastructure necessary for a sustainable local economy: water, energy, waste, communications, housing, and transportation.
6. Preserve and enhance the county's assets to be attractive for tourists and residents.
7. Preserve and enhance our cultural landscape, scenic resources, and recreational opportunities for residents, tourists, and businesses.

IV. Sustainable Development Element

- **Vision Statement**

Our community develops based upon principles that respect and protect 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 real communities. La Plata County guides development in a way that is symbiotic with local municipalities, sovereign states, neighborhood communities and property owners. As a result, we are recognized as the most livable county in America. To protect our rural character, our County has grown around designated centers integrating new and old neighborhoods while preserving agricultural lands. These centers are connected by a well planned multimodal transportation system. Our agricultural system is a principle provider of food to our community 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 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 being an exporter of renewable energy. Locally we have reduced energy demand through efficiency, conservation, and design.

- **SD Goals**

1. Support the enhancement of local food, fiber and forest production systems (growing, processing, marketing, consumption).
2. Support the enhancement of renewable natural resource production systems (forest products, fisheries, wildlife).
3. Promote access to healthy, affordable, culturally-appropriate, and sustainably produced food, sourced as locally as possible.
4. Promote a resource-efficient growth and settlement pattern.
5. Meet local energy and materials needs as much as possible through efficiency and with local or regional renewable resources.
6. Support investment in adequate/sustainable water resources for social, environmental and economic purposes.
7. Encourage energy production and mineral development that minimize impacts on public health and the environment.
8. Promote historic and pre-historic preservation to enhance heritage tourism and increase restoration of these sites.

9. Protect historic and prehistoric cultures and resources.

V. Transportation Element

- **Vision Statement**

La Plata County has an efficient multi-modal transportation system that complements our land use strategies. Walking and cycling routes connect our neighborhoods, towns, and employment. We have a countywide public transportation system fueled by renewables. Street, road 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**

1. Promote development that is accessed with multiple modes of transportation.
2. Develop 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 rail connectivity.

VI. Natural Environment Element

- **Vision Statement**

La 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 disturbed lands.

- **Goals**

1. Protect & enhance the native bio-diversity in the county.
2. Preserve and restore wildlife corridors, wetlands and riparian habitats.
3. Reduction of wildfire hazards.

4. Address the risk of climate change to our natural environment and long-term water supply by appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures.
5. Reduce the upwind emissions of carbon dioxide and conventional air pollutants that enter the local airshed.
6. Minimize light pollution, light trespass, and glare from future development and encourage retrofit of existing lights.
7. Work with residents, businesses, and other agencies to develop energy infrastructure to generate sufficient energy locally to meet future needs without net energy imports.
8. Encourage the restoration or reuse of lands impacted by resource development.
9. Preserve and improve local air quality.

VII. Healthy Communities and Housing Element

- **Vision Statement**

La Plata County strives to maximize the quality of life, well being and potential of all citizens.

The County has achieved a balance of being able to both live and work in the county by taking an active leadership role in affordable housing. There are ample housing choices for all income levels achieved through partnerships and county supported programs. Through programs and organizations, families in poverty, children, the elderly, and youth 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 provides quality recreational and park facilities throughout the county enhancing public health. Our community members have access to quality and affordable health care for all income levels. Young people receive the support, care and love they need, are viewed as assets, are involved community members and responsible citizens, and take advantage of constructive, well-organized and accessible activities. They want to continue to live here. Our community provides opportunities for lifelong learning and development of every individual, including educational excellence for our youth.

- **Goals *(goals and phrases in italics are revisions by WG members that have not been vetted by WG)***

1. Encourage and take an active role in increasing the supply of accessible affordable/attainable housing.
2. Integrate a mix of housing types near employment and services.
3. Improve substandard housing *to be* safe, healthy and energy efficient.
4. Promote new and *renovation of* existing homes with increased energy efficiency and reduced carbon footprints.
5. Support education to close the gap between poverty and self-sufficiency.

6. *Engage local financial institutions to help bridge the gap between initial and life-cycle housing costs.*
7. *Promote, encourage, support, and maintain a truly competitive and active real estate development market.*
8. *Restrain the development review process from serving as a gate keeper that limits supply, discourages investment, and drives prices.*
9. Strive to ensure healthcare *as a right* with access for every resident.
10. Ensure a continuum of care that keeps seniors and disabled persons in their homes for as long as possible.
11. Promote healthy communities through neighborhood design, transportation networks, and public education.
12. Provide leadership to engage other jurisdictions and entities in improving healthcare and social services.
13. Ensure that quality childcare is widely available and affordable.
14. Provide a public transportation system that facilitates the independence and wellbeing of youth, seniors, families in poverty, and disabled persons.
15. *Promote healthy communities by encouraging and supporting development of competitively priced housing as well as business locations in order to support local service businesses that provide healthcare and childcare at reasonable prices.*

VIII. Organizational Excellence Element

- **Vision Statement**

We have a strong sense of community where 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. Respectful and informed dialogue results in effective solutions based upon multiple benefits to resolve community challenges. 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, progressive personnel practices, and continuous workforce development to ensure county services are delivered in an efficient, ethical and responsible manner

- **Goals**

forthcoming