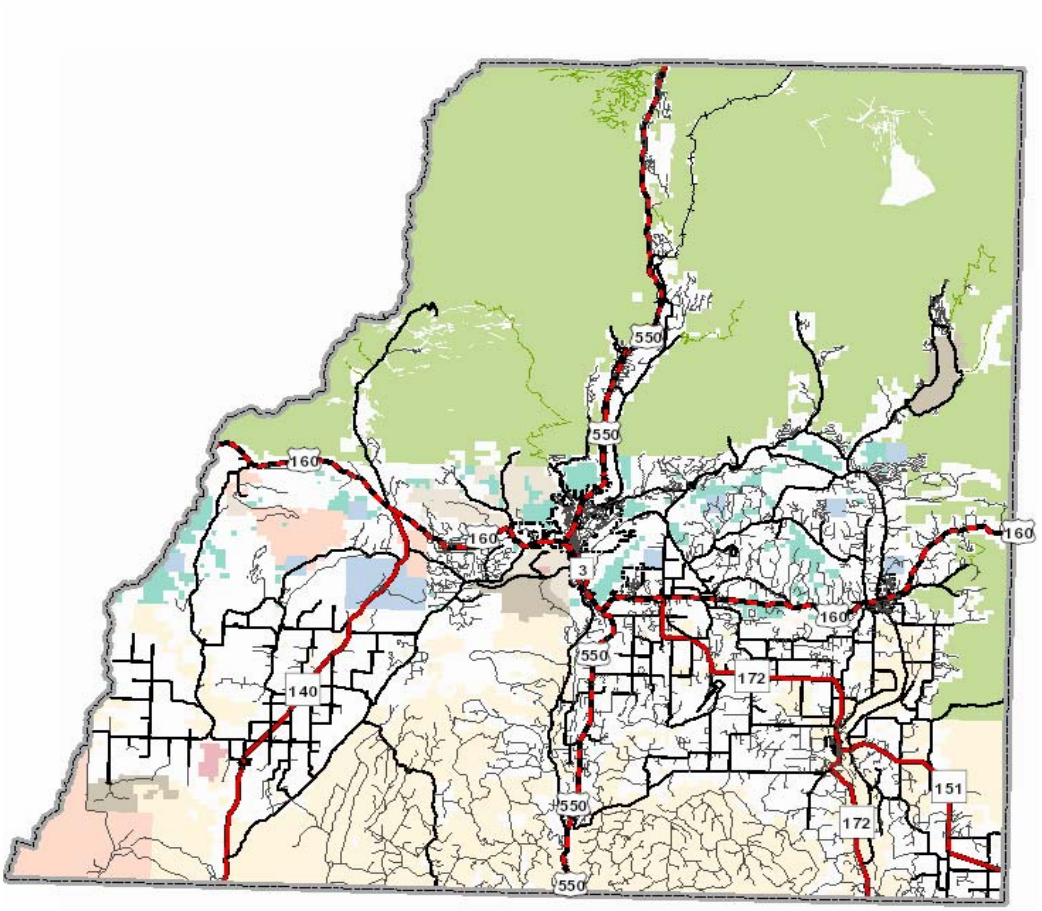
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



by the Planning Commission
November 2015

La Plata County Community Development Team
Planning Department

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

by the Planning Commission
November 2015

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Land use planning is intended to give residents, property owners and community leaders a means for creating a shared vision for the future development of their community. Authority for planning is granted to counties by the State of Colorado under Section 30-28-106 of the Colorado Revise Statutes. In part, the statute reads:

> ***"It Is the Duty of a County Planning Commission to Make and Adopt a Master Plan for the Physical Development of the Unincorporated Territory of the County"***

The La Plata County Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document which establishes a framework for planning in the County. Planning is not intended to be a static, one-time event, but an ongoing process that reflects changing conditions in the community. While the comprehensive plan establishes the framework, the ongoing planning process sets forth the specific actions to carry out the plan so the community can work together to achieve its desired future.

The comprehensive plan establishes a number of goals, objectives and policies to guide planning in the coming years. The broader and more generalized Goals express the vision or aspiration of the County's residents, while the Objectives create a measurable means toward reaching the expressed Goals; and Policies identify how the County anticipates fulfilling the Objectives. A prioritized list of "action items", or tasks, in the plan provides an organized set of items for focused pursuit by the County (and are identified in association with the various elements, or chapters of the Plan).

The Comprehensive Plan Is Advisory and Intended to Guide Planned Growth While Protecting the Environment And Enhancing the Lives of County Residents. The Comprehensive Plan Also Seeks to Recognize Diverse Perspectives on Land Use and Private Property Rights Expressed by County Residents.

This introduction includes a brief look back at several planning efforts in La Plata County over the past several decades. It provides an overview of the Plan's purpose, its structure and its layout. It documents the planning process used during the preparation of the Plan. It presents a brief overview of other government entities that influence the Plan. It recognizes that changes may occur to the land use regulatory process in Colorado which could affect the content and direction of the Plan in the coming years. Finally, it provides a detailed summary of our history and how the area has transitioned from its original inhabitants to the current residents.

PLAN BACKGROUND

In La Plata County, the process of planning has been underway for many years. Early iterations of the comprehensive planning process included a master plan prepared and adopted in 1984. It was replaced by a follow-up planning process undertaken in the late 1980s which resulted in the 1990 adoption of the "La Plata County Comprehensive Land Use Plan: Element 1-Policy Plan". Both

of these plans were based on the philosophy that land use regulation should be kept to a minimum except when the health, safety, and welfare of County residents was at stake. Since that time, there have been other exercises and long-range planning efforts by the County to reinforce its evolving vision of future growth.

The 1990 Plan was the precursor to what today is known as the "La Plata Land Use Code", the permitting system by which development is regulated in La Plata County. The primary emphasis of the land use code is to mitigate the impacts of the new development rather than having restrictive land use classifications. The intention was to establish standards for new development to ensure impacts to neighbors are mitigated while allowing flexibility in the use of one's land.

Goals *express the vision or aspiration*

Objectives *create a measurable means toward reaching the expressed Goals*

Policies *identify how the County anticipates fulfilling the Objectives*

Tasks *list specific action items to help achieve Polices & Objectives*

As the mid-1990s approached, however, a county-wide survey indicated that attitudes toward land use regulation in the unincorporated County were shifting. This new sentiment suggested that mitigating the impacts of development was only addressing part of the issue. It was felt that without some type of county-wide organization of what types of uses went where, providing essential services in the County would become more difficult and expensive as more development occurred. As a result, a new comprehensive planning process was undertaken. By 1997, the County had established 10 planning districts, eight of which established land use plans to guide growth by identifying preferred land uses types and densities within their districts. And by 2012, the County had added two additional district plans for a total of 12 planning districts with 11 plans. These Plans, therefore, are part of this Comprehensive Plan and are located within its appendix.

The district planning process identified a vision of what each of the districts should look like in the future. Goals and objectives were established; preferred land use types, locations, and densities were mapped; and district review groups were established to watch over implementation of each Plan. While each Plan has its own unique vision, goals and objectives, several prevailing themes tie them together. These include such things as retaining rural character, accommodating new growth, protecting the environment, respecting private property rights, and ensuring housing affordability.

PLAN PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

While the district land use plans share common themes, there are a number of county-wide issues that are either inadequately addressed in the district plans or were not addressed during the district planning process at all. *While the comprehensive plan is intended to incorporate and uphold the intent of the district plans, it is also intended to provide further detail and guidance to the overall growth management system of La Plata County.*

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan Consists of the Following Plan Sections & Elements:

- Introduction
- Growth Trends
- (1) Land Use Element
- (2) Infrastructure Element
- (3) Housing Element
- (4) Environmental Element
- (5) Agriculture Element
- (6) Airport Element
- (7) Public Safety Element
- (8) Extractive Resources & Renewable Energy Element
- (9) Recreation & Tourism Element
- (10) Historic Preservation Element
- Plan Implementation
- Appendix

Elements 2 and 9 each summarize topics that have already been addressed through separate planning processes. The *La Plata County Transportation Plan* and the *La Plata County Trails Plan* were each adopted in 2000 and are housed within the Plan's Appendix. Element 1: *Land Use*, also incorporates by reference, the District Land Use Plans.

Each primary plan element (chapter) is organized with an overview and background of identified issues; goals, objectives and policies; general analysis; and key points

Within each plan element certain issues have been highlighted for recognition as highlighted facts or recommendations (Key Points). These key points help to clarify significant aspects of each element for the reader.

Action Items from the various objectives and policies are located in a categorized list associated with each element within the "*Implementation*" Section; and assist by recognizing specific actions that could be taken to implement the Plan. An Implementation Table is included as a matrix within the Appendix, and should be utilized to assist in the tracking and management of action items.

PLAN PREPARATION HISTORY

La Plata County's 2001 comprehensive planning process actually began in the mid-1990s with Phase I, the creation and adoption of the district land use plans. Phase II of this program was initiated in 1999 by identifying approaches for dealing with issues of county-wide concern, those that overlap the district plans and ultimately affect the cost of living and/or quality of life of all County residents.

Over the course of the following two years, planning staff, in conjunction with a planning consultant, worked with the Planning Commission, the Board of County Commissioners, and the

public to establish a set of working papers which helped to set the stage for the Plan's main elements. The working papers titled *"La Plata County Comprehensive Plan: Framing the Discussion"* were widely distributed during the fall of 2000. Nearly one-hundred written and oral public comments were collected during that period and modifications were made to reflect those comments.

From the background research, public input, and the guidance of the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners, a draft Plan was written and presented to the Planning Commission for review/discussion and process direction in early June 2001. Five additional work sessions were held with the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissions between June and August to finalize the draft Plan. The draft Plan was then distributed to local media outlets and widely publicized for public comment. The Planning Commission ultimately adopted the 2001 Plan in August of that year.

The Comprehensive Plan Also Seeks to Recognize Diverse Perspectives on Land Use and Private Property Rights Expressed by County Residents.

In 2009, La Plata County embarked on a long-range planning project to replace its adopted Comprehensive Plan, with the assistance of a consultant. That effort was extensive and well attended by the public, and included more than 120 public meetings and monthly meetings with a 21 member working group. The draft Plan was presented to the Planning Commission in April 2011 for their consideration and adoption. After nine months of public hearings, the Commission voted to terminate their review of the draft Plan in December 2011.

In 2014, the Board of County Commissioners met with the Planning Commission and expressed an interest in updating the adopted 2001 Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission shared that interest, and therefore began by directing staff to perform the necessary organization, that year, for an upcoming major project to update the existing Plan. Included with this established project are designated monthly public meetings during which the Planning Commission provided input and direction, reviewed work product, and accepted public comment. Each designated monthly meeting focused upon a subject of the existing Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC ENTITIES, PLANS AND REGULATIONS

The Comprehensive Plan and its implementation tools are intended to be used in conjunction with a number of other public entities, and their plans and regulations. Following is an overview of a number of those public entities and their relationship to the updated 2001(2015) La Plata County Comprehensive Plan.

Local Municipalities:

The City of Durango and the Towns of Bayfield and Ignacio all have adopted comprehensive plans which include, among other things, land use and transportation elements which overlap into lands

regulated by La Plata County. The County also enters into a multitude of agreements with these entities regarding issues ranging from road maintenance and land use to revenue sharing.

Southern Ute Indian and Ute Mountain Ute Tribes:

La Plata County includes approximately 208,835 acres of Southern Ute Indian and Ute Mountain Ute Tribal lands and trust lands located in the southern portion of the County. Recognized as sovereign nations by the Federal government in the late 1800s, the regulatory function of La Plata County government does not apply to tribal lands. None-the-less, issues that transcend political boundaries require a degree of interaction and cooperation. This interaction has led to a number of formal and informal agreements between tribal and non-tribal interests.

Federal and State Land Management Agencies:

With approximately 41 percent of land in La Plata County controlled by Federal and State land management agencies (Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the Colorado State Land Board) the coordination of activities and sharing of information is critical. Whether it be information of plans for controlled burns or plans for a new development proposed near interface lands, coordination will help to ensure that comprehensive planning policies and strategies are met.

Colorado Department of Transportation and Other State Agencies:

Activities of the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and other State agencies can have significant ramifications for the residents of La Plata County. Upgrades and expansion projects to state highways within the County will have a lasting effect on traffic and development patterns throughout the County. The coordination of County land use and transportation goals with those of CDOT will help to ensure consistency between the two entities' efforts.

Other State agencies include the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Department of Natural Resources. The Department of Natural Resources includes a number of divisions related to the Plan elements including the Geological Survey, Parks & Wildlife, Reclamation, Mining & Safety, the Oil & Gas Conservation Commission, Forestry, Water Resources, the Water Conservation Board, and the State Land Board.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE IN COLORADO

With significant population growth expected to continue in the coming decades, the debate over the effects of growth and its impact on residents' quality of life have risen to primary importance. This debate has led to a number of citizen and legislative efforts to change how land use is regulated in Colorado.

This Plan has attempted to address the most common aspects of community development comprehensively. It has not, however, attempted to anticipate and incorporate all aspects of any potential constitutional or statutory changes that may occur in the coming years. As a result, this Plan may require significant modification in the coming years if major changes to the land use

regulatory process in Colorado occur. Also, on a cyclical basis, the County should continue to maintain this Plan with current interests, issues and necessary adjustment for consistency with statutory mandates; as well as evolving, effective planning practice, in order to keep the Plan intact and in effective working order for the County.

HISTORY AND STORY OF PLACE[1]

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 Indian Tribe) accepted these terms and tribal members selected allotments in 1896. The Weeminuche Band (now the Ute Mountain

[1] *Prepared by Jill Seyfarth, Cultural Resource Planning, Oct 2009*

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.

Unclaimed lands (about 200,000 acres) were returned to the Southern Ute Indian 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 41% 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 Falfa (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 1890's 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 sightseers 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 Indian 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.

Credit: Kathy Myrick

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. Other social changes affected the county in the 1950s. 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. Government agencies employed a growing number of specialists.

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, ridership 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.

This pattern since the 1960s of dividing agricultural lands into rural residential subdivisions provides a financial injection for the agricultural business, but is difficult to continue in the long term. Regardless, it is anticipated to continue for the foreseeable future. As a result of this conversion, we anticipate seeing a continued decline in traditional agriculture lands and an increase in dispersed residential properties. The continued population increase along with changes in land uses and ownership patterns present both an opportunity and a challenge for the community to address as we move through the 21st century.

GROWTH TRENDS

Overview

Population demographics are an ever changing factor in La Plata County. The consistent growth of the county has lead to significant changes in other areas as well. Growth trends are documented in this section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Population Change and Distribution

Significant changes have occurred in the County's population over the past several decades. *Table 1* and *Table 2*, and *Chart 2* outline this change. During the 1970 to 2010 period, the County's total population increased by approximately 178 percent (5.9% average annually), from 19,199 in 1970 to 53,446 in 2010. The growth in the unincorporated portions of the County has been particularly significant, increasing by over 9,000 during the 2000 to 2010 period.

Table 1
Historic County Population Levels: 1970 - 2010

	1970		1980		1990		2000		2010	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Bayfield	320	1.7	724	2.6	1,090	3.4	1,549	3.5	2,333	4.4
Durango	10,333	53.8	11,649	42.1	12,439	38.5	13,922	31.7	16,887	31.6
Ignacio	613	3.2	667	2.4	720	2.2	669	1.5	697	1.3
Unincorporated *	7,933	41.3	14,607	52.8	18,035	55.9	27,801	63.3	33,529	62.7
Total	**19,199**	**100.0**	**27,647**	**100.0**	**32,284**	**100.0**	**43,941**	**100.0**	**53,446**	**100.0**

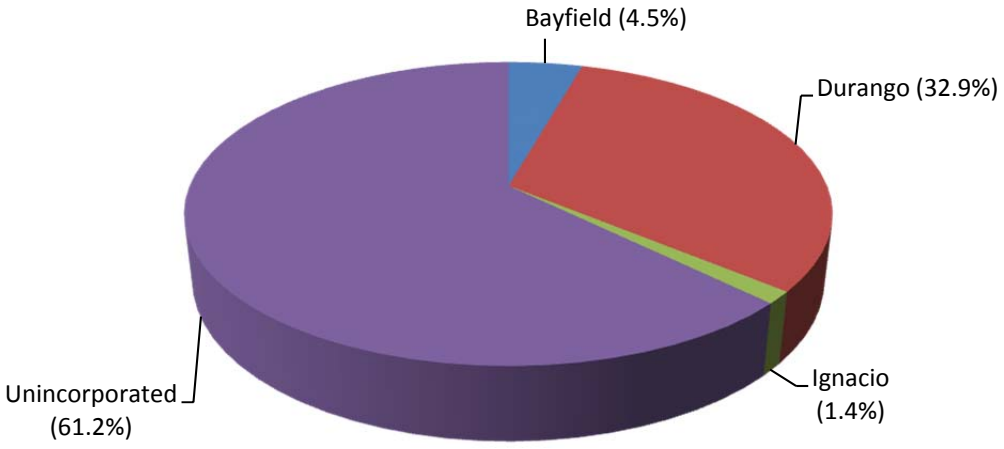
** Includes Tribal and non-Tribal*
Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs and U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2
Recent Population Levels: 2001 - 2010

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Percent of Total
Bayfield	1,624	1,635	1,652	1,639	1,678	1,824	1,962	2,025	2,087	2,333	4.4
Durango	14,636	14,970	14,967	15,366	15,623	15,888	16,019	16,420	16,627	16,887	31.6
Ignacio	839	841	833	820	810	799	790	786	797	697	1.3
Unincorporated *	28,004	28,533	28,806	29,080	29,681	30,323	30,897	31,402	32,135	33,529	62.7
La Plata County	**45,103**	**45,979**	**46,258**	**46,905**	**47,792**	**48,834**	**49,668**	**50,633**	**51,646**	**53,446**	**100.0**

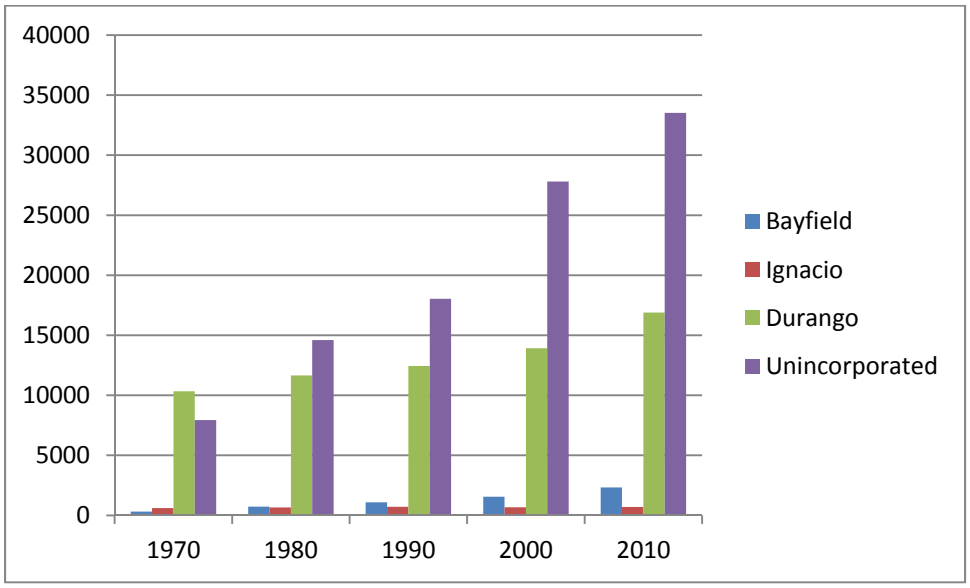
**Includes Tribal and non-Tribal*
Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs and U.S. Census Bureau

Chart 1
Population Distribution: 2010



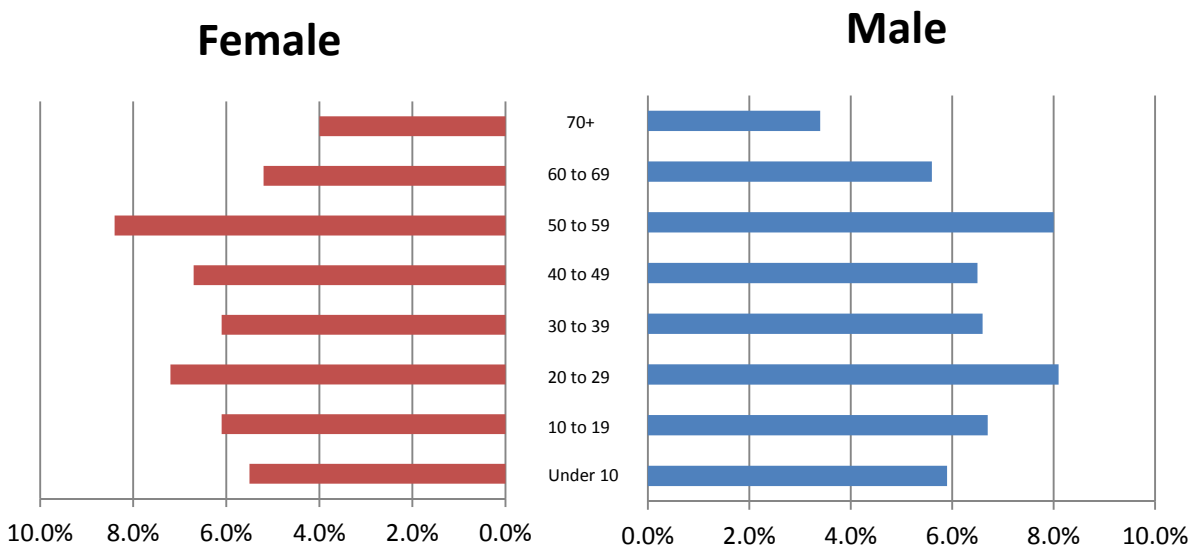
Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs and U.S. Census Bureau

Chart 2
Historic Population Distribution: 1970 - 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

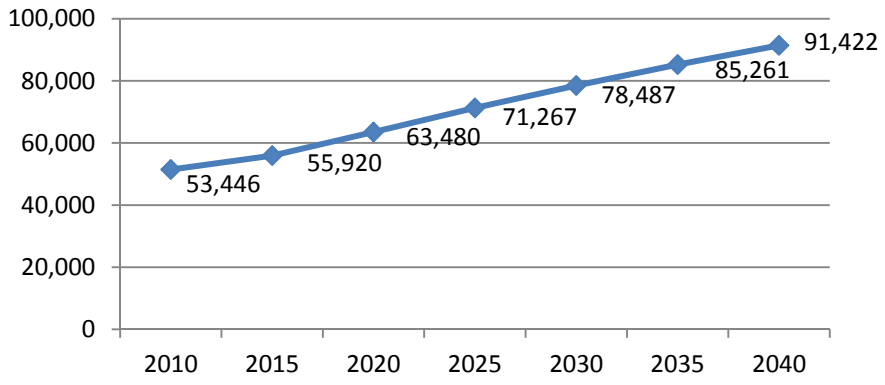
Chart 3
Gender and Age Profile of La Plata County Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

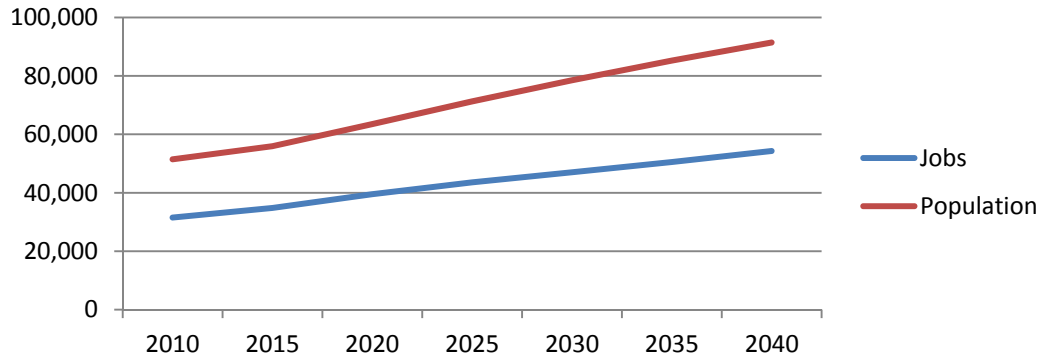
Chart 4 below reflects La Plata County's population forecast for 2010 to 2040. The County's total population is expected to grow from the surveyed Colorado Department of Local Affairs figure of 53,446 in 2010 to 91,422 by 2040, a 71% increase (expected average of 2.5% annually). By most accepted standards, growth rates of 2.5% or greater are considered high rates of growth.

Chart 4
La Plata County Population Forecast: 2010 - 2040



Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Chart 5
La Plata County Population and Employment Forecast: 2010 - 2040

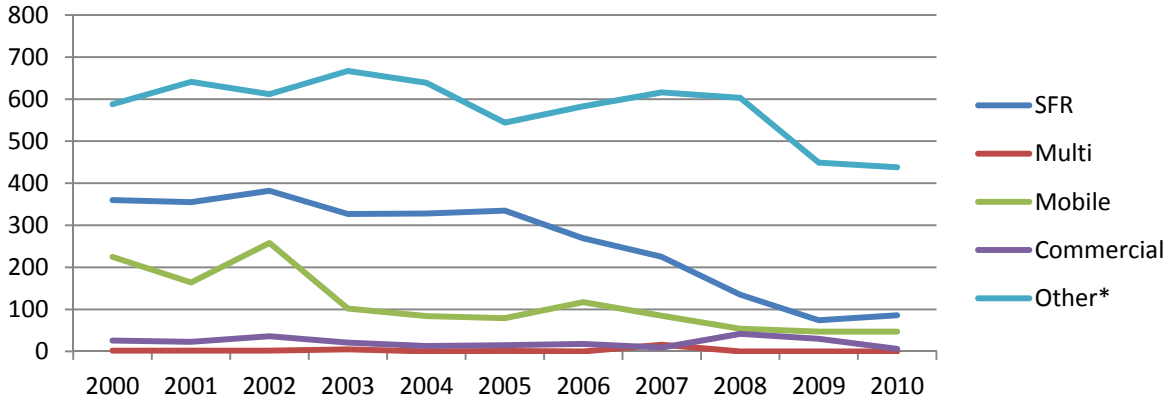


Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Building Permits

Historically, the population of La Plata County was concentrated in and around Durango, with smaller concentrations in the Bayfield and Ignacio areas. In recent years, however, growth rates have fluctuated, potentially a reflection of the 2008 economic downturn that ultimately resulted in the nation's recession. During the 1990's the number of building permits issued annually in the County increased nearly 80 percent, from 673 in 1990 to 1,201 in 2000. Conversely, from 2000 to 2010, building permits issued annual decreased significantly by nearly 52%.

Chart 6
Building Permit Applications: 2000 - 2010

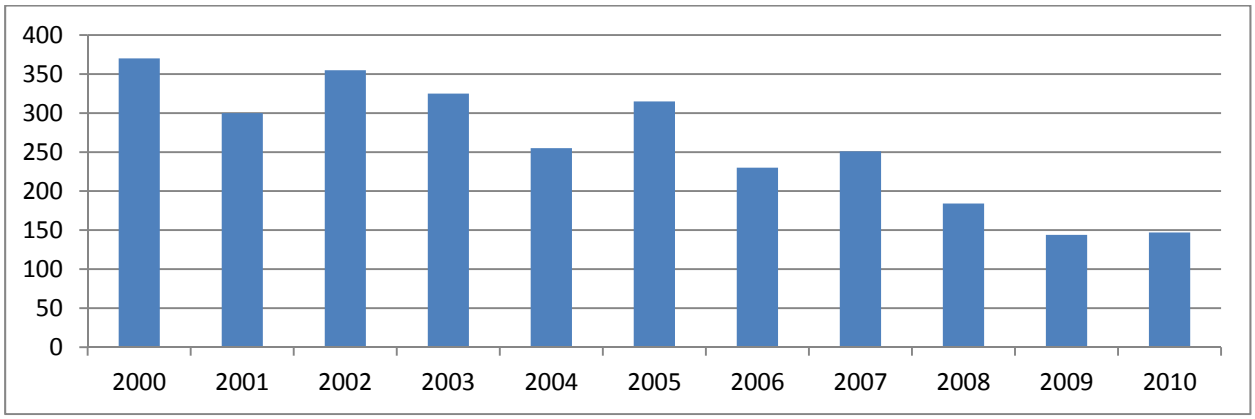


**Includes Remodels, Accessory Structures, and Additions*
Source: La Plata County Building Department

Onsite Wastewater Treatment System

Linked to development is the construction of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS). The majority of developments in the unincorporated County rely on OWTS. As shown in *Chart 7*, the number of septic permits issued annually has fluctuated during the past decade, but generally has followed suit with the decline in issued building permits.

Chart 7
OWTS Permits Issued: 2000 - 2010



Source: San Juan Basin Health Department

The Changing Economy

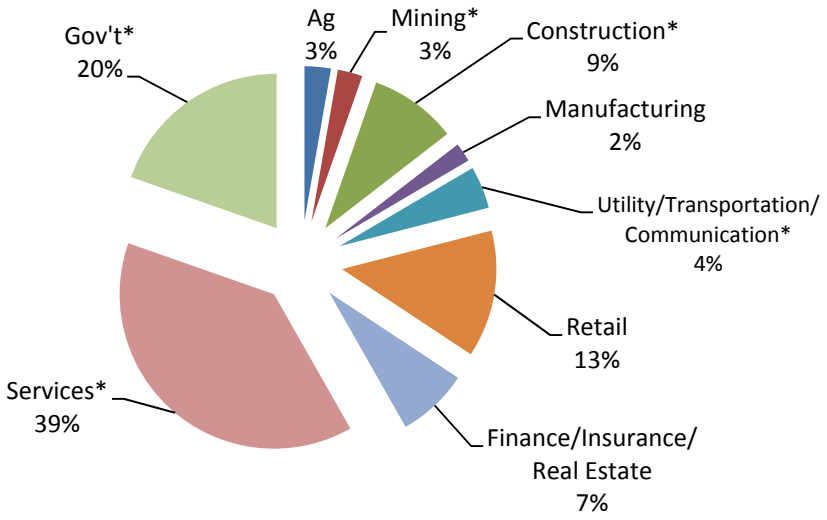
It has been estimated that as much as 60 percent of the County's economy is dependent upon the tourism industry. *Table 3* and *Chart 8* depict the number and percentage of jobs within the nine major employment sectors of the County. During the 1990s, the most significant job growth was experienced in the Wholesale and Retail Trade sector, the Services sector and the Construction sector. Recently, we have seen a significant increase in the Mining and Extractive Industries employment rates in addition to strong growth in the Financial sector.

Table 3
County Employment by Job Sector: 1980 - 2010

	1980		1990		2000		2010		Change 1980 - 2010	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent Change
Agriculture	948	6.5	1,104	5.9	1,311	4.4	839	2.7	-109	-11.5
Mining	104	0.8	263	1.4	315	1.1	788	2.6	684	657.7
Construction	1,101	7.5	1,677	8.9	3,186	10.7	2,796	9.2	1,695	154
Manufacturing	633	4.3	711	3.8	1,023	3.4	609	2.0	-24	-3.8
Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities	626	4.3	700	3.7	969	3.2	1,354	4.4	728	116.3
Wholesale and Retail Trade	3,410	23.4	4,131	22.0	6,834	23	4,051	13.3	641	18.8
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	751	5.2	1,104	5.9	1,591	5.3	2,277	7.5	1,526	203.2
Services	4,583	31.4	5,890	31.3	10,653	35.8	11,745	38.6	7,162	156.3
Government	2,428	16.6	3,212	17.1	3,915	13.1	5,977	19.7	3,549	146.2
Total	**14,584**	**100.0**	**18,792**	**100.0**	**29,797**	**100.0**	**30,436**	**100.0**	**15,852**	---

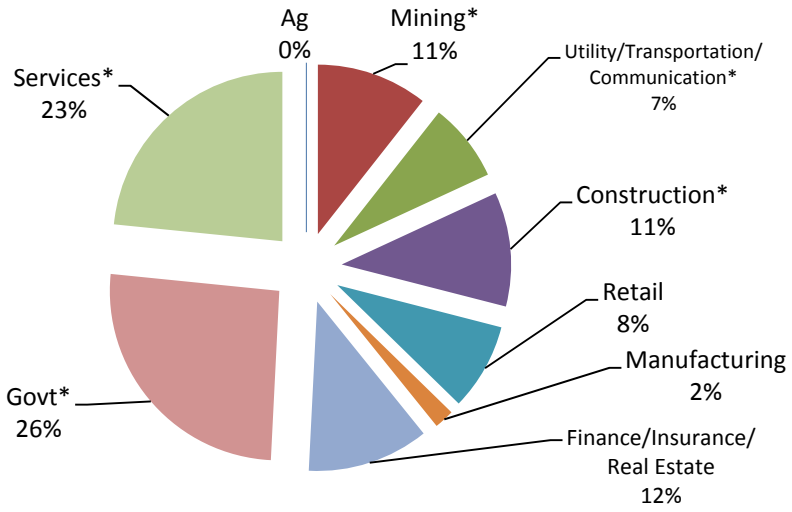
Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Chart 8
Employment by Major Job Sector: 2010



Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs
**Accounts for Oil and Gas*

Chart 9
Personal Income by Major Job Sector: 2010



Source: U.S Department of Commerce
** Accounts for Oil and Gas*

Property Valuation

During the 1990s tax revenues in the County increased dramatically, partly due to appreciating property values, and partly due to a significant growth in natural gas production. In 1990, taxable County properties had a total assessed value of $396,535,120 and by 1999 had increased to $1,163,142,350, a 193% increase over the decade. Relative to the economic downturn and affect on the housing market between 2007 - 2008, property values depreciated significantly but as of recent are appreciating at a slow, steady pace. *Table 4* depicts total assessed value and change in values during the 2000 to 2010 time period.

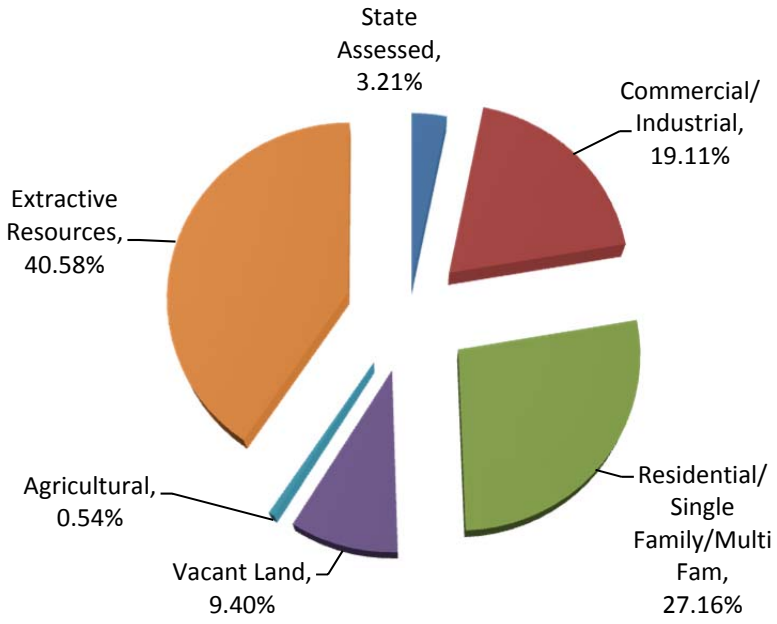
Table 4
County Assessed Property Value: 2000-2010

Year	Assessed Value	Percent Change From Previous Year
2000	$1,208,364,610	--
2001	$1,738,849,390	43.9
2002	$1,872,778,250	7.7
2003	$1,518,871,310	-18.9
2004	$2,130,538,680	40.2
2005	$2,487,795,340	16.7
2006	$3,003,202,240	20.8
2007	$2,876,454,210	-4.2
2008	$2,968,738,000	3.2
2009	$3,413,058,370	14.9
2010	$2,357,128,750	-30.9

Source: La Plata County Assessor's Office

As mentioned, the Extractive Resource Industry has played a significant role in the La Plata County economy. As shown in *Chart 10*, this industry accounted for approximately 40 percent of the total County assessed value by property class in 2010.

Chart 10
County Assessed Value by Property Class: 2010



Source: La Plata County Assessor's Office

1 LAND USE

Overview

The Land Use Element of the comprehensive plan focuses on the County's land use system and how it shapes the development pattern of the County. While other plan elements such as transportation, housing, and environmental resources are also critical to land use, they are addressed separately, in subsequent chapters. This plan element will focus its attention on the following issues:

- Urban Growth Areas
- District Land Use Plans
- Land Use Code
- Other Land Use Considerations

The district land use plans, created in the mid-1990s, establish the framework from which land use and density determinations are made in most of the County. This plan element is intended to provide clarity to those plans by removing ambiguities, and adding detail where needed.

Key Point: The Land Use Element is intended to uphold the visions and goals of the district land use plans while guiding future growth in the County.

Background

The implications of growth are far reaching. During the 1990's increased costs for the provision of County services were offset in large part by revenues from gas production. However, with gas production expected to decrease in the coming decades, taxing entities throughout the County will be faced with the challenge of finding new sources of revenue to supplement declining gas revenues in order to meet level of service expectations. While new development will provide some relief in this area, it is widely held that development does not pay its own way relative to the service demands it creates. New development has significant implications that can be grouped into two categories – impacts and demands.

Growth can impact the physical environment in many ways. These impacts can sometimes be subjective and difficult to measure. Moreover, many of the physical impacts are cumulative in nature – that is, they are not attributable to any one specific development, but result from numerous developments.

Examples of the Physical Impacts of Development Can Include:

- Visual impacts such as the disruption of views, scarring of hillsides, obtrusive road cuts, and unsightly grading;
- Destruction and fragmentation of wildlife habitat;
- Traffic congestion and accelerated road deterioration;
- Increased erosion and runoff;

- Pollution – noise, light, water and air;
- Negative impacts on ground water aquifers;
- Proliferation of individual septic disposal systems; and
- Loss of productive agricultural land

Growth also creates demands for new, improved or expanded services. Historically, the demand for services in the unincorporated areas of the County has been relatively low, and the County's role in providing services has been limited to such things as:

- Construction and Maintenance of County Roads
- Sheriff/Jail/Search and Rescue, Emergency Preparedness Planning
- Social Services
- Animal Control
- Fairgrounds Operations

As the population of the rural County grows, land that was once in rural and agricultural uses, and requiring minimal services, is converted to higher-density, non-agricultural uses that create higher service demands on the County. The demand for services traditionally provided outside the County government's purview also grows-- fire protection, emergency medical services, schools, and parks and recreation. As these demands increase, so does the public pressure to ensure that expectations are met.

Key Point: The challenge is to adequately and cost-effectively meet new service demands while not disproportionately placing the cost associated with new development on existing residents.

Minimizing the physical impacts of growth while also ensuring that the service expectation of the citizenry is met within the resources available is the essence of proper growth management. It does not mean stopping growth but establishing sound management strategies that can allow the County to grow while maintaining and enhancing its economic base, and protecting its unique character.

Key Point: The qualities and character that make the County unique, and economically stable, must be maintained as new development is accommodated.

Land Use Goals

Goal 3.1: To accommodate a growing population through the fair and consistent administration of a land use system that provides clear direction for private and public land use.

Goal 3.2: To uphold the visions and goals established within each of the district land use plans.

Goal 3.3: To periodically reevaluate and refine the district land use plans.

Goal 3.4: To support Bayfield, Durango, and Ignacio in their efforts to expand commercial and residential development, and employment opportunities.

Goal 3.5: To encourage growth hubs in the County that would provide opportunities for higher-density commercial and residential development, and employment centers.

Goal 3.6: To support efforts to extend central services to growth hubs and other areas envisioned for higher densities in the district plans.

Goal 3.7: To support efforts to create a rural water system to serve areas consistent with the district plans.

Goal 3.8: To encourage the preservation of contiguous open lands in La Plata County

URBAN GROWTH AREAS

Due to a lack of central water or sewer service in most of the unincorporated County, there are only a few places where development can occur at urban densities, that is, a density higher than one unit per 3 acres. These urban growth areas include much of the joint planning areas around Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio; as well as several residential developments scattered throughout the County. Following is a discussion of existing urban service areas as well as future potential urban growth areas.

Joint Planning Areas

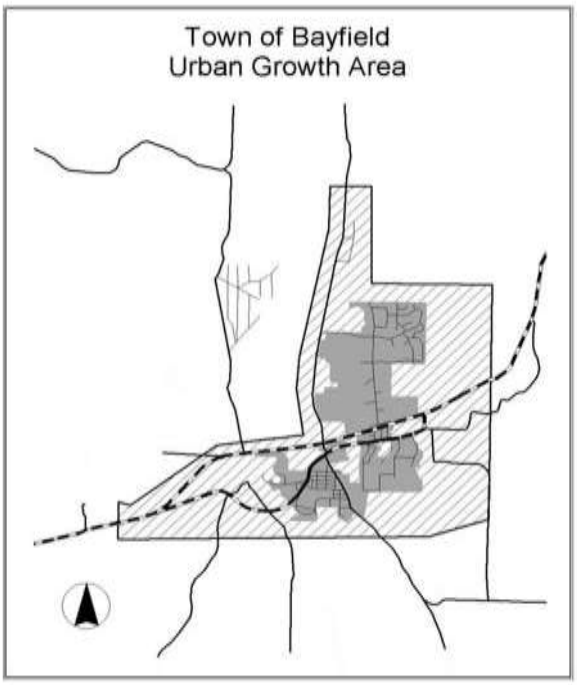
Development regulated by La Plata County is often times proposed near the borders of Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio. These communities have their own comprehensive plans which outline the type and intensity of development that should occur within their urban growth areas. As shown on the diagrams on the following page, the urban growth areas around each community (diagonal lines) include land that is not located within the corporate limits of the community (solid grey) but on adjacent lands that are likely to be served by central services in the future and, at some point, likely annexed into the community. These areas tend to change with revisions to a community's comprehensive plan.

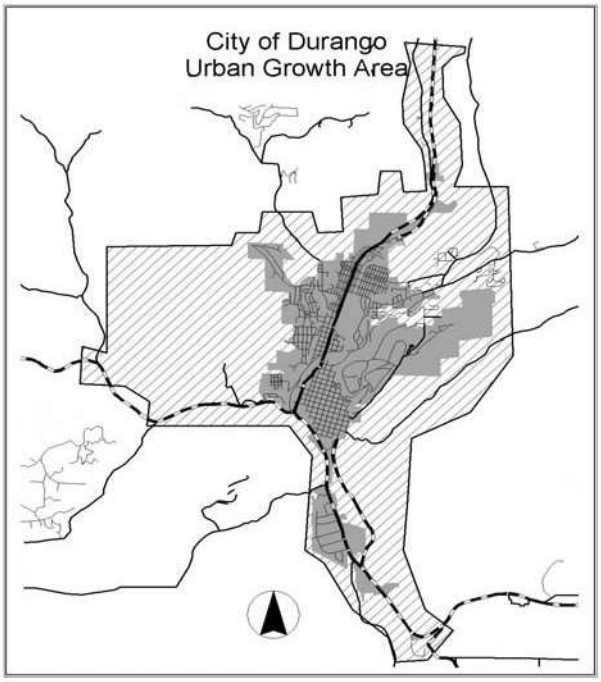
In order for a property to be annexed a number of criteria must be met including one-sixth contiguity between the parcel to be annexed and the annexing community, as well as property owner consent. As a result, the timing on an annexation can sometimes be uncertain. It is therefore important that there is good coordination between the County and each of the respective communities at the time a development is proposed so that an appropriate analysis of the proposal can be undertaken and the

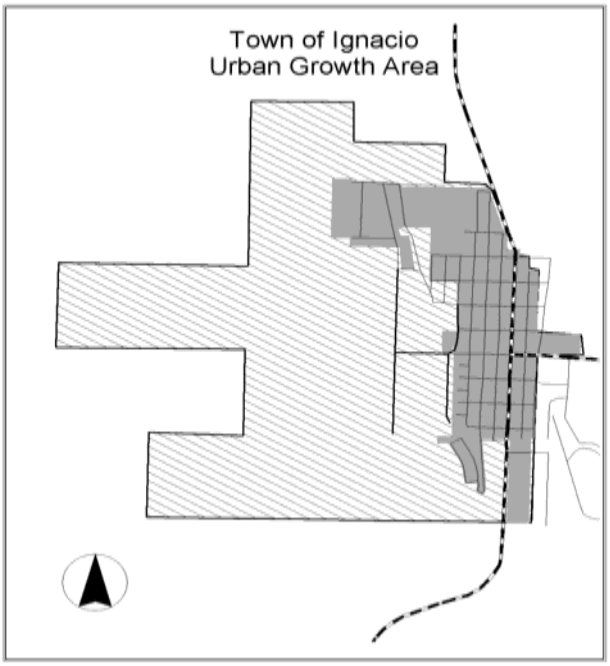
goals of each community can be met.

A few of the issues to consider include:

- Is the property eligible for annexation? If so, the development proposal should be processed by the community rather than the County; If not, is the development proposal consistent with the community's plan?
- What urban services can be provided to the property?
- What engineering and development standards are appropriate given its location–urban or rural?, County or municipal?







Some lands within the joint planning areas may not be eligible for annexation or may not be served by central services for a number of years. In these cases, it is important that there is consistency between the County's plan and that of the local community with regard to preferred land use types and densities. This will ensure that development administered by the County in these outlying areas does not interfere with the preferred future development pattern of the community.

Key Point: Overlapping areas of influence near Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio should be clearly defined and conflicting issues and processes should be resolved and agreed upon via joint planning efforts and intergovernmental agreements.

As of 2001, only the City of Durango had a formal Joint Planning Agreement with La Plata County. While discussions had been initiated with both Bayfield and Ignacio, no formal agreements have been established.

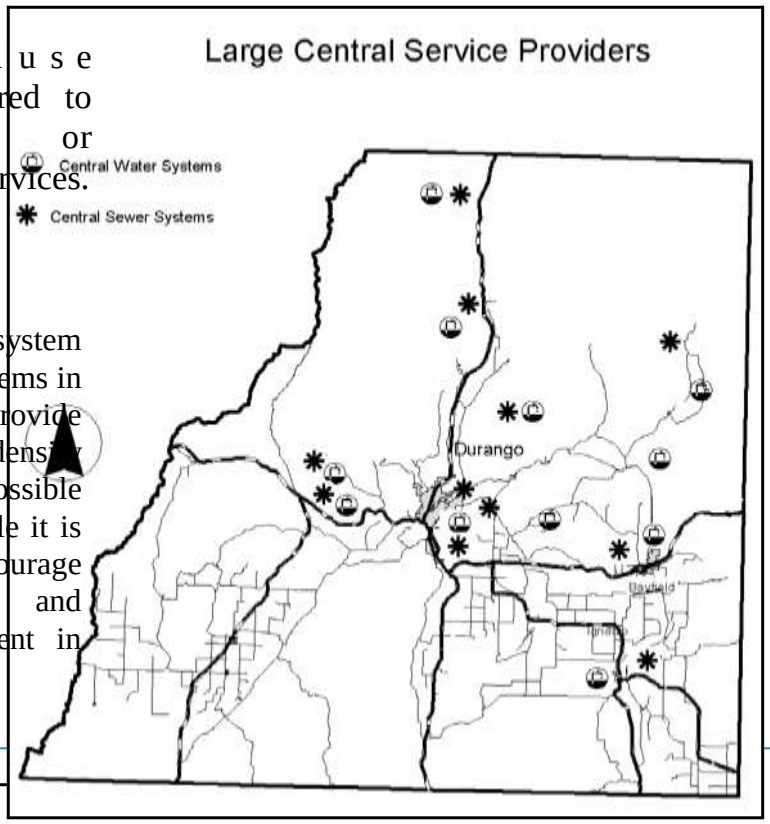
Other Urban Service Areas

In areas of the county where central water and sewer services are available, these services are provided by entities such as local municipalities, metropolitan districts, private companies, homeowner associations, and, in some cases, the Southern Utes. The map to the right shows the general location of major central service areas in the County.

These systems tend to serve smaller developments scattered throughout the County. Efforts to bring a large-scale rural water system to the southeastern part of the County have been underway since the mid 1990's. If established, this system would provide residents with a safe and consistent source of central water. Such efforts should be supported by the County.

Assuming such a system is eventually established, cooperation and coordination with the service providers will be critical to effectively upholding and implementing the district land use plans.

Key Point: Coordination between service providers and the County should be established and/or strengthened to ensure that the County district land use plans are adhered to during the provision or expansion of central services.



Growth Hubs

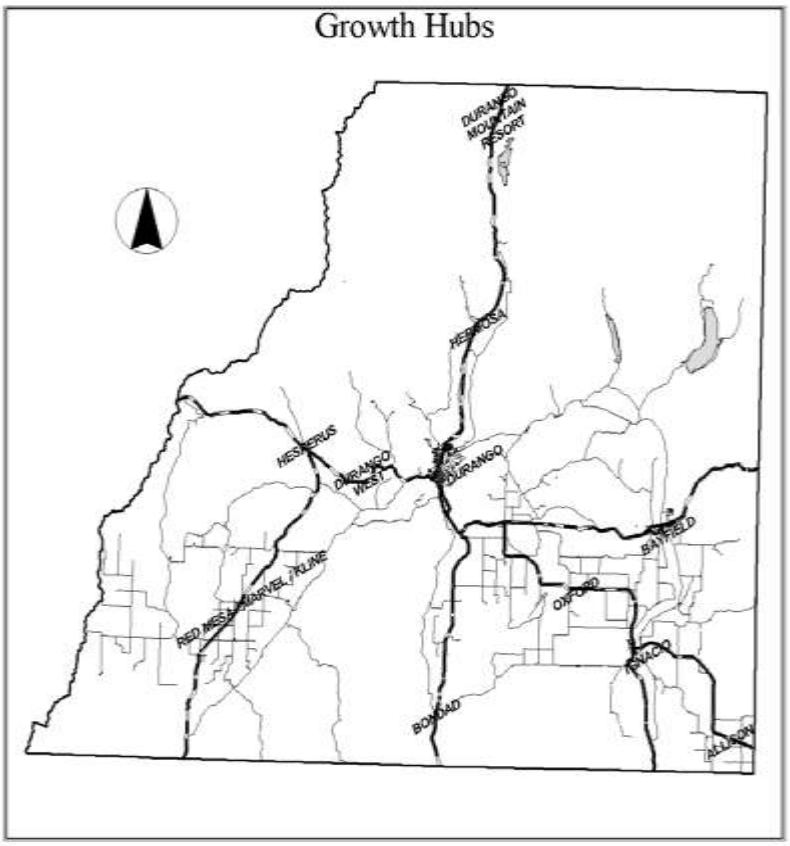
The development of a rural water system and the addition of central sewer systems in outlying parts of the County would provide opportunities for higher-density development to occur than has been possible using individual on-site systems. While it is not the intention of this plan to encourage the proliferation of unplanned and scattered high- density development in outlying parts

of the County, the provision of central water and sewer to key growth hubs could create opportunities to modestly decentralize the County. The growth hubs would essentially be higher-density developments having a mix of uses including such things as residential, commercial, employment, and civic opportunities.

As of 2001, the City of Durango was relied upon as the main source of jobs, goods and services in the County. The adjacent map depicts several potential growth hubs in the County based upon their historical land uses, higher densities, and in some cases, large number of platted lots already found in the area. This map is not meant to be all-inclusive. Additional study would be required to determine if these area, or others, would be appropriate growth hubs.

Key Point: The growth hub concept is not intended to encourage the proliferation of unplanned and scattered high-density development in outlying parts of the County but to allow for strategically located growth areas.

The reliance on the City of Durango as the primary center of commerce results in daily vehicular traffic patterns that overburden the major arterial roadways during peak periods. It forces County residents to drive significant distances in order to address even the most basic needs for goods and service. By encouraging the improvement or creation of strategically located growth hubs, this reliance on Durango can be lessened.

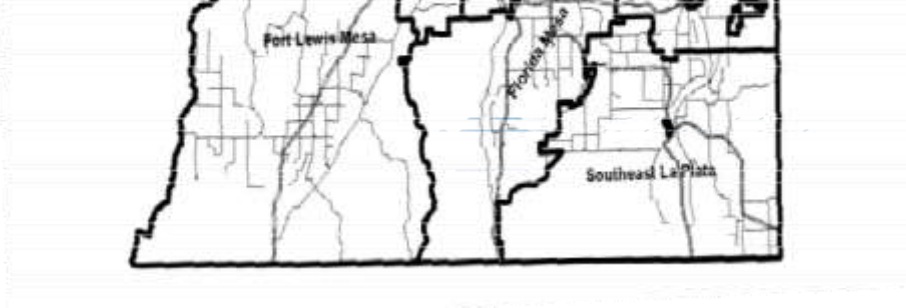


Key Point: The strengthening of growth hubs in the County, including Bayfield and Ignacio, will help to lessen the reliance on the City of Durango as the primary source of employment opportunities, goods and services in the County.

Planning Districts

It is recognized that the County plays a limited role in the provision of central services, and that it may be some time before central services are available to some of these areas. As such, rather than limiting new development in the unincorporated growth hubs until such time that the central services are available, development should be allowed to occur, but at rural densities. However, project proponents should recognize the potential for additional on-site development in the future as services become available, and incorporate that potential for additional density into their initial site design.

1 LAND USE



Key Point:

Project proponents should recognize the potential for additional on-site development as services become available and design their initial site plan accordingly.

When services do become available, the growth hubs could serve as "receiving zones" for transferred development rights (TDRs). Establishing the growth hubs as receiving zones would allow for the transferring of likely future development from the outlying rural areas to these higher- density areas. This would provide the County with an additional mechanism for helping to maintain the rural character and agricultural uses of the outlying County while compensating the rural land owners for the right to do so. The concept of TDR is discussed later in this chapter.

DISTRICT LAND USE

PLANS Overview and

Background

In the mid-1990s, the County created 10 planning districts as shown on the map above. Advisory land use plans were prepared for seven of the 10 districts. The Animas Valley District had previously established a plan that was subsequently codified and incorporated in the land use code making the plan required rather than advisory. Each of the seven district land use plans are similar in format. The particular emphasis and character of each plan varies somewhat however. The underlying theme of all plans reflects a desire to maintain the existing qualities of each district while they grow.

Key Point: The underlying theme of each district plan is to maintain the existing character of the district as it grows.

Each plan was prepared with extensive input from the residents of each planning district. The plan preparation process spanned several years, during which time more than 100 district planning group meetings were held to solicit public involvement. The district plans are integral sub elements of this comprehensive plan.

The District Land Use Plans Are Intended To:

- Provide guidance for County staff, project applicants, residents, business owners, service providers, and elected and appointed officials in determining preferred land use types and intensities for properties within the planning districts.

- Help direct growth to specific areas that are capable of accommodating it in a manner that

reinforces the goals of each particular district.

- Influence site planning and design in a manner that promotes the goals of the individual districts.
- Direct the provision of services by the County government and other entities.
- Assist planning efforts of the County's municipal jurisdictions, tribal governments, and federal and state land management agencies by providing them with a vision of preferred development patterns along their borders.

At the time as when the plans were being prepared, residents from the Fort Lewis Mesa District and the Southeast District expressed concern with the concept of mapping preferred future land uses. They expressed a preference for not creating traditional plans for their districts. As an alternative, the Fort Lewis Mesa District established a mission statement and project review checklist. The Southeast District undertook a similar approach. Since that time, development proposals in these districts have been guided solely by the land use code and State Statute. With limited development pressures in these districts, this approach has appeared to work adequately. However, with the potential for a consistent and viable source of water becoming available to these districts at some point in the future, development pressures will likely increase and result in difficulties using the checklist approach only.

Key Point: The County should work with the Fort Lewis Mesa and Southeast districts to establish district land use plans.

District Plan Review and Analysis

While the comprehensive plan is intended to uphold the goals and visions established within each of the district plans, it is also intended to refine and add clarity to them, focusing on areas of the plans that have proven problematic to administer over the years.

The Review and Analysis of the District Plans Is Separated into the Following Categories:

- Issue Clarification
- Public Benefit Criteria Process
- Plan Review Procedures

Issue Clarification

The district land use plans have provided guidance for review and approval of many projects. However, after several years of application, a number of issues have been identified that need clarification and/or augmentation. Additionally, since the plans were adopted over a period of several years, there is also a need to unify the treatment of similar issues among plans. This section contains recommendations that are intended to provide more certainty for project applicants and reduce the potential for subjective interpretations of specific plan provisions.

Topics Identified for Clarification Include:

- Clustered Development
- Open Space within Development
- Areas for Business Development
- Mixed Uses
- Public Facilities
- Park and Ride Lots
- Recreational Vehicle Parks
- General Definitions

Clustered Development: Cluster development is a form of residential development that concentrates lots on only a portion of the development parcel in order to preserve rural character, agricultural uses, wildlife habitat and other open space values. By reducing the size of the lot or the building envelope on each lot while also maintaining the overall density of the project, the developable area associated with the project can be concentrated on only a portion of the development parcel thus leaving some land undeveloped. While the district plans all encourage cluster development as a means of preserving rural character and open space, none provide guidance as to what makes an effective cluster design to achieve these goals.

This section of the plan is intended to provide some very general design guidelines for determining what an appropriate cluster development may look like. It is not intended to be a comprehensive cluster guide, but an overview of concepts.

Key Point: The County should create a comprehensive cluster design guidebook

Because of the unique development patterns in La Plata County, clustered development may need to be treated differently depending upon the size of the development. Be it developments having a small number of lots, say, five or less and those having a large number of lots. While five is not a hard and fast rule, typically subdivisions having five or fewer lots are characteristic of projects that may have difficulty undertaking some of the traditional approaches to cluster development. None-the-less, many of the design guidelines presented herein may be appropriate for both types of subdivision

Important Elements of a Cluster Development Include:

- Preservation of existing natural features
- Preservation of open space adjacent to existing roadways
- Screening new housing with topography, or existing and/or new vegetation
- Preservation of sufficient open space for viable wildlife habitat

Preservation of Existing Natural Features– Efforts should be taken to preserve as much of the existing natural features of the development site as possible so to minimize the visual effects of the new development on adjoining land uses.

Preservation of Open Space Adjacent to Existing Roadways-- Since the perception of rural character is largely a function of what motorists in passing cars see, the preservation or enhancement of the view of the development from the adjacent public roadway is critical. Significant minimum setbacks from the roadway can go far in protecting the rural character. If these setback areas do not contain existing vegetation or topographic features sufficient to significantly screen the houses, it is essential that vegetation, preferably native, be added to screen the development from the road.

Key Point: Significant minimum setbacks from the public roadway and adequate vegetation can go far in protecting rural character.

Screening New Housing with Topography, or Existing and/or New Vegetation-- A good local example of significant setbacks and screening can be found in Durango West II. While not a traditional cluster development, it incorporates a naturally landscaped setback from the highway of approximately 200 feet along its southern boundary that provides both passive recreational open space for trails and an effective buffer to minimize the visual impact of the development from the highway. It should be recognized, however, that due to the varied terrain and vegetation found throughout La Plata County, no one specific standard can be applied to all clustered developments.

Preservation of Sufficient Open Space For Wildlife Habitat–while open space objectives and layout considerations are discussed later in this section, it is important to note that wildlife corridors should be considered an important element of a well-designed cluster development.

Key Point: A menu of flexible design options and setbacks should be established that can be applied under varying circumstances to help protect rural character.

While maintaining rural character is a critical element of a clustered development, the design and layout of the homes on the site (cluster groupings) within the overall development is equally critical to a successful clustered development.

As shown in Cluster Diagram No. 1, by limiting the size of each cluster group–to say 10 units or less per cluster group; by requiring open space within each cluster group, and by requiring cluster groups to be separated from one another by open space, it is possible to locate each lot in the development adjacent to some form of open space. While this approach will help to preserve rural character and offer residents accessibility to the open space parcel, it will not automatically serve to protect wildlife corridors, agricultural lands, or other unique natural feature unless these issues are specifically taken into consideration during the design phase.

Diagram No. 1 Diagram No. 2

The main objective of Cluster Diagram No. 2 is the preservation of agricultural land. As you can see, a slightly different approach is taken. Houses are grouped near one another on the remnant parcel, that is, that portion of the development parcel not being used for agricultural purposes. When possible, the houses should also be placed so as to limit views from the adjacent public roadway.

As you can see by the above examples, there are a number of issues to consider when evaluating the merits of a clustered development proposal. First, and probably foremost, is the open space objective. What has traditionally been the case in La Plata County is that most open space designations are intended to protect agricultural lands, wildlife corridors, view corridors, or other unique natural features. It is this issue that should determine the location of the houses, or cluster groups, on the parcel. For instance, if the objective of the open space is to preserve unique natural features, the homes should be located in general proximity to one another and away the natural feature as shown in Diagram No. 3 below. If the objective is to preserve an agricultural parcel, the approach would be similar–locate the houses near one another but away from the agricultural parcel.

Key Point: The objective of the open space designation should help to determine the location of the houses on the parcel.

Secondly, should the lands identified as open space be maintained in common ownership? Or should the subdivision have platted building envelopes that allow development on only a portion of the lot and individual ownership of portions of the open space. With large cluster developments, common ownership of the open space should be required to ensure the preservation and maintenance of the open space as originally envisioned. In cluster developments that are limited in the number of total lots, as we typically see in La Plata County, a joint management agreement between individual owners may suffice. The individual ownership approach has been common practice in the past in La Plata County and does serve as a pragmatic means of ensuring that open space is provided in limited-lot subdivisions while also eliminating the need for common ownership. There are pitfalls associated with this approach however. In particular, unless there is a management agreement established for the entire area designated as open space, there is no assurance that once the development is occupied that the open space will be maintained for such things as weed control, or the protection of wildlife habitat or unique natural features.

Key point: It is clearly preferable to have common ownership of the open space, or a joint management agreement to ensure that the open space objective is maintained.

Diagrams No. 3 and No. 4 below explore the concept of limited-lot cluster subdivision a bit further by showing what should, and should not, qualify as limited-lot clustered subdivision. Diagram No. 3 shows a design that effectively utilizes clustering in a way that protects maximum functional open space, unique natural features, and views from the adjacent public roadway. In this example, the lots sizes are smaller and building envelopes are established in general proximity to one another. It should qualify as clustering. Diagram No. 4; on the other hand, fails to achieve the intent of clustering. The development parcel is split into four large lots and the placement of building envelopes has little relationship to the open space parcel, view corridors or natural features. Without some consideration for these issues, this example should not be considered as a limited-lot cluster subdivision.

Diagram No. 3 Diagram No. 4

Open Space Designations within a Development: A number of issues relative to open space within a clustered development have already been presented. However, since properly designed cluster developments are very much a function of the open space that is being preserved, further discussion is needed. This section will only deal with open space as it relates to a development. Open space preservation as a broader category, one that is intended to identify and preserve certain environment features or other lands in the community but occurring outside the development process, will be addressed in a later element of the plan.

Land Designated as Open Space Should Be Consistent with the Following:

- Open space should, in general, be contiguous: The purpose of contiguity is to ensure that open space areas are large enough to be functional as agricultural parcels or wildlife habitat.

They do not merely consist of numerous isolated pockets of land that were otherwise unusable for development purposes. Certain smaller remnant parcels may be included in the overall open space designation when the remnant parcel is intended to preserve a unique natural feature such as a wetlands or tree stand or when serving as a landscaped buffer or playground area for children.

- Open space should be held in a single ownership: As mentioned previously, while management agreements can sometimes serve the same purpose, ideally the title to the open space parcel should be held by a party that can ensure ongoing maintenance and management such as a land trust, homeowners association, or other single ownership entity.

- Uses of Open Space Should Be Limited to Agricultural, Conservation, or Passive Recreation.

Open Space Uses Within a Development May Include:

- Environmental Features - wildlife habitat protection, flood control, water quality protection, and visual buffering from roads or between developments and recreation; or certain other features such as landscaped cul-de-sac islands;

- Agriculture - except those higher-intensity agricultural uses requiring Class II land use permits such as intensive animal production or processing facilities;

- Limited Structures - limited agriculturally related structures such as barns, well houses, and stables may be considered appropriate but should be kept to a minimum. Fencing should be prohibited except as necessary for agricultural uses;

- Passive Recreation including such things as trails, fishing, and undeveloped picnic areas (Refer to Chapter 11: Parks, Recreation, and Trails for discussion of active recreation)

- Roads - driveways and road cuts should be minimized and placed, when feasible, on the edge of the open space;
- Open space tracts should be of an appropriate width: An important aspect of open space is that it has a "natural" character. The appropriate minimum dimension is related to its use. For example, a meadow or hay field should be large enough to turn around farm equipment and to irrigate. On the other hand, a natural stream corridor, or trail access, can be relatively narrow and still have a natural character.

- Management of open space: The easement or title that creates an open space parcel will incorporate management objectives and commitments, and provisions for monitoring and enforcement. Commitments need not be onerous, but they should be recorded into property deeds and on the subdivision plat when created. Such restrictions should provide enforceable and unambiguous guidance for the long-term management of open space.

  Management Commitments May Include Such Things As:

  - Fencing prohibitions or restrictions;

- Allowable uses;
- Allowable structures; location and size;
- Maintenance requirements for noxious weeds, irrigation ditches; fire hazard prevention, etc.
- Commitments to vegetate with appropriate plants immediately after grading, filling, road construction and other types of ground disturbance;
- Locations for and restrictions on public access.

Subdivisions having a limited number of lots: As suggested earlier, establishing single ownership and/or management entities for open space areas designated within a subdivision having a limited number of lots/owners, while preferable, can be onerous. It is for this reason that designating building envelopes and open space areas on each parcel has become an accepted alternative for preserving open space within limited-lot subdivisions.

Key Point: The platting of building envelopes on individual lots with the remaining lands designated as the open space has become an accepted, yet less effective, means of preserving open space.

None-the-less, even under this scenario, many of the same management criteria could apply with the establishment of a homeowners association or management agreement. Another component of the open space issue relates to how much land should be dedicated as open space in order to receive a district plan density bonus. Each district plan has an established threshold for the bonus but each is also different to one another. This issue will be further evaluated later in the section of this chapter that addresses the public benefit criteria process.

Areas for Business Development: The district plans each address non-residential land uses differently. With few exceptions, the designation of land for non-residential uses in the plans was based primarily upon uses already in place at the time of plan adoption. The few exceptions are areas in Grandview, Gem Village and on the Koshak Mesa where larger tracts of undeveloped land were designated for business use, and where central services are likely to be in the future. Since the adoption of the plans, the County has received, and granted, a number of individual requests to redesignate specific parcels for business development. This has not, however, fulfilled the apparent demand. The business community has expressed interest in seeing the establishment of additional areas designated for non-residential uses.

Key Point: An analysis of existing non-residential land uses and plan designations should be undertaken to identify available lands or land deficiencies associated with such uses.

This analysis should focus on areas where central services already exist or may be feasible in the future development, such as in and around areas appropriate for growth hubs.

Mixed Use Land Use Classification: The mixed use land use classification is included in the Florida Mesa, Bayfield and Vallecito district land use plans. Areas designated as mixed use include: portions of Grandview, Gem Village, and northwest of Vallecito Reservoir. The mixed use classification is generally defined as a transition area between residential and

commercial uses. The mixed use designations vary slightly among the district plans with regard to underlying residential densities as well as the allowable non-residential uses.

During the district planning process, the mixed use classification was applied only in areas already having a mix of residential and commercial uses and where no new or expanded mixed use areas were envisioned. Since the adoption of the plans, however, the County has received, and granted, requests to establish additional mixed use areas. This has resulted in new isolated pockets of mixed land uses, running counter to the intentions of the plans and the definition of the mixed use classification.

As an alternative to applying the mixed-use classification to new areas, a similar effect can be achieved with less potential for conflict by carefully delineating the proposal area with "non-residential" and "residential" land use classifications.

Key Point: As an alternative to creating new mixed-use areas, a similar effect can be achieved with less potential for conflict by carefully delineating the proposal area with "local commercial" and "residential" land use classifications.

For example, the first tier of parcels fronting a highway or main road might be designated local commercial or light industrial, while the second tier of parcels could be designated medium-density residential. For areas being proposed for development that already have a mixed use classification, requiring specific mitigation standards and uses could lessen impacts on surrounding land uses.

Key Point: The mixed use classification should be refined by adding specific development and mitigation standards, and allowable uses, so to lessen impacts on surrounding residential land uses.

Refinement of the Mixed Use Classification Could Include:

- Establishing standards for maximum building size and minimum setbacks to residential structures;
- Limiting non-residential uses to minimum impact uses such as office, service and limited retail to minimize the potential for conflict with less intensive surrounding uses;
- Establishing lighting, landscaping, buffering, and signage standards; and
- Establishing criteria for determining the mix of commercial uses allowed (the Vallecito Plan may serve as a good model with its mixed Residential/Accommodations classification).

Recreational Vehicle Parks: The district plans do not specifically address RV parks as a land use classification. Such uses are neither traditional commercial or residential uses. They are also different than mobile home parks, which are treated as residential subdivisions in terms of density.

Key Point: RV Parks are probably most similar to lodging, campground or country tourist land use classifications and should be allowed in areas classified for such uses. RV parks should also be allowed in other commercial areas.

Public Facilities: Several of the district plans include language stating that public facilities are allowable in all areas provided that they meet land use code requirements for compatibility. The Florida Mesa, Vallecito, Florida Road and North County plans should be made consistent by including language stating that public facilities may be appropriate in any area subject to an approval of a plan amendment and land use permit.

Key Point: Public facility uses may be compatible with most land uses provided that the site is adequately buffered from adjacent properties to mitigate impacts.

Park and Ride Lots: The La Plata County Transportation Plan has identified generalized locations suitable for park and ride lots. Such facilities are compatible with most land uses provided that the site is adequately buffered and set back from adjacent properties and have good access to the arterial highway system. As such, park and ride lots should be allowed within any land use classification contingent upon receiving approval for a Class II land use permit. No plan amendment should be required.

Park and Ride Lots Should:

- Share parking lots that receive mostly evening or weekend use;
- Not be located on intersection corners (reserve for buildings);
- Have hard surfaces that minimize dust; and
- Be designed with adequate landscaped buffers and drainage

Key Point: Park and ride facilities may be compatible with most land uses provided that the site is adequately buffered and set back from adjacent properties and has good access to the arterial highway system.

General Definitions: Each district plan has a set of land use classifications which identify preferred uses and densities. In many cases, however, determining allowable uses is left to subjective interpretation due to a lack of specificity. In order to ensure consistency in application of uses allowable in each classification, definitions should be refined for each classification. The definitions should not be considered exclusive to only those uses listed but should clarify the intent of each classification while establishing a baseline from which other uses could be considered.

Key Point: To ensure consistency in application of uses allowable in each land use

classification, definitions should be refined to clarify the intent of each classification.

Public Benefit Criteria Process

The public benefit criteria density bonus process was established as an incentive program within the district plans to allow for higher residential densities to occur if certain public benefits were provided as part of a project. Each district plan is slightly different in how density bonuses are determined and awarded. Each has similarities though, especially as they relate to clustering development to protect open space and other natural features. There is, however, a lack of detail in each plan relative to what is meant by clustering, open space, trails, ridge lines, etc. This has resulted in case-by-case interpretation of the density bonus criteria.

Key Point: The public benefit criteria process in each district plan should be refined to ensure consistent and objective application of the bonus criteria.

The application of the clustering and open space guidelines provided earlier in this chapter will help to lend specificity to the public benefit criteria process relative to those issues. The County Trails Plan also provides guidance relative to new development and should be incorporated by reference into the public benefit criteria section of each plan that addresses trail issues.

Additionally, there may be opportunity to improve upon the process by adding additional, alternative public benefit criteria that allow for density bonuses beyond 100 percent. Some, but not all, of the plans have density bonuses available for providing affordable housing. This should be expanded upon for all districts. Other possible alternatives include the provision of sewer and water, paved road, internal neighborhood commercial uses, mass transit opportunities, public facility sites, etc. By assigning bonus values to an assortment of public benefit alternatives, a development proposal could choose among a menu of alternatives to reach a desired density, with a maximum density bonus of, say, 150 percent being established.

Key Point: The public benefit criteria process should be expanded to provide developers with further incentive to add amenities to a development, enhancing the overall quality of the project.

Plan Review Procedures

The district plans were completed in the mid-to-late 1990s. At that time, a process was established for modifying the plans based on citizen request, be it a project-specific need or general amendment based on a changing environment. A later change to this process provided for semi-annual plan amendment hearings to occur in March and September.

Key Point: The criteria by which plan amendments are considered should be more clearly defined.

The amendment process as written does not identify a specific time frame for comprehensive reviews to evaluate the "big picture" changes that may have occurred since a plan's original adoption. Typically, community plans are revisited every five to 10 years in most communities.

Key Point: For the district land use plans to be effective tools for directing growth in the County, each plan should be re-evaluated on a periodic and consistent basis.

Key Point: La Plata County, having seven district plans and one zoning plan in place as of 2001, should establish an evaluation schedule of one plan per year on a rotating basis. This would allow for a comprehensive revision of each plan approximately every seven years.

This approach, while providing a schedule to revisit each plan, does not address the question of which plan gets revisited when. Based on development pressures occurring in the County, it is recommended that the Florida Mesa Plan and the Animas Valley Plan receive reviews prior to others. Additionally, efforts should continue to develop plans for the Southeast La Plata district and the Fort Lewis Mesa district. The balance of plan reviews should be based on need and interest.

LAND USE CODE

Overview

The Land Use Code is the primary means by which the comprehensive planning goals of the County are implemented. It is therefore critical that any changes in planning policy as outlined in the comprehensive plan and elsewhere are accurately reflected in the Code. The following discussion is not intended as a detailed analysis of the Code. It is however a brief history of the Code as well as a discussion of several issues that should be considered prior to any Code revisions.

Background

In 1990 La Plata County adopted a land use permitting process, currently titled "La Plata Land Use Code", to guide its review of subdivisions and development. The Code was prepared as a follow up to the 1990 adoption of the "La Plata County Comprehensive Land Use Plan - Element 1: Policy Plan". The development review process envisioned in the Plan, and subsequently outlined in the Code, has since undergone a number of revisions but still remains largely based on the concepts of compatibility and the mitigation of impacts.

In 1990, planned land uses were not designated on district maps. In fact, the whole premise behind the Plan and the Code were to not designate land uses at all but to ensure compatibility between adjoining land uses by mitigating negative impacts such as excessive noise, lighting, dust, etc. This approach was very much a reflection of the historically strong perspective in the County relative to private property rights and individual freedoms. It was felt at the time that by establishing performance standards for new development, flexibility in use of one's land would be maintained

while ensuring that impacts to neighbors would be minimized.

As the mid-1990s approached, however, a shift in attitudes was emerging. This new sentiment suggested that mitigating the impacts of development on neighbors, while critical, was only addressing part of the issue. An important piece seemed to have been overlooked. It was felt that without some type of county-wide organization of what types of uses went where, that cumulative community-wide impacts would be overlooked, and providing essential services in the County would become more difficult and expensive. As a result, a new comprehensive planning process was undertaken. By 1997, the County had established 10 planning districts, eight of which established land use plans to guide growth by identifying preferred land use types and densities within their district.

The designation of preferred land uses throughout most of the County has indeed resulted in a more organized pattern of development for service delivery, and has also provided a degree of certainty for land owners and developers. Unfortunately, the land use code, which was originally established upon the notion of compatibility and impact mitigation rather than use designation, was never revised to truly reflect this change. An additional factor is that State Statute dictates that land use plans are advisory only, and that the land use code is the primary, legally enforceable means by which development proposals are reviewed and processed. What this has resulted in, is a unique blend of two distinct approaches to land use administration that sometimes do not work well as one system.

Key Point: The La Plata Land Use Code, established as a performance-based system based upon the notion of compatibility and impact mitigation, rather than use designation, was never revised to appropriately reflect the changes established by the district plans.

Revision of the Land Use Code

With the difficulty in blending the existing land use code with the district plans, it is critical that a comprehensive revision of the code be undertaken. The question of whether the County should refine its existing performance style code or move towards a more traditional zoning system has likely already been answered by the historically strong preference for a flexible land use system. A traditional zoning system may provide for more certainty in allowable uses, densities and land values but it would be quite rigid, and inflexible to the incentive-based land use system of La Plata County.

A number of code revisions have already been identified that would provide for a far more functional integration of the code with the district plans. These changes would likely improve the overall function of the code for areas that do not have plans as well. Revising the code in its current style, as a performance-based system, will allow for a continuation of the flexibility that is currently found in the code and the plans. It is yet to be seen, however, whether this type of revision would improve the County's ability to implement such progressive tools as purchase and/or transfer of development rights programs which rely heavily upon regulatory-based densities to determine land values.

Key Point: A comprehensive code revision must be undertaken in order for the Code to work more effectively with the district land use plans.

OTHER LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS

Several other growth management tools are introduced here for consideration. They are programs that have been used effectively in other communities but are not currently being utilized, or are underutilized, in La Plata County. This list is intended as a brief overview only. Thought should be given towards whether a thorough evaluation of these programs should be undertaken to determine whether they could prove effective in La Plata County.

Capital Expansion Fees

Colorado State Statutes authorize statutory counties such as La Plata to collect certain narrowly defined capital expansion fees such as fees-in-lieu of school and park land dedication, or road impact fees. They are a one-time charge assessed on new development that is intended to ensure that the new development will pay for at least a part of the cost of the capital facilities needed to serve it. Capital expansion fees must be specifically tied to the impacts of development on public facilities, and must be used to provide or improve facilities that benefit the development in question. In order to meet the legal requirements, a careful analysis of existing conditions and the public facility needs which are attributable to the new development must be undertaken. La Plata County uses capital expansion fees on a limited basis. School fees-in-lieu are collected, as are road impact fees associated with certain development.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)

A transfer of development rights program creates a mechanism by which a property owner can transfer a predetermined amount of development "right" from one parcel to another. Rather than developing a specific site, the development rights associated with that site are transferred to another site, where the development then occurs. This allows more intensive development on the second site then would have originally been allowed previous to the transfer. It also removes the right to develop the transferred rights on the original site. A variety of different approaches to TDR have been used effectively around the country to direct density, retain rural character, and protect unique natural features where desired.

Key Point: A Transfer of Development Rights study should be undertaken to determine the feasibility of such a program in La Plata County

Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs)

A purchase of a development rights program is similar to a transfer of development rights program in that it is premised on the idea that every piece of property has a specific number of development rights or allowed housing units which can be defined and quantified. However, instead of transferring the right to develop to a different parcel, the rights are purchased outright as a tool for eliminating the ability to develop all or part of the parcel. The PDR approach to preserving undeveloped land is a less technical approach than the TDR approach but it tends to be very

expensive due to the outright purchasing of rights rather than the transferring of them.

Key Point: Growth management programs used in other areas should be evaluated for consideration in La Plata County.

Summary of Goals, Key Points and Plan Recommendations

Goals

Goal 3.1: To accommodate a growing population through the fair and consistent administration of a land use system that provides clear direction for private and public land use.

Goal 3.2: To uphold the visions and goals established within each of the district land use plans.

Goal 3.3: To periodically reevaluate and refine the district land use plans based on their visions and goals.

Goal 3.4: To support Bayfield, Durango, and Ignacio in their efforts to expand commercial and residential development, and employment opportunities.

Goal 3.5: To encourage growth hubs in the County that would provide opportunities for higher-density commercial and residential development, and employment centers.

Goal 3.6: To support efforts to extend central services to growth hubs and other areas envisioned for higher densities in the district plans.

Goal 3.7: To support efforts to create a rural water system to serve areas consistent with the district plans.

Goal 3.8: To encourage the preservation of contiguous open lands in La Plata County

Key Points

The Key Points presented in this chapter are summarized below. Many, but not all, should be considered Action Items--specific actions that must be taken in order to implement the plan.

- ✓ The Land Use Element is intended to uphold the visions and goals of the district land use plans while guiding future growth in the County.
- ✓ The challenge is to adequately and cost-effectively meet new service demands while not disproportionately placing the cost associated with new development on existing residents.
- ✓ The qualities and character that make the County unique, and economically stable, must be maintained as new development is accommodated.
- ✓ Overlapping areas of influence near Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio should be clearly defined and conflicting issues and processes should be resolved and agreed upon via joint planning efforts and intergovernmental agreements.
- ✓ Coordination between service providers and the County should be established and/or strengthened to ensure that the County district land use plans are adhered to during the provision or expansion of central services.
- ✓ The growth hub concept is not intended to encourage the proliferation of unplanned and scattered high-density development in outlying parts of the County but to allow for strategically located growth areas.
- ✓ The strengthening of growth hubs in the County, including Bayfield and Ignacio, will help to lessen the reliance on the City of Durango as the primary source of employment opportunities, goods and services in the County.
- ✓ Project proponents should recognize the potential for additional on-site development as services become available and design their initial site plan accordingly.
- ✓ The underlying theme of each district plan is to maintain the existing character of the district while it grows.
- ✓ The County should work with the Fort Lewis Mesa and Southeast districts to establish district land use plans.
- ✓ The County should create a comprehensive cluster design guidebook.
- ✓ Significant minimum setbacks from the public roadway and adequate vegetation can go far in protecting rural character.
- ✓ A menu of flexible design options, buffering standards, and setbacks should be established that can be applied under varying circumstances to help protect rural character.
- ✓ The objective of the open space designation should help to determine the location of the houses on the parcel.
- ✓ It is clearly preferable to have common ownership of the open space, or a management

agreement to ensure that the open space objective is maintained.

- ✓ The platting of building envelopes on individual lots with the remaining lands designated as the open space has become an accepted, yet less effective, means of preserving open space.

- ✓ An analysis of existing non-residential land uses and plan designations should be undertaken to identify available lands or land deficiencies associated with such uses.

- ✓ As an alternative to creating new mixed-use areas, a similar effect can be achieved with less potential for conflict by carefully delineating the proposal area with "local commercial" and "residential" land use classifications.

- ✓ The mixed use classification should be refined by adding specific development and mitigation standards, and allowable uses, so to lessen impacts on surrounding residential land uses.

- ✓ RV Parks are probably most similar to lodging, campground or country tourist land use classifications and should be allowed in areas classified for such uses. RV parks should also be allowed in other commercial areas.

- ✓ Public facility uses may be compatible with most land uses provided that the site is adequately buffered from adjacent properties to mitigate impacts.

- ✓ Park and ride facilities may be compatible with most land uses provided that the site is adequately buffered and set back from adjacent properties and has good access to the arterial highway system.

- ✓ To ensure consistency in application of uses allowable in each land use classification, definitions should be refined to clarify the intent of each classification.

- ✓ The public benefit criteria process in each district plan should be refined to ensure consistent and objective application of the bonus criteria.

- ✓ The public benefit criteria process should be expanded to provide developers with further incentive to add amenities to a development, enhancing the overall quality of the project.

- ✓ The criteria by which plan amendments are considered should be more clearly defined.

- ✓ For the district land use plans to be effective tools for directing growth in the County, each plan should be re-evaluated on a periodic and consistent basis.

- ✓ La Plata County, having seven district plans and one zoning plan in place as of 2001, should establish an evaluation schedule of one plan per year on a rotating basis. This would allow for a comprehensive revision of each plan approximately every seven years.

- ✓ The La Plata Land Use Code, established as a performance-based system based upon the notion of compatibility and impact mitigation, rather than use designation, was never revised to appropriately reflect the changes established by the district plans.

- ✓ A comprehensive code revision must be undertaken in order for the Code to work more effectively with the district land use plans.

- ✓ A Transfer of Development Rights study should be undertaken to determine the feasibility of such a program in La Plata County

- ✓ Growth management programs used in other areas should be evaluated for consideration in La Plata County.

Plan Recommendations

Plan recommendations have been included throughout this chapter. They should be implemented through the prioritization and initiation of action items. The Action Items (AI) summarized below are drawn, in part, from the Key Points. They are incorporated into an Action Item Prioritization Table included in Chapter 12.

AI3.1: Define overlapping areas of influence near Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio; and establish consistency between plans and processes.

AI3.2: Coordinate with service providers to established and/or strengthened recognition and adherence to district plans during the provision or expansion of central services.

AI3.3: Establish criteria for developing and/or expanding growth hubs.

AI3.4: Work with the Fort Lewis Mesa and Southeast districts to establish district land use plans.

AI3.5: Create a menu of flexible design options, buffering criteria, and setbacks that can be applied under varying circumstances to help protect rural character. This could be undertaken as part of a comprehensive cluster design guide.

AI3.6: Analyze existing non-residential land uses and plan designations to identify available lands or land deficiencies associated with such uses.

AI3.7: Refine the mixed use land use classification by incorporating specific development and mitigation standards, and allowable uses, so to lessen impacts on surrounding residential land uses.

AI3.8: Clarify land use classification definitions to ensure consistency in application of uses allowable in each classification.

AI3.9: Refine the public benefit criteria process in each district plan to ensure consistent and

objective application of the bonus criteria.

AI3.10: Expand the public benefit criteria process to provide developers with further incentive to add amenities to a development, enhancing the overall quality of the project.

AI3.11: Reevaluate each district land use plan on a regular basis to ensure that each plan is effective at appropriately directing growth in the County.

AI3.12: Undertake a comprehensive revision of the Land Use Code.

AI3.13: Evaluate growth management programs used in other areas. In particular, undertake an analysis of transferable development rights for use in La Plata County.

AI3.14: Work with San Juan Basin Health Department to review ISDS regulations.

* * * * *

2 INFRASTRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

Infrastructure is the backbone of a strong economy. From roads and bridges, to sewer and internet connection, services must be provided to members of the community in varying capacities. For growing economies such as La Plata County, it is vital to consider and identify options for the future build-out of an area to best serve the community's needs. In order to make sound decisions for the continued development of infrastructure current and projected growth will be considered to arrive at viable solutions which meet those needs. Additionally, highlighting areas where existing services are already in place is paramount to a cost effective approach of ongoing facility maintenance.

Infrastructure may be broken into "sub-elements", of the developed landscape. For purposes of those directly relevant to the build-out of La Plata County, such sub-elements of this Element consist of Transportation, Water, Sewer, Utility and Telecommunications. Each sub-element is identified within this Element relative to its own unique impacts and needs (relative to La Plata County), while at the same time incorporating anticipated growth and development trends that will ultimately have an effect on the County, as a whole. Moreover, the goals, objectives, and policies as identified throughout each sub-element below establish mechanisms by which those needs can be addressed, and development can be guided. Additionally, these sub-elements may be refined the County formulates a more structured perspective regarding its goals for financially responsible growth.

From roads and bridges, to sewer and internet connection, services must be provided to members of the community in varying capacities.

BACKGROUND

Previously, the Comprehensive Plan only addressed ***Transportation*** infrastructure, and in August 1998 initiated a study to inform a long-range plan. The outcome of that study was to develop a coordinated strategy and Plan (2030 TRIP) for the management and improvement of the County's transportation system for the next 20 years and beyond. The Plan studied all public roads in the County and County Road network, while attempting to predict the need for future improvements and traffic management strategies based on roadway conditions, traffic volumes, and realistic growth projections.

Overall findings of the Plan indicated that many roadway improvements would be required in coming years to safely accommodate existing and future traffic on County roads and State highways.

Since the costs of associated improvements were particularly high, the Plan prioritized recommended improvements and identified potential funding sources to assist with financing recommended projects. Any updates to such a discrete Plan will be made part of this Comprehensive Plan for La Plata County and will be located within the Appendix.

2 INFRASTRUCTURE

Water is a sub-element of the Infrastructure Element that demands significant attention. In 2014, the Board of County Commissioners appointed a Water Advisory Committee (WAC) to directly address questions regarding water resources and its future use, as well as County perspective, regarding water in La Plata County. The Committee is scheduled to sunset in the summer of 2015, when they will make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. Based on the outcome of the Board's discussion, relative to the particular questions asked, the Water sub-element of this Element should capture the Board's ultimate considerations, concerns and determinations. Presently, general inventory and objectives regarding water are captured.

Water usage is also a statewide concern being addressed by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB). The CWCB is in the process of drafting Colorado's Water Plan in order to provide strategies, policies, and actions to address projected future water needs. This is being accomplished through collaboration with basin roundtables, local governments, water providers and other stakeholders. Nine basin roundtables were established by House Bill 05-1177. These roundtables represent each of the state's eight major river basins and the Denver metropolitan area. The basin roundtables bring more than 300 citizens into water discussions across the state and include representatives with agricultural, industrial, domestic water supply, environmental and recreational interests. A draft of the Plan was released in December 2014, with a final version scheduled to be released in December 2015. The intent of the plan is to outline how various interests, pertaining to several basins in the State, can attain locally driven, collaborative solutions regarding water.

Sewer/Solid Waste is a sub-element of the Infrastructure Element that directly addresses sanitary sewer and wastewater treatment, storage and disposal, and solid waste disposal. Not necessarily in the technical sense as regulation would, however, in a general sense relative to capacity, future build-out of La Plata County, and via intergovernmental cooperation to reach and maintain associated, stated goals and objectives.

The General ***Utility*** sub-element includes several remaining forms of infrastructure important to the development and build-out of the County. These include utilities such as electric power, phone, cable, fiber-optics, etc. There are many factors which come into play when contemplating the potential for system build-out of the general utilities. By first understanding what level of service (LOS) for these exists within the County, a stronger understanding of where the "path of least resistance" for further build-out within the County exists. This sub-element is drafted with direct correlation to the other sub-element goals and objectives.

Finally, the ***Telecommunications*** sub-element is a unique form of infrastructure, specifically dealing with wireless technology (hard wire infrastructure is captured under the "General Utility Sub-Element); and which directly affects economic and residential development of La Plata County, as well as the physical landscape. As such, it is addressed as its own sub-element of infrastructure within this Element. Wireless communication technology development is providing unprecedented opportunities for La Plata County residents and businesses. Increased access to remote information contributes towards a greater "quality of life" for residents and allows businesses more opportunity for increased efficiency. Adverse impacts to be considered regarding

the physical landscape include environmental and visual effects, as well as electromagnetic pollution.

Nonetheless, technology continues to refine this form of infrastructure so that our knowledge of its impacts and capable potential to serve La Plata County must be regularly re-visited. Moreover, since Federal-level regulations for this industry change frequently, the County must stay apprised of the changes and adopt to ensure the Land Use Code is not in conflict with Federal regulations.

INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS

TRANSPORTATION

Goal 2.1: Plan a transportation system to accommodate existing and future motorized and non-motorized travel/circulation within La Plata County.

Objective 2.1.A: To identify and maintain the existing system of the County roadway network by mapping and articulating regularly needed improvements/maintenance.

Policy 2.1.A1: Develop and maintain an inventory of all existing County and non-county roadways, as well as understand existing and future capacity needs.

Objective 2.1.B: To accommodate multi-modal forms of transportation county-wide by coordinating intergovernmental efforts.

Policy 2.1.B1: Regularly coordinate efforts with Federal, State and municipal governments, as well as special districts, in order to effectively implement various components of uniform traffic circulation design whenever possible.

Policy 2.1.B2: Recognize, participate, and coordinate with efforts to establish future plans of both the La Plata-Durango and Animas Airports.

WATER

Goal 2.2: Coordinate with appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies to address current and future water sources, demand, and conservation strategies.

Objective 2.2.A: To identify and promote the maintenance of existing potable and agricultural water distribution systems, and to identify locations for the development of future water distribution systems in a concurrent manner with associated needs and demands.

Policy 2.2.A1: Develop and maintain an inventory of all existing potable water distribution systems, as well as understand the existing and anticipated capacity of such facilities.

Policy 2.2.A2: Coordinate with State and local agencies to ensure proposed projects are consistent with minimum potable water system requirements and needs.

Policy 2.2.A3 : Encourage and support the development of water infrastructure which is necessary for continued agricultural operations

Objective 2.2.B: To provide incentives toward water conservation and appropriate water re-use when opportunities for such initiatives exist.

Policy 2.2.B1: Provide incentives for distinguished water conservation efforts, such as the use of grey-water within development projects, when opportunities for this type of water use exist.

SEWER / SOLID WASTE

Goal 2.3: Encourage and promote safe and efficient sanitary sewer and solid waste disposal systems which meet existing and projected demands, promotes and accommodates orderly growth and development, and protects the public health of the community.

Objective 2.3.A: To identify and promote the maintenance of existing sanitary sewer facilities, and encourage the responsible use of individual waste systems where such systems are the only alternative to sanitary sewer expansion and connection.

Policy 2.3.A1: Develop an inventory of all existing sanitary sewer facilities, as well as understand the existing and anticipated capacity of such facilities.

Policy 2.3.A2: Coordinate with State and other local agencies, such as Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment and San Juan Basin Health Department, to ensure proposed projects are consistent with minimum sewer and waste system requirements.

Policy 2.3.A3: Collaborate with State and other local agencies, such as Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment and San Juan Basin Health Department to consider appropriate locations for accommodating waste disposal and/or treatment.

Objective 2.3.B: To identify and promote the maintenance of existing solid waste facilities; and encourage the expansion and appropriate design of multi-functional refuse locations to adequately serve the County's demands/needs.

Policy 2.3.B1: Develop an inventory of all existing solid waste facilities, as well as understand the existing and anticipated capacity of such facilities.

Policy 2.3.B2: Coordinate with State and other local agencies, such as Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment and San Juan Basin Health Department, to ensure proposed projects are consistent with minimum solid waste system requirements.

Policy 2.3.B3: Collaborate with State and other local agencies, such as Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment and San Juan Basin Health Department to consider appropriate locations for accommodating solid waste disposal and/or treatment (refuse) as well as encourage recycled solid waste accommodations.

UTILITY

Goal 2.4: Encourage and promote safe, efficient and effective transmission and distribution of general utility throughout the County based on existing and projected demand, and to provide the opportunity for introduction of a utility service to the County where such opportunities can accommodate safe and secure utility delivery.

Objective 2.4.A: To identify and promote the maintenance needs of existing utility facilities, and encourage safe and efficient delivery of utility services based on concurrent demands and known future needs for such services.

Policy 2.4.A1: Develop an inventory of all existing major utility facilities, as well as understand the existing and anticipated capacity of such facilities.

Policy 2.4.A2: Regularly coordinate with Federal, State and other local agencies, as well as utilities serving the County, in order to ensure proposed projects are consistent with minimum requirements for design and safe utility service delivery.

Policy 2.4.A3: Provide incentives to accommodate utility services for segments of the population lacking appropriate utility service, in bulk and based on "bulk needs" data, in order to ensure secure and quality utility resources for such population.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Goal 2.5: Encourage and promote safe, efficient and effective transmission and distribution of telecommunication services throughout the County based on existing and projected demand; and provide opportunity for introduction of such service to the County where opportunities can accommodate sufficient level of service delivery.

Objective 2.5.A: To identify and promote the maintenance of existing telecommunication facilities, and encourage a safe and effective level of service delivery based on existing demands and known future needs for such services.

Policy 2.5.A1: Develop an inventory of all existing telecommunication facilities, and understand the existing and anticipated level of service needed from such facilities.

Policy 2.5.A2: Regularly coordinate with Federal and State agencies and, the telecommunications industry, to ensure proposed projects are consistent with the minimum requirements for design and safe utility service delivery.

Policy 2.5.A3: Provide incentives to accommodate telecommunications service for segments of the population lacking appropriate levels of service. The incentives would be based on "propagation" and service area data, to provide for quality telecommunication service throughout the County.

Policy 2.5.A4: Explore funding and grant opportunities to invest in the County's telecommunication infrastructure.

Existing Infrastructure Maps Located in Appendix:
1. Road Map with public & Tribal Lands
2. Community Water Systems Map
3. Drainage Sub-Basins
4. Sanitation Facilities
5. Utility Gas Service and Vacant Parcels
6. Vacant Parcels over 1 mile from Utility Gas Service
7. Telecommunications Facilities

3 HOUSING

Overview

The Housing Element of the La Plata County Comprehensive Plan focuses on housing affordability issues that La Plata County government can play a role in. It documents recent housing trends, overviews several elements of affordability, looks at past and ongoing County efforts to assist with the creation of affordable housing, establishes goals, and presents plan recommendations that may help to ensure that a full range of housing is accessible to all County residents.

It should be recognized that the preferred location of housing in the unincorporated County is a function of the district land use plans and is not addressed here. And although important to the provision of affordable housing, the comprehensive plan does not attempt to overview or evaluate the assortment of public and private non- profit housing organizations working in La Plata County.

Background

The County's housing market experienced significant change during the 1990s. The growth rate exceeded three percent annually for most of the decade. Spurred by the intense interest of those moving here, land and home prices increased dramatically. At the same time, most wages remained relatively low, a function of the tourist-based economy which relies heavily on traditionally low-paying service jobs. This situation compromised the ability of many long-time residents and young adults to obtain reasonably affordable housing.

Key Point: "Affordable" housing is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a household that pays no more than 30 percent of its gross income for rent or mortgage, and utilities.

A look at median home prices in the County illustrates the significance of the affordability issue. Table 5-1 shows the median priced houses and percentage of families unable able to qualify to purchase a median-priced house in 1995 and 1998. As shown, in 1998, 54 percent of families in Durango had incomes that did not qualify, while 51 percent of families in unincorporated parts of the County did not qualify. A comparison with 1995 indicates housing has become slightly more attainable over that three-year period in unincorporated areas yet relatively unchanged in Durango.

Key Point: Over half of the families living in unincorporated parts of the County in 1998 were unable to afford the purchase of a median-priced home.

Table 3-1

Percentage of Population Unable to Qualify For Median Priced Home Purchase

	Median Priced House		Qualifying Income		Percent of Families with Less than Qualifying Income	
	1995	1998	1995	1998	1995	1998
Bayfield	115,740	127,000	33,250	36,336	54%	39%
Durango	145,500	180,000	41,457	50,628	53%	54%

Ignacio	70,000	109,000	20,836	31,073	56%	33%
Unincorporated	150,000	167,175	46,621	47,293	57%	51%

Source: Pathways To Healthier Communities, Operation Healthy Communities, 1997 & 2000

Renters were also faced with similar difficulties in finding affordable units. Nearly 60 percent of jobs in the County in 1998 were in the lower-paying service and retail/wholesale sectors. Average annual wages in these sectors consistently fall well below the threshold for affordability to rent an average two-bedroom or three-bedroom unit.

One result of the high housing costs in the Durango area has been the tendency for people to move to the outlying, less-developed areas of the County where land tends to cost less. Moving to the outskirts of the County has allowed many lower-income families to buy or lease a parcel, and occupy it with a mobile or modular home served by an individual well and septic system. Outwardly, this would appear to provide for reasonable, lower-cost solution. But there are secondary costs, some non-financial, associated with this approach. Ownership and maintenance of one or more automobiles is one cost. As is the installation and maintenance of onsite sewer and water systems. Both add thousands to annual cost of living. Non-financial costs to consider include increased travel times and, in most cases, slower service response times.

The cost of land is often the least significant factor in housing affordability. There are a number of other variables affecting the cost of housing. Interest rates and the cost of construction--both labor and materials, are two aspects of the affordability equation that are difficult to control. Only a modest rise in long term interest rates can add thousands of dollars per year to the cost of housing. This often can mean the difference between mortgage loan qualification and denial. Construction costs also tend to fluctuate based on changes in the market, sometimes resulting in significant cost increases in a relatively short period of time. Installation of infrastructure is another factor. Infrastructure costs typically exceed land costs. If all other factors were equal, higher-density development probably provides the best method for minimizing housing costs.

Key Point: By developing at higher-densities, less land is needed per unit, and the cost of roads and other infrastructure are typically less.

A major requirement for high-density development is centralized infrastructure such as water and sewer. A number of areas in the unincorporated County are already served by, or can likely be served by, central water and/or central sewer in the future.

Developing at higher densities in areas with centralized infrastructure provides a number of benefits including:

1) More economical provision of utilities, police, fire, road maintenance, and other services
2) Easier access to schools, businesses and, in some cases, public transit
3) The protection of agricultural uses resulting from the reduction of low-density development spreading into the countryside

Housing Goals

3 HOUSING

Goal 5.1: To support efforts to provide housing that is decent, safe, and affordable for all County residents.

Goal 5.2: To Support Efforts to create a county-wide housing authority.

Past and Ongoing Efforts

There is a wide array of approaches for addressing affordable housing. The primarily approaches fall into two categories: incentive-based and regulatory. Incentive-based strategies provide benefits such as density bonuses and tax benefits, making affordable housing more appealing to developers. Regulatory solutions generally require some sort of recognition or commitment to affordable housing as a condition of development approval. Other initiatives may include housing developments built by the local government, nonprofits or housing authorities, or the subsidization of rents or mortgage down payments via an assortment of different public and/or private non-profit programs.

La Plata County has historically used the incentive-based approaches to affordable housing. By offering density bonuses, development fees waivers or low-interest loans, the County has made efforts in the past to support individual affordable housing projects.

Key Point: The County has made efforts in the past to support individual affordable housing projects.

Fee Waivers

In the past, the County has agreed to reimburse the cost of land use permit and application fees as well as building permit fees for housing units considered affordable. While not a significant cost savings, the fee waiver/reimbursement process has provided some relief for the development of affordable units in the County.

Key Point: While not a significant cost savings, the fee waiver/reimbursement process has provided some relief for the development of affordable units in the County.

1996 Housing Needs Analysis

A 1996 City of Durango/La Plata County affordable housing report analyzed local affordability issues and concluded, among other things, that the magnitude and range of affordable housing needs are such that no single entity is likely to be able to address them all. The report recommended, among other things, that there needed to be stronger public/private partnerships. The report stated, "Developing workable solutions to the County's affordable housing problems will require imaginative solutions and cooperation among local and state governments, and private developers."

Key Point: The magnitude and range of affordable housing needs are such that no single entity is likely to be able to address them all.

Housing Revolving Loan Fund

The County has a segregated housing fund that can only be used for affordable housing-related

projects. The fund was capitalized in 1992 with La Plata County's share of the $237,000 balance in the trustee's reserve account that resulted from the refunding of approximately $7.5 million in the six county Southwestern Colorado Single Family Mortgage Revenue Bonds issue from 1979. A July 2001 restructuring of the outstanding 1992 bonds elicited another $93,000 that was deposited to the Fund. The Fund has been used to provide a $125,000 loan in 1996 for 12 income-restricted apartments in a 48 apartment complex in Durango. Also, a $62,000 loan was made to an assisted living facility which reserves six beds for low to moderate income occupants. As the loans are repaid, the returned funds recapitalize the loan fund for use on other Board of County Commissioner approved projects. As of August 2001, the loan fund had a balance of approximately $325,000.00. Future uses of the fund could include the payment of capital improvement fees, permit fees, or other fees that are typically paid to the County as part of the development review and approval process.

Key Point: Future uses of the revolving loan fund could include the payment of capital improvement fees, permit fees, or other fees that are typically paid to the County as part of the development review and approval process.

2001 Housing Needs Analysis

The City of Durango, La Plata County and the Towns of Bayfield and Ignacio entered into a partnership in 2001 to establish a system to annually collect and update county-wide housing data. The analysis includes annual sale prices, availability, and other pertinent information. The baseline for the analysis the 1996 affordable housing study prepared for the City of Durango.

Key Point: The County's housing problems will require imaginative solutions and cooperation among local and state governments, and private developers.

Summary of Goals, Key Points and Plan Recommendations

Goals

Goal 5.1: To support efforts that help to provide housing that is decent, safe, and affordable for all County residents.

Goal 5.2: To Support Efforts to create a county-wide housing authority.

Key Points

The Key Points presented in this chapter are summarized below.

- ✓ "Affordable" housing is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a household that pays no more than 30 percent of its gross income for rent or mortgage, and utilities.
- ✓ Over half of the families living in unincorporated parts of the County in 1998 were unable to afford the purchase of a median-priced home.
- ✓ By developing at higher-densities, less land is needed per unit, and the cost of roads and

other infrastructure is less.

- ✓ The magnitude and range of affordable housing needs are such that no single entity is likely to be able to address them all.
- ✓ Future uses of the revolving loan fund could include the payment of capital improvement fees, permit fees, or other fees that are typically paid to the County as part of the development review and approval process.
- ✓ While not a significant cost savings, the fee waiver/reimbursement process has provided some relief for the development of affordable units in the County.
- ✓ The County has made efforts in the past to support individual affordable housing projects.
- ✓ The County's housing problems will require imaginative solutions and cooperation among local and state governments, and private developers.

Plan Recommendations

Plan recommendations should be implemented through the prioritization and initiation of action items. The Action Items (AI) identified below are incorporated into an Action Item Prioritization

Table included in Chapter 12: Implementation.

AI5.1: Evaluate each district plan to determine whether an affordable housing density bonus and/or other incentives can be incorporated into the public benefit criteria process.

AI5.2: Evaluate whether the expansion of central services in the County has created new opportunities for higher-density residential neighborhoods.

AI5.3: Participate in a County-wide housing authority. Discussions relative to the establishment and funding of a housing authority should continue.

AI5.4: Form an expert panel to review county subdivision and building regulations to determine whether there are changes that could be made that would lower the cost of development while not undermining the safety, integrity or aesthetics of new development.

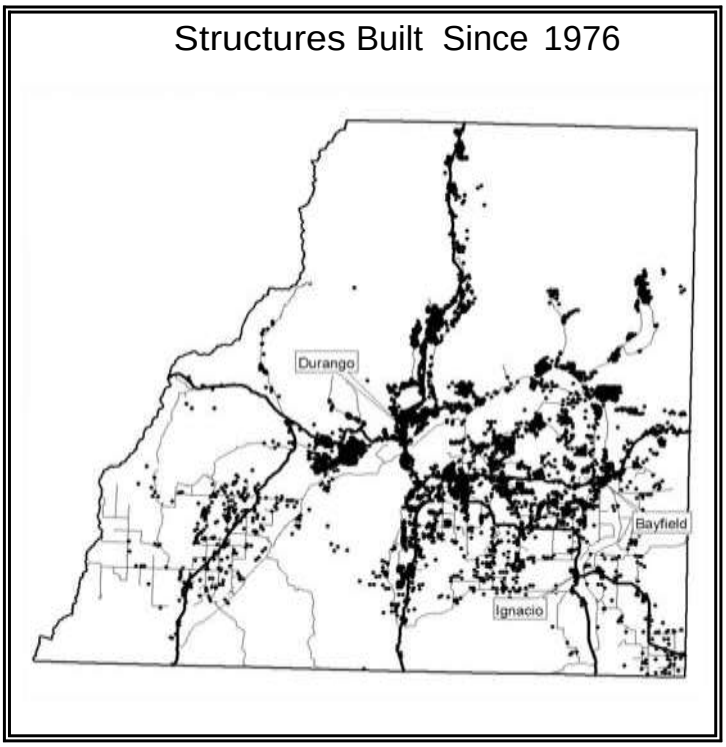
AI5.5: Find funding sources to recapitalize the County's affordable housing loan fund and other affordable housing efforts.

AI5.6: Encourage the private sector to take a stronger role in the provision of affordable housing.

AI5.7: Implement affordable housing requirements within the land use code reflective of those envisioned within the district land use plan.

* * * * *

parts of the County. Many residents rely on hauled water for a consistent source of potable water.



The extensive use of onsite individual sewage disposal systems (ISDS) also plays a role in the ground water quality issue. Nearly 11,500 single-family homes were built in the County between 1976 and 2000 (See map to the right). Most rely on ISDS systems and individual groundwater wells. While no major instances of well contamination have been reported as a direct result of the ISDS as of 2001, it is likely that contamination occurs but goes unnoticed and, as a result, unreported. Recent improvement to ISDS regulations, particularly setback requirements, have lessened the potential for contamination from ISDS systems. A reduction in irrigable lands with a commensurate increase in the number of individual wells also has implications for the continued availability of ground water.

Annual research conducted by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) since 1995 indicates that in many rapidly developing areas, such as the Florida Mesa, ground water recharge is highly dependent on infiltration of irrigation water. As areas develop and previously irrigated agricultural lands are taken out of production, recharge is in many cases insufficient to maintain the existing water table

Key Point: The continued proliferation of on-site ground water wells and individual sewage disposal systems may have a negative effect on both water quality and quantity.

The Colorado Department of Health and Environment supports the development of a rural water system in La Plata County as a means of addressing the growing concern over the lack of a consistent source of potable water for County residents. Since the late 1990s, efforts have been underway to establish a rural water system. Construction of a system had not begun as of 2001. Development of a rural water system in La Plata County would provide County residents with a safe and dependable source of water for domestic use. And due to the largely onsite disposal and treatment of wastewater in the proposed service delivery area, there is the potential that the system water may help to replenish aquifers previously strained by the large number of on-site wells.

Key Point: The development of a rural water system would provide many

County residents with a consistent and safe source of domestic water.

Surface Water

A number of factors affect surface water quality. Effective storm water management techniques and appropriate erosion control measures are probably two of the most critical. Maintaining the quality of surface water is critical to the overall environmental health of many of the natural features of La Plata County including rivers corridors, other riparian areas, floodplain and wetlands. Without consideration of these issues, unique natural features and wildlife habitat can be irreparably damaged or destroyed.

With the significant amount of open, permeable surface area found in the County, a County-wide storm water management plan is not likely to be a significant concern. Storm water management is, however, an important issue relative to individual projects and their impact on downstream features. As more permeable surface areas are built upon throughout the County, there is less surface area to rely on for storm water absorption. As a result, drainage ditches and natural water courses tend to bear the burden of the additional runoff with downstream natural and man-made features being affected. Typical storm water management techniques may include such things as curb, gutter and piped storm sewer; detention ponds; and building to site ratios that require a certain percentage of permeable land as part of the development site.

Key Point: To minimize the impact on the downstream features, both manmade and natural, adequate storm water management techniques must be incorporated in all development projects.

Erosion control measures can play an instrumental role in the protection of surface water quality. As with other storm water management techniques, adequate erosion control measures can prevent excessive silt and other debris from running off a development site during rain falls or snow melts. The use of silt fencing or berming during site preparation as well as adequate landscaping immediately after construction can help to minimize the potential for erosion problems.

Key Point: Erosion control measures such as adequate landscaping can play an instrumental role in the protection of surface water quality.

Key Point: Working to minimize non-point source pollution resulting from existing development and agricultural operations is also an important tool for limiting surface water contamination.

Identifying non-point source pollution can sometimes prove difficult, however, as it is often hard to identify the source of non-point pollutants.

Air Quality

Good air quality in La Plata County is essential to the tourism economy. The Durango area is an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Attainment Area for all air pollution criteria including ozone, carbon monoxide and PM_{10}s. La Plata County, on occasion, experiences localized air quality problems and decreased visibility common to many western slope communities. The majority of these occasional hazy days arise from factors unrelated to activities in the County.

Despite La Plata County's generally clean air and Durango's attainment status, air quality is a concern of local residents who recognize that past and likely future growth could lead to air quality problems. Measures are being taken to address countywide air quality issues. In 1998, the San Juan Basin Health Department initiated a community-based air quality improvement initiative for the Durango area called the La Plata County Air Quality Advisory Council. The Council's focus is to monitor and evaluate air quality issues important to the community. In 2001, the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad put a pollution "scrubber" on its locomotive maintenance facility in downtown Durango.

Key Point: While air quality in the County is generally good, residents recognize that growth impacts could result in a decrease in air quality.

There are a number of other activities and issues that affect air quality. One in particular is road dust. The County has established a program to use Magnesium Chloride, a dust inhibitor and bonding agent, on gravel County roads that experience high-volume traffic. It has proven to be an effective agent for holding the roadbed in place and limiting dust.

Other Activities with the Potential to Affect Air Quality Include:

- Open burning
- Sand and gravel mining operations
- Vehicular emissions
- Wood burning
- Asphalt batch plants

Key Point: Partnerships should be established and/or strengthened which help maintain air quality in La Plata County.

Open Space/Visual Resources

The distinct character and feel of La Plata County is, in many ways, created by the beauty and openness of the landscape. The County encompasses 1,692 square miles. From the 14,000-foot peaks and rugged wilderness in the north, to the lush river bottoms and pinon juniper woodlands in the heart of the County, to the dry farmlands and desert arroyos in the south, the County's landscape defines the County itself. The many "faces" of the County are reflected in its scenery and views. Residents, business owners and visitors place high value on maintaining this scenic character that contributes to community pride and well-being. The County's economy is, in many ways, dependent on the continued vibrancy and integrity of the landscape.

Open Space

Open Space Serve a Variety of Uses Including:

- Agriculture
- Wildlife habitat
- Visual buffering around and between developments and communities
- Protection of view corridors along County roads and state highways
- Preservation of Floodplain, wetlands and other unique natural areas
- Passive recreation uses such as hiking, horseback and bicycle riding
- Buffering of noise, dust, and lighting glare between adjacent land uses

Approximately forty-one percent of La Plata County land is in public ownership (BLM, Forest Service, Division of Wildlife, and State Lands Commission). Still another 18 % (approximately) is tribally owned. However, the public lands are largely concentrated in the northern third of the County, generally removed from areas where the most development is occurring, such as the Animas Valley and the Florida Mesa. It is in these growing areas where concerns about the retention of open land and community character are the greatest.

Preserving open space and the rural character of the County is not just a nostalgic wish to avoid change. There is a direct relationship to the health of the County's economy and the quality of life of its residents. For example, two major sectors of the economy – tourism (which accounts for over 50 percent of the County's economy) and the influx of retirees – are strongly linked to the County's scenic and rural qualities. The County's continuing ability to attract and retain visitors, residents, and businesses will depend on maintaining the values and characteristics that brought them here in the first place.

Key Point: The primary purpose of protecting open space should be to preserve unique ecological, biological, cultural and aesthetic features of the community.

Existing and Potential Open Space Protection Programs

Apart from the County's land use system which encourages the preservation of open space as part of the development process, there are a number of other land protection techniques that can provide tax benefits and economic incentives to landowners including:

- Dedications of conservation easements
- Donations for tax and/or estate planning purposes
- selling or transferring development rights
- Exchange of land with public agencies

Several land trusts exist in the County, each having been relatively successful. These land trusts generally work directly with landowners helping to establish easements and monitor the land for compliance with the easements.

Land Trusts Active in La Plata County Include:

- The La Plata Open Space Conservancy
- The Animas Conservancy
- The Trust for Public Lands
- Colorado Cattlemen's Association

In existence since the early 1990s, the La Plata Open Space Conservancy has protected more than 40 properties through acquisition or easements, protecting more than 5,000 acres. Just established in 1999, the Animas Conservancy has begun acquiring easements and is dedicated to protecting properties primarily in the Animas River drainage. The Trust for Public Lands, a national organization, has also helped facilitate several large land acquisitions in the County.

In 2001, a proposal was brought before the La Plata County Board of County Commissions to establish an advisory committee to oversee the creation of a County-wide open space acquisition program. Additionally, a proposal to fund open space acquisitions via proceeds of a use tax was brought before the electorate in November 2001. The ballot measure failed by a 3 to 1 margin, thus eliminating it as a near-term funding source.

Key Point: The creation of a County Open Space Advisory Committee would establish a foundation for the development of a comprehensive open space program for La Plata County.

Visual Resources

As stated earlier, the scenic beauty of the County plays a significant role in shaping the local economy and quality of life for local residents. However, as the County grows, the potential exists for development to degrade and diminish many of the view corridors in the County.

Key Point: Poorly designed development has the potential to degrade many of the view corridors in the County.

Of particular importance are the State and U.S. highway corridors passing through the County. The land use code establishes these corridors as "view corridors" that should be treated uniquely by preserving their aesthetic values. The San Juan Skyway, which includes Hwy 550 North and 160 West has already received significant attention relative to protecting visual resources. Conversely, Hwy 160 East between Grandview and Gem Village has not received nearly as much attention. It should, however, be of particular importance and should be considered a priority corridor for visual resource protection. It serves as the only major east-west arterial through the County and is also located in an area that has significant commercial development potential. New development along this corridor should include significant setbacks and/or vegetative cover to ensure the integrity of the view corridor.

Key Point: Due to development pressures in the area, the Highway 160 corridor between Grandview and Gem Village will be particularly susceptible to a

loss of visual resources.

Activities That May Affect Visual Resources Include:

- Excessive grading, cutting and filling associated with new roads and site preparation
- Placement of structures in prominent or sensitive locations, such as open meadows, river bottoms, ridge tops and open hillsides
- Obtrusive residential structures that obscure views of prominent natural features, such as meadows, lakes, streams, hilltops, ridgelines and mountains
- Unscreened outside storage areas
- Excessive removal of vegetation and/or lack of re-vegetation along pipeline and utility rights-of-ways and new roads
- Excessive on-site signage and lighting
- Billboards

Existing Visual Resource Protections

Protection of visual resources is addressed in a variety of existing studies and plans. Following is a brief summary of these protection measures.

District Land Use Plans: The District plans contain a variety of incentives to protect visual resources. All seven district plans make use of the public benefit criteria process which provides density incentives for residential developments that are compatible with the goals of each plan. Much of the focus of the public benefit criteria process is oriented toward development that is visually unobtrusive to the surrounding environment.

La Plata Land Use Code: The Code contains several references to the protection of visual resources and development within the Corridor District. Protections, however, are primarily among the Code's encouraged standards and lack specificity. Most notable are the omission and inadequacy of grading and excavation standards; comprehensive signage standards; and enforced landscaping, buffering and revegetation standards.

San Juan Skyway Open Space Strategic Plan: Prepared in January 1998, the plan provides a strategic framework for stimulating open land protection of key corridor segments that have been identified as having important scenic, natural, recreational, wildlife, and/or historic landscape values. The San Juan Skyway encompasses a 232-mile loop connecting Durango, Silverton, Ouray, Telluride, Dolores, Cortez and Mancos.

City of Durango Parks, Open Space, and Trails Plan (POST): The POST Plan was prepared by the City of Durango in 2000. The Open Space Element of the plan identifies a number of key parcels that should be preserved for the unique characteristics. A number of these parcels are located outside Durango city limits in the unincorporated County.

Key Point: Proposed developments should recognize and accommodate visual resources as an important aspect of La Plata County's character.

Wildlife Habitat

La Plata County has always been home to a diversity of wildlife. Elk herds are commonly seen grazing the Animas Valley during the winter months; Black Bears and mountain lions are often reported in residential areas adjacent to forest lands during the spring and fall. Throughout the year, small game and other wildlife can be seen in any number of places throughout the County. As development of the Animas Valley and along arterial roads continues throughout the County, there will continue to be increasing conflicts between humans and wildlife.

The County district land use plans all recognize the importance of wildlife habitat as a unique aspect of each district, an aspect that the crafters of those plans hoped to retain.

Key Point: By recognizing and preserving critical wildlife habitats in the County, conflicts between humans and wildlife can be reduced, thus maintaining this unique aspect of La Plata County's character.

Wetlands/Riparian Areas

Wetlands

Wetlands is the collective term for marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar areas found in flat vegetated areas, in depressions in the landscape, and between dry land and water along streams, rivers and lakes. They are areas which are saturated or inundated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support life forms associated with saturated soils. Wetlands are a unique, yet somewhat limited, natural feature in the ecosystem of La Plata County. They serve a number of important functions including erosion and flood control, and as habitat for a variety of aquatic plants and animals.

The County Land use code requires new development to establish a setback of no less than50 feet from known wetlands. A determination of whether wetlands are on a project site are typically made by qualified engineers or the Army Corp of Engineers. The Corp regulates permitting for disturbance or modification of wetlands under their jurisdiction. The Army Corp has a "no net loss" policy which requires replacement, or mitigation, of wetlands heavily impacted by development. Unfortunately, wetland mitigation has shown to be minimally effective.

Key Point: Wetlands are a unique, yet somewhat limited, natural feature in the ecosystem of La Plata County that should be preserved.

Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are typically linear strips along either side of rivers, streams, creeks, and other drainages. They are characterized by saturated soils that support both wetland vegetation as well as other natural features such as cottonwoods, willows, river birches, alders, sedges, and rushes. Riparian areas also typically provide critical habitat for many species of wildlife. They are also attractive for housing and recreational activities. Additionally, the high productivity of these areas also makes them attractive for grazing.

While the County Land use code requires new development to establish a setback of no less than50 feet from bank high-water line of rivers, streams, and other water courses, this does not, in all cases, provide the protection necessary to limit disturbance of the riparian area.

The Southwest Colorado Riparian Partnership (SWCORP), a local consortium of concerned residents, landowners, land management agencies, and others has formed to establish and maintain a network of interested and diverse parties working toward the common goal of maintaining healthy riparian habitat for multipurpose uses. They are, in essence, developing a long-term plan for conservation of riparian areas throughout the County.

Key Point: Because of the importance of riparian areas to the biological diversity and character of La Plata County, SWCORP's efforts to establish conservation practices for riparian areas should be supported.

Other Environmental Resource Considerations

A number of other resource issues which have not received significant attention in the past are mentioned here for future discussion. Things such as energy efficiency standards in new developments; water conservation techniques; alternative energy uses; recycling, and light pollution are all issues which have the potential to impact the County. Given the recent energy problems experienced in California, as well as ongoing concerns over water usage here in La Plata County, a number of these issues, if properly addressed, could play a very positive role in shaping the County as it grows.

Each of these issues have been, or are currently being, addressed via a number of private and public/private initiatives in the County. It is not the intention of this iteration of the County comprehensive plan to recommend any specific steps relative to them. None-the-less, the County should stay informed and support local efforts that lead to appropriate use of these resources.

Key Point: The County should stay informed and support local efforts that lead to appropriate use of resources.

Summary of Goals, Key Points, and Plan Recommendations

Goal

Goal 6.1: To Maintain or Improve the Quality of La Plata County's Environmental Resources including Water, Air, Visual Resources, open lands, forests, Wildlife Habitat, Riparian Areas, and Wetlands.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Key Points

The Key Points presented in this chapter include:

- The continued proliferation of on-site ground water wells and individual sewage disposal systems may have a negative effect on both water quality and quantity.
- The development of a rural water system will provide many County residents with a consistent and safe source of domestic water.
- To minimize the impact on the downstream features, both manmade and natural, adequate storm water management techniques must be incorporated in all development projects.
- Erosion control measures such as adequate landscaping can play an instrumental role in the protection of surface water quality.
- Working to minimize non-point source pollution resulting from existing development and agricultural operations is also an important tool for limiting surface water contamination.
- While air quality in the County is generally good, residents recognize that growth impacts could result in a decrease in air quality.
- Partnerships should be established and/or strengthened which help maintain air quality in La Plata County.
- The primary purpose of protecting open lands should be to preserve unique ecological, biological and aesthetic features of the community.
- The creation of a County Open Space Advisory Committee would establish a foundation for the development of a comprehensive open space program for La Plata County.
- Poorly designed development has the potential to degrade many of the view corridors in the County.
- Due to development pressures in the area, the Highway 160 corridor between Grandview and Gem Village will be particularly susceptible to a loss of visual resources.
- Proposed developments should recognize and accommodate visual resources as an important aspect of La Plata County's character.
- By recognizing and preserving critical wildlife habitats in the County, conflicts between humans and wildlife can be reduced, thus maintaining this unique aspect of La Plata County's character.
- Wetlands are a unique, yet somewhat limited, natural feature in the ecosystem of La Plata County that should be preserved.
- Because of the importance of riparian areas to the biological diversity and character of La Plata

County, SWCORP's efforts should be supported.

- The County should stay informed and support local efforts that lead to appropriate use of resources.

Plan Recommendations

Plan recommendations have been included throughout this chapter. They should be implemented through the prioritization and initiation action items. The Action Items (AI) summarized below are incorporated into an Action Item Prioritization Table included in Chapter 12.

Water

AI6.1: Evaluate and refine USGS water monitoring program to improve baseline data collection.

AI6.2: Continue study of impacts gas industry activities have on ground water wells

AI6.3: Encourage San Juan Basin Health Department to comprehensively review ISDS systems to determine impacts on ground water.

AI6.4: Publicly support development of rural water systems

Air

AI6.5: Continue support for, and participation in, the La Plata County Air Quality Advisory Council

AI6.6: Establish standards for residential wood burning in new developments as part of the development review process.

AI6.7: Support the implementation of the County Transportation Plan and its efforts to reduce road dust and promote alternative modes of transportation

Open Space

AI6.8: Provide technical assistance to organizations and/or entities attempting to establish a County open space acquisition program.

AI6.9: Develop a County voluntary open space plan as an element of the County comprehensive plan

AI6.10: Fully evaluate merits of a purchase and transfer of development rights programs

Visual Resources

AI6.11: Revise and refine County visual corridor map.

AI6.12: Create design guidelines for development proposed in visual corridors

AI6.13: Define Highway 160 between Grandview and Gem Village as a high-priority visual protection corridor.

AI6.14: Evaluate and consider for adoption road development standards that emphasize the minimization of grading, cutting and filling; the avoidance of steep slopes and visually prominent hillsides; and revegetation after construction.

AI6.15: Complete and expand upon the Animas Valley ridge line study, establishing guidelines to minimize visual impacts of hill side development.

Wildlife Habitat

AI6.16: Initiate discussions with the Division of Wildlife to create a revised comprehensive wildlife inventory and develop a "best development practices" guide to integrate new development with wildlife considerations.

AI6.17: Work with DOW to create education format on wildlife and their habitat.

AI6.18: Create habitat inventory with DOW for planning and educational purposes.

Wetlands/Riparian Areas

AI6.19: Support the Southwestern Colorado Riparian Partnership in their efforts to find solutions to maintaining healthy wetland and riparian habitats.

* * * * *

5 AGRICULTURE

OVERVIEW

Historically, agriculture has been the predominant land use in the rural parts of La Plata County, it has defined the area's character. Agriculture plays such an important role in the county and the state that the State Legislature has adopted a "Right to Farm" statute which protects agricultural operations from nuisance claims (C.R.S. § 35-3.5-102).

Over the past several decades, however, declining agriculture commodity prices coupled with increasing land values (predominantly resulting from an in-migration of new residents) has made selling agricultural land for residential development a profitable enterprise. This leads toward a transition to more dense rural residential uses from, otherwise, historic agricultural uses. While this phenomenon is not unique to La Plata County, it has been recognized by many area residents who believe that the preservation of agriculture in La Plata County is essential to maintaining the working landscape of the County.

The Agriculture Element of the Plan describes La Plata County's role to support and strengthen agricultural uses and ensure they remain a prominent part of the community. It is intended to outline current and proposed land development processes, as well as other tools that agricultural land producers can use to increase agriculturally based income from their land while at the same time continuing agricultural operations.

The intent of this plan element is to support and strengthen agricultural uses within the County.

BACKGROUND

In 2010, there were approximately 271,413 acres of land taxed agriculturally in the County. Despite this large amount of land, agriculture is a small component of the County's economy. As of 2010, agricultural products and services accounted for 2.7% of jobs in the County. Table 7-1, and Chart 7-1 both depict agricultural receipts and net realized income for the County from 2005-2010. This data shows net income from agriculture as a loss for the identified period. Additionally, Chart 7-2 depicts a breakout of County Assessed property types, and Chart 7-3 further identifies those various types agriculturally assessed properties.

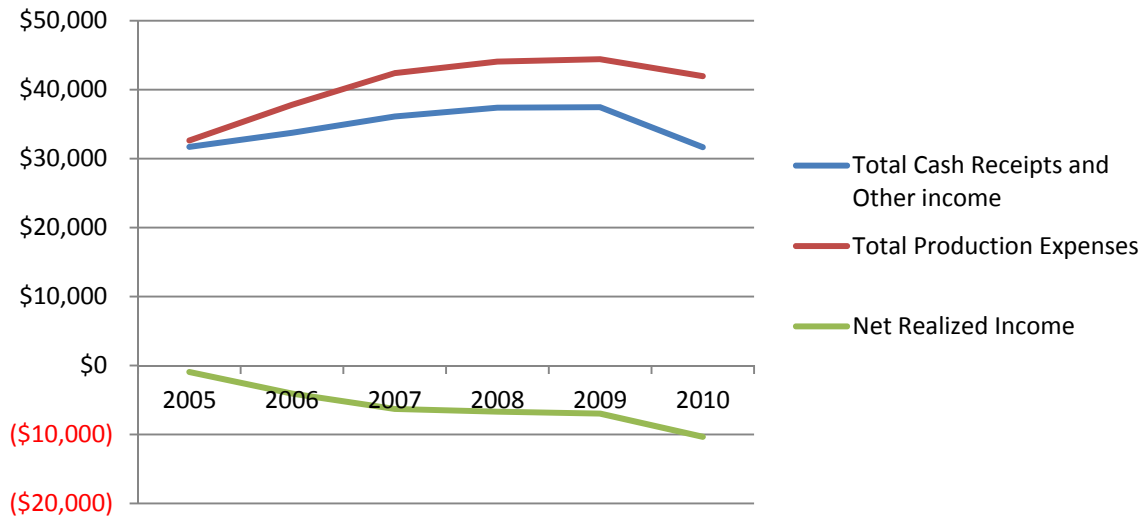
Table 5-1
La Plata County Agricultural Income: 2005 - 2010

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total Cash Receipts and Other	$31,717	$33,747	$36,113	$37,388	$37,462	$31,654
Total Production Expenses	$32,648	$37,801	$42,394	$44,068	$44,419	$41,974
Net Realized Income	($931)	$4,054)	($6,281)	$6,680)	($6,957)	($10,320)

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

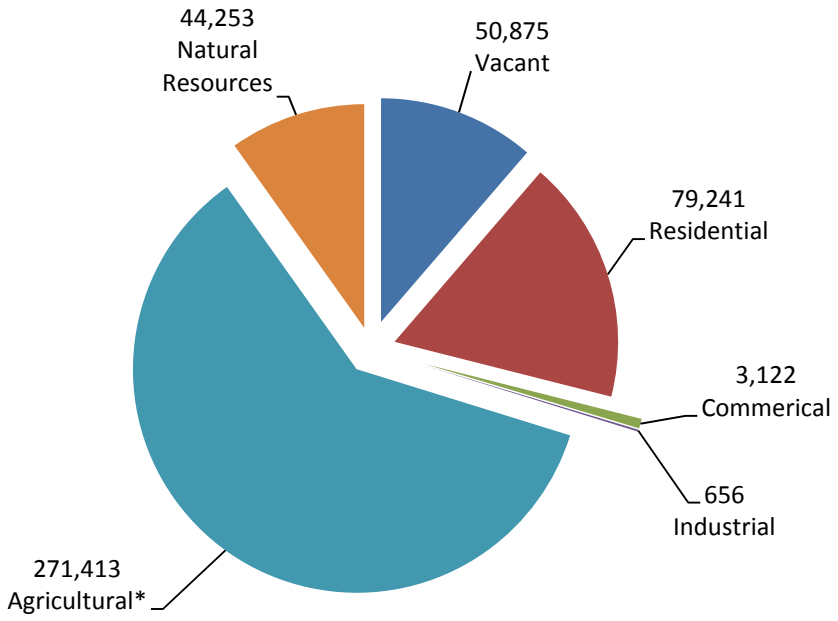
5 AGRICULTURE

Chart 5-1
La Plata County Agricultural Income: 2005 - 2010



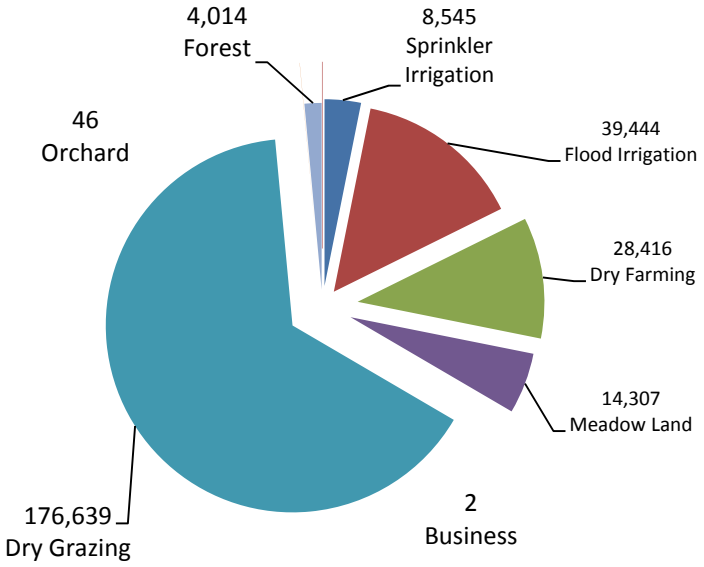
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Chart 5-2
La Plata County Property Assessment by Acreage: 2010



**See Chart 5-3 for detailed breakout*
Source: La Plata County Assessor's Office

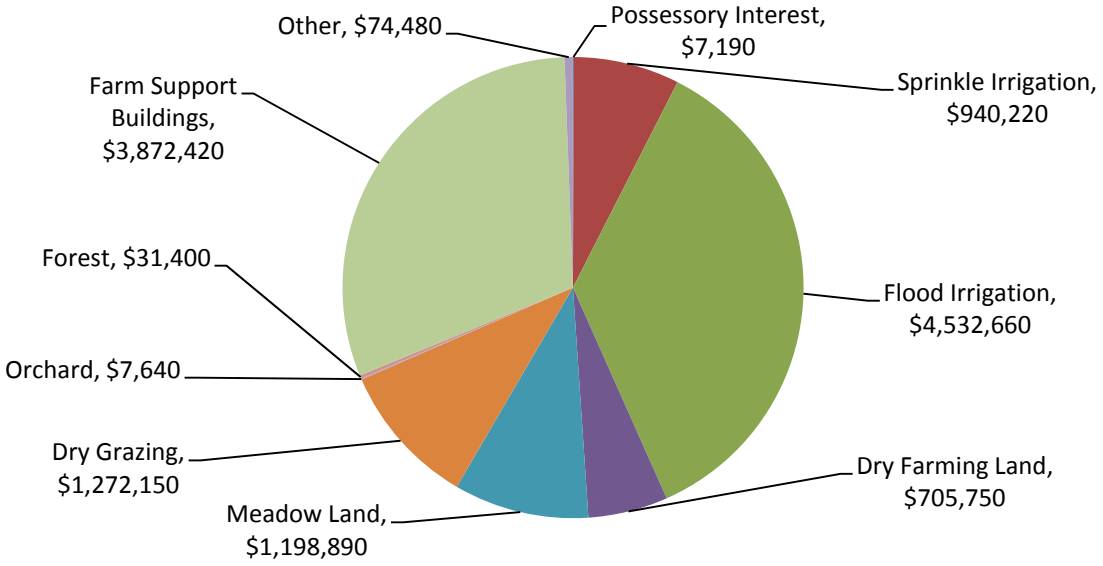
Chart 5-3
Agricultural Property Assessment by Acreage: 2010



Source: La Plata County Assessor's Office

Coupled with high real estate values, the data from Table 5-1 creates an attractive option for farmers and ranchers to sell all or part of their land leading to the higher density rural residential population growth discussed earlier. The simplest and fastest means of selling land is in tracts of 35 acres or larger, which are not subject to County development review. This approach overall results in a transition of the rural landscape in La Plata County.

Chart 5-4
Agricultural Assessed Property by Value: 2010



Source: La Plata County Assessor's Office

There are several realized consequences over time, stemming from the division of agricultural land into residential lots. They include:

- A reduction in available land for farming and ranching;
- Reduction in groundwater recharge as a result of reduced agricultural irrigation;
- The proliferation of noxious weeds, as a result of infeasibility to maintain the larger property for residential uses;
- Diminished sense of agricultural landscape;
- Creation of parcels too small to accommodate larger scale farming and ranching;
- Fragmentation of wildlife habitat; and
- The reallocation of water rights previously used for only agricultural purposes.

It is clear that strategies, in addition to a streamlined subdivision process, will be required if the County commits to preserving agriculture as an integral part of the community.

Recognized as an issue of concern for quite some time, the loss of agricultural lands to development came to the forefront in the early to mid-1990s as the economy strengthened. In Colorado, a continued influx of new residents has put significant development pressure on local communities and agricultural producers. Additionally, public roads have historically been, and are still, used for moving livestock between summer and winter ranges. These perceived conflicts continue to lead to myriad of initiatives at the State and local level to find ways to help preserve agriculture and the working landscape.

In 1995, La Plata County established the *Agricultural Protection Task Force*, made up of members within the farming and ranching community. The purpose of the Task Force was to determine what actions the County could take to help protect agriculture activities and property while also helping to protect open lands. Several changes have already been initiated, including the refinement of the eligibility requirements for home-based businesses and the revision of eligibility requirements for Minor Exempt Subdivisions (3 or fewer lots).

A number of La Plata County initiatives have occurred since 2001, which include the modification of subdivision regulations and the adoption of district land use plans that have designated areas for higher density development in areas served by central services while maintaining lower density in outlying more agricultural areas.

In 2009, a group of agricultural producers were convened to provide guidance and suggestions on steps the County could take to support agricultural producers. The committee identified a number of recommendations that could be implemented to make agricultural operations more diverse and productive. Based on broad suggestions that came from the group:

- Encourage agricultural operations to establish or expand, regardless of parcel size;
- Develop a subdivision option that allows for more lots (smaller acreage) than the current MES process, in exchange for expanded agricultural land retention;
- Establish and expand “uses by right” that are compatible and supportive of agricultural operations. Examples could include: onsite sales of agricultural products (farm stands), home office, vet clinic, outfitting operations, wholesale greenhouses and nurseries; and

- Strengthen local protections for agricultural operators.

AGRICULTURE GOALS

Goal 5.1: Encourage the continuation of agriculture as an integral part of La Plata County; recognizing the rights of operation, freedom of choice as to the methods of cultivation, crops/livestock, rotation of crops and other functions within agricultural management.

Objective 5.1.A: To identify and recognize, sound agricultural practices, which promote the long-term viability and sustainability of agriculture.

Policy 5.1.A1: The County should promote the diversification of agricultural operations and explore ways to promote businesses directly related to the working farms and ranches.

Policy 5.1.A2: The County should consider applicable resource protection programs and regulations in order to support various agricultural operations.

Policy 5.1.A3: The County should create and maintain/regularly update an inventory of irrigable or other important agricultural lands identified for continued farming/ranching.

Policy 5.1.A4: The County should establish a land use process that provides farmers and ranchers with additional alternatives to 35-acre subdivisions.

Policy 5.1.A5: The County should work with project applicants to promote site planning that maximizes the protection of agricultural lands consistent with County regulations and the landowner's development goals.

Policy 5.1.A6: County residents should recognize that the generation of noise, smoke, odor and dust is a natural consequence of normal agricultural practices provided that agriculturalists exercise reasonable measures to minimize such effects.

Policy 5.1.A7: The County should encourage and support the development of water infrastructure which is necessary for continued agricultural operations.

Objective 5.1.B: To establish voluntary and/or incentive/compensation-based programs for supporting and strengthening agriculture in La Plata County.

Policy 5.1.B1: The County should support open space acquisition programs that would assist with agricultural land preservation.

Policy 5.1.B2: The County should support the agricultural community's own efforts to improve the economic viability of farming/ranching in the County.

Policy 5.1.B3: The County should consider segregating annual agricultural property tax revenues for exclusive use in agricultural preservation strategies, such as funding costs associated with managing conservation easements or expanding the existing noxious weed abatement program.

Policy 5.1.B4: The County should explore the possibility of strengthening the local protections for agricultural operations that would protect smaller or newly established operations from nuisance claims.

Policy 5.1.B5: The County should coordinate with interest groups, such as land trusts, to assist in land owner education regarding the physical and financial benefits of agricultural land preservation, including the provision of information regarding potential tax benefits to agricultural land owners.

Policy 5.1.B6: The County should consider a subdivision option that allows for more lots (smaller acreage) than the current MES process, in exchange for expanded agricultural land retention.

6 AIRPORT

Overview

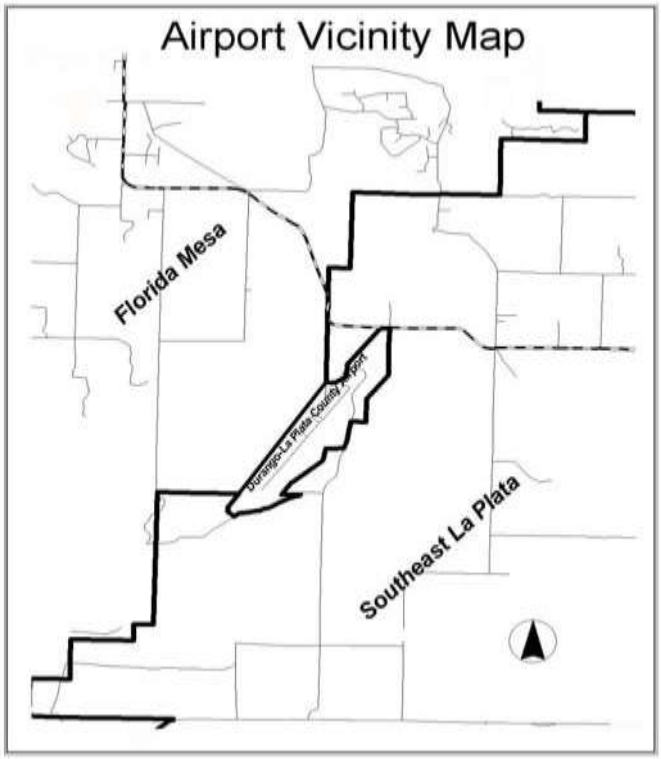
The Durango/La Plata County Airport, located approximately 14 miles southeast of the City of Durango, serves as a regional air facility with scheduled air service to Albuquerque, Denver, Phoenix and, during ski season, to Dallas/Fort Worth. The airport also supports private aviation facilities, air freight operations and an interagency wildfire air tanker base. The airport is jointly owned and operated by La Plata County and the City of Durango. Businesses, local residents and tourists all depend upon the airport as a lifeline to major metropolitan areas and airports around the country. As a result, the airport plays a significant role in the County's economy.

Given the amount of growth and development occurring southeast of Durango on the Florida Mesa, the Airport Area Element of the comprehensive plan is quite important. It is intended to establish preferred land use types and impact mitigation techniques for properties that currently are, or may be in the future, impacted by airport operations. The airport area, as shown below, includes land located within both the Florida Mesa and Southeast La Plata Planning District.

Background

Land uses around an airport are typically of concern if they pose a safety hazard to residents or are a threat to the continued operation of the facility. In the case of Durango-La Plata Airport, this concern is partially ameliorated by the fact the facility is located on a mesa top, with lands to the east and west located well-below the airport facilities.

Existing land uses in the vicinity are generally mixed, with a significant amount of scattered low-density residential development surrounding the airport to the south and east, and some clustered business development immediately to the north.



Key Point: Land uses around an airport are typically of concern if they pose a safety hazard to residents or are a threat to the continued operation of the facility.

The airport straddles the boundary of the Florida Mesa and Southeast La Plata Planning Districts. As of 2001, only the Florida Mesa District had an adopted land use plan identifying preferred land uses in the District. This plan identified lands directly northwest of the airport as appropriate for agriculture and low-density residential. The balance of lands around the airport is within the Southeast Planning District, and is not designated for any specific use. Development in the Southeast District is based solely on County land use code requirements which are largely based on mitigating impacts and proving compatibility with existing surrounding uses.

The fact that lands surrounding the airport are contained in two separate planning districts and that the Southeast District does not have an adopted land use plan is cause for concern because there is little guidance for decision-makers to determine what may be appropriate in the area.

Key Point: Lands around the airport that are located within the Southeast Planning District are not designated for any particular use, thus providing little guidance for decision-makers to determine what may be appropriate in the area.

Key Point: Due to the unique importance of the airport to the economic health and livability of La Plata County, it is critical that land uses surrounding the airport do not unduly interfere with airport operations.

Airport Area Goals

Goal 9.1: To Protect the Safety of Persons and Property Surrounding the Airport.

Goal 9.2: To Protect the Present and Future Operations of the Airport.

Airport Master Plan

Development of the airport itself is guided by the Durango – La Plata County Airport Master Plan. An update of this plan is required on a regular basis by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). An update of the plan is underway in 2001. The master plan is used to determine long term budgets for airport construction and development. All airport facilities including runway, terminal, parking, air cargo and general aviation development are analyzed. The strongest focus of the plan is on airport needs for the next five to seven years. However, given growth trends in the County around the airport, airport planners have been instructed to view the 2001 plan as a final build out plan. At the request of La Plata County, the plan will include an analysis of issues for lands located outside the airport property that may potentially be impacted by existing or future airport activities.

Summary of Goals, Key Points and Plan Recommendations

6 AIRPORT

Goals

Goal 9.1: To protect the safety of persons and property surrounding the airport

Goal 9.2: To protect the present and future operations of the airport.

Key Points

The Key Points presented in this chapter are summarized below.

T Land uses around an airport are typically of concern if they pose a safety hazard to residents or are a threat to the continued operation of the facility.

T Lands around the airport that are located within the Southeast Planning District are not designated for any particular use, thus providing little guidance for decision-makers to determine what may be appropriate in the area.

T Due to the unique importance of the airport to the economic health and livability of La Plata County it is critical that land uses surrounding the airport do not unduly interfere with airport operations.

Plan Recommendations

Plan recommendations should be implemented through the prioritization and initiation of action items. The Action Items (AI) summarized below are incorporated into an Action Item Prioritization Table included in Chapter 12.

AI9.1: Continue to participate in airport commission's update of airport master plan.

AI9.2: Establish an airport "area of influence" around the airport, developing a land use plan for that area that incorporates the needs of the airport facility as well as the concerns of area residents and property owners.

AI9.3: In accordance with Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS) 24-65-102(1) adopt "1041 Powers" to regulate land uses around the Durango-La Plata Airport as an area of State interest.

AI9.4: Identify and consider adoption of land use code requirements for "navigation" easements.

AI9.5: Identify lands surrounding the airport that Airport Commission expects to need for future expansions

AI9.6: Identify and consider establishment of requirements for special construction techniques to be used on projects within the airport area of influence.

* * * * *

7 PUBLIC SAFETY

Overview and Background

The Public Safety Element of the comprehensive plan is intended to provide an overview of several public safety issues affecting residents of La Plata County. The provision of timely and adequate law enforcement, and fire and emergency medical services are paramount as the County continues to grow. So are thorough emergency preparedness planning, search and rescue services, and a number of other hazard mitigation issues such as wildfire and floodplain management.

Public Safety Goal

Goal 8.1: To ensure that, as the County grows, emergency preparedness planning and the provision of emergency services continue to meet the growing demands of residents and visitors.

Law Enforcement

The La Plata County Sheriff's Office is the primary law enforcement agency for the unincorporated County. Other agencies that provide law enforcement include: the Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio Police Departments; Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Police; Colorado Bureau of Investigation; Colorado Division of Wildlife; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Immigration and Naturalization Service; and United States Forest Service.

The Sheriff's Office is also responsible for operating the jail and the juvenile detention facility. Demand for law enforcement services has grown significantly in recent years. Between 1997 and 2000 the number of incidents investigated by the Sheriff's Department has increased by 25 percent from 17,737 incidents investigated to 22,100 (estimated). In order to meet service demands, the Sheriff added a number of additional deputy positions in the detentions division and the public safety division in 2000.

Key Point: Between 1997 and 2000, the number of incidents investigated by the Sheriff's Department has increased by 25 percent

The County's 88-bed jail opened in 1987 was intended to meet the County's needs until 2010. Increases in crime and tougher sentencing laws have led to significant overcrowding at the jail. The average daily jail population increased 83 percent between 1997 and 2000, surging from an average of 63 inmates per day in 1997 to 115 inmates in 2000. While planning is underway to meet the demands of this increasing population, a request of residents to finance a new jail was defeated in a November 2000 ballot initiative.

Key Point: Between 1997 and 2000, the average daily jail population increased by nearly 83 percent.

Fire and Emergency Medical Service

7 PUBLIC SAFETY

Fire protection in the County is provided by the Animas, Upper Pine, Hermosa, Los Pinos, and Fort Lewis Mesa volunteer fire districts and the city of Durango's full time paid fire department. The United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management fight fires on public lands in the County. Demand for fire protection services increases as the County grows. The Animas Fire District, the County's largest, had 78 calls in 1978, 800 calls in 1999, and an estimated 1000 calls in 2000.

Key Point: The Animas Fire District, the County's largest, had 78 calls in 1978 and an estimated 1000 calls in 2000.

Meeting increased demand is contingent upon adequate funding and the availability of volunteers. The ability to do this varies among the County's fire districts. In 1995, Animas Fire District received voter approval of a bond issue and property tax increase, allowing them to construct several new stations, purchase new equipment, and hire several firefighters to man their main station during daylight hours when fewer volunteers are available. Other fire districts in the County have been less successful at passing property tax increases. In the mid 1990's the Upper Pine and the Los Pinos Fire Districts lost ballot initiatives.

Key Point: Meeting the increased demand for emergency services is contingent upon adequate funding and the availability of volunteers.

With the exception of the Animas Fire, most of the districts are finding that it is becoming harder to attract volunteer fire fighters. The Hermosa Cliffs Fire District recruits volunteers county-wide because it cannot attract enough volunteers from within its own district.

In 2001, the Animas, Hermosa Cliffs and Los Pinos Fire Districts, and the City of Durango entered into a joint service agreement which establishes a single operating entity for the four districts, in essence, consolidating the four districts into one– The Durango Fire and Rescue Authority. As part of this agreement, Mercy medical's ambulance service also becomes part of the authority. This consolidation provides a number benefits for County residents by reducing service redundancies and territorial discrepancies, while also reducing response times and increasing efficiency.

Key Point: Fire District consolidation has provided a number benefits for County residents by reducing service redundancies and territorial discrepancies, while also reducing response times and increasing efficiency.

Even with the consolidation, the adequate provision of services is very much a function of development location and design. And while fire districts routinely provide comment on project design as they move through the County's development review process, they typically do not play a major role in determining the location of new development.

Key Point: Continued cooperation between government agencies and fire districts is critical to ensuring the provision of high-quality emergency services.

As presented in Chapter 4: Land Use, over 11,000 residential structures have been placed throughout the County since 1978. This scattering of home sites results in: 1) an overall increase

in the number and time of responses; and 2) the need for additional facilities located further out in the County. Other issues such as proper road and driveway design and maintenance; as well as adequate road naming and address signing are important considerations for ensuring good access and minimum response times. The availability of an adequate water source is also an important consideration.

Key Point: La Plata County Government, having a certain degree of control over the location and design of developments, has the ability to regulate development as a means of ensuring the continuation of adequate services.

Another factor in the regulation of development is the fire code. The County's fire districts have endorsed the adoption of the 1997 Uniform Fire Code which would give them broad authority over building and subdivision design standards and other fire hazard mitigation measures. It is likely that they will request the Board of County Commissioner's endorsement of its adoption in 2001.

Emergency Preparedness Planning

The County operates the Office of Emergency Management which oversees emergency planning, emergency services coordination and search and rescue operations. A part time director is the office's only paid staff person. It is anticipated that the Office will likely have to hire at least one full time staff person in coming years in order to meet growing demands for emergency services.

Key Point: It is anticipated that the Office of Emergency Management will likely need at least one additional full time staff person in the coming years in order to meet the growing demands for emergency services.

Search and Rescue

The County Sheriff's Office and the County Office of Emergency Management coordinate search and rescue operations. The County's search and rescue workers are a trained volunteer force. Consistent with the demand for other emergency services, search and rescue incidents continue to grow concurrently with increases in the County's population and tourism. In recent years, the difficulty of many search and rescue operations has increased due to the growing popularity of high intensity outdoor sports such as climbing, kayaking and mountain biking. This has created a need for greater training and more complex rescue apparatus in order to reach victims in remote and rugged locations.

Key Point: The popularity of high intensity outdoor sports such as climbing, kayaking and mountain biking has created a need for greater training and more complex rescue apparatus in order to reach victims in remote and rugged locations.

Wildfire Hazard Mitigation

In recent years, the risk of wildfires has increased throughout the County due to significant development in forested areas along with the buildup of tree densities and underbrush in most

forests. During dry summer months, particularly in drought years, wildfires have been known to cause considerable property damage. Fortunately for La Plata County, it has been spared from the catastrophic wildfires that have impacted other communities in recent years.

While some fires can be allowed to burn naturally in order to maintain or restore the health of forest lands, out of control wildfires need to be prevented through cooperative, community and land management planning.

Key Point: Out of control wildfires need to be prevented through cooperative, community and land management planning.

In 2001, a wildfire risk assessment was conducted in La Plata County to identify specific areas in the County susceptible to a significant level of wildfire risk. The assessment indicated a large number of residential subdivisions with a high degree of wildfire risk. The outcome of the assessment was to provide information to fire districts, land management agencies, property owners and local governments so that they could take the actions necessary to reduce and prevent out of control wildfires.

Key Point: The 2001 wildfire risk assessment provides La Plata County with invaluable information that can be used during the development review process to ensure wildfire risk in developing areas can be minimized

Flood Plain Hazard Mitigation

La Plata County regulates development in flood plains via standards established in the National Flood Insurance Program. The program establishes development standards to be used on projects located within flood plain areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Some areas of the County, such as the Florida and Pine River drainages, do not have FEMA flood plain designations, and as such, applying specific development standards to projects near these waterways is difficult.

Key Point: Some areas of the County, such as the Florida and Pine River drainages, do not have FEMA flood plain maps, and as such, applying specific development standards to projects near these waterways is difficult.

Summary of Goal, Key Points and Plan Recommendations

Goal

Goal 8.1: To ensure that, as the County grows, emergency preparedness planning and the provision of emergency services continue to meet the growing demands of residents and visitors.

Key Points

The Key Points presented in this chapter include:

- ✓ Between 1997 and 2000, the number of incidents investigated by the Sheriff's Department has increased by 25 percent.
- ✓ Between 1997 and 2000, the average daily jail population increased by nearly 83 percent.
- ✓ The Animas Fire District, the County's largest, had 78 calls in 1978 and an estimated 1000 calls in 2000.
- ✓ Meeting the increased demand for emergency services is contingent upon adequate funding and the availability of volunteers.
- ✓ Fire district consolidation has provided a number benefits for County residents by reducing service redundancies and territorial discrepancies, while also reducing response times and increasing efficiency.
- ✓ Continued cooperation between government agencies and fire districts is critical to ensuring the provision of high-quality emergency services
- ✓ La Plata County Government, having a certain degree of control over the location and design of developments, has the ability to regulate development as a means of ensuring the continuation of adequate emergency services.
- ✓ It is anticipated that the Office of Emergency Management will likely need additional staffing in the coming years in order to meet the growing demands for emergency services.
- ✓ The popularity of high intensity outdoor sports such as climbing, kayaking and mountain biking has created a need for greater training and more complex rescue apparatus in order to reach victims in remote and rugged locations.
- ✓ Out of control wildfires need to be prevented through cooperative, community and land management planning.
- ✓ The 2001 wildfire risk assessment provides La Plata County with invaluable information that can be used during the development review process to ensure wildfire risk in developing areas can be minimized.
- ✓ Some areas of the County, such as the Florida and Pine River drainages, do not have FEMA flood plain delineations, and as such, applying specific development criteria to projects near these waterways is difficult.

Plan Recommendations

Plan recommendations are included as Action Items (AI). They should be implemented through their prioritization and initiation. The Action Items summarized below are incorporated into an Action Item Prioritization Table included in Chapter 12.

AI8.1: Continue active role in the funding and supporting law enforcement and emergency service agencies.

AI8.2: Continue to work cooperatively with special districts and volunteer groups to assist them in pursuing their missions.

AI8.3: Continue to coordinate with public safety and emergency service providers to ensure adequacy of development standards and review process.

AI8.4: Determine whether wildfire hazard mitigation standards should become further integrated into the development review process.

AI8.5: Request completion of FEMA flood plain mapping throughout County.

* * * * *

8 EXTRACTIVE RESOURCES & RENEWABLE ENERGY

OVERVIEW

Resource extraction is the removal of natural resources from their place of discovery. Extractive resources are considered non-renewable resources. The primary extractive resource in La Plata County is natural gas, along with some oil. Sand, gravel, coal, gold, and silver are also mined in the County. Extractive natural resources play a major role in the County, both in terms of fiscal impacts as well as impacts upon the physical environment and local residents. The State Legislature has adopted Title 34 Mineral Resources to acknowledge the importance of commercial mineral deposits for the State's economy (C.R.S. § 34-1-301 et seq.). As a result of La Plata County's expanding rural population (See *Growth Trends*, Element 2 of this Plan), increasing conflicts have occurred between the private rural population and extractive industries. The challenge is to find a balance between accommodating extractive resource development with an increasing population and to develop ways for mitigating potential conflicts between extractive resource development activities and other land uses.

There is a significant regulatory network in place for extractive resources in the County which involves multiple agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. Each agency involved with the various extractive resources industry has their prescribed roles. Therefore, local coordination with the various agencies is a primary interest of the County. It is important for La Plata County to be aware of the activities under its jurisdiction and to further coordinate with other regulatory agencies as well as local residents to ensure areas of concern are addressed. The State of Colorado provides legislation for local regulation that could be used to address various subjects of this Element, such as hard mineral extraction and renewable solar power generation on a large scale. That legislation is termed "*1041 Powers*", which the County does not currently utilize, however may wish to pursue in the future.

Renewable energy is an emerging part of the County's energy portfolio. Renewable energy is energy generated from natural processes that are continuously replenished rather than from fossil fuels. An increase in renewable energy production has the benefits of reducing the community's dependency on fossil fuels, reducing the need to bring in electricity from outside the area, as well as the associated costs; and providing a more efficient usage of the commodity. One important goals of supporting and promoting local projects is the positive economic impact to a variety of local businesses, companies and contractors. There is considerable support in the County for additional local renewable energy projects. Although there are many positive aspects of developing renewable energy resources, each of the potential sources of renewable energy has its own drawbacks. The technology associated with many renewable energy projects is fairly new and the impacts from these endeavors may not be fully realized. Although there are several regulatory agencies involved with the development of renewable energy, the regulatory framework for the industries involved has not yet been entirely established.

8 EXTRACTIVE RESOURCES & RENEWABLE ENERGY

BACKGROUND

OIL AND GAS

The southern portion of La Plata County lies within the northern extent of the San Juan Basin, a geologic structural basin. The San Juan Basin was the fourth largest gas basin in the United States as of 2013 (U.S. Energy Information Administration). Table 10-1 shows the number of oil and gas wells and related facilities in the County. There are currently 3,288 active wells in La Plata County, with 2,019 located on private lands. The location of these wells is shown on Table 10-1.

Table 8-1
La Plata County Active Oil and Gas Wells and Facilities

	Total	No. on Private Surface
Active oil and gas wells*	3,288	2,019
Injection wells	39	22
Compressor stations	7	6
Treatment facilities	4	3

*Includes wells with a status of active, drilling, producing, shut in, temporarily abandoned, and waiting upon completion.
Source: Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, 2015

Exploration and development in the San Juan Basin is largely found in the Ignacio-Blanco field. This field was discovered in the 1940s, although oil and gas deposits were first discovered in La Plata County in the 1890s. The Ignacio Blanco field comprises the portion of the San Juan Basin within La Plata County. Production in the field is from the Dakota Sandstone, Fruitland Formation, Pictured Cliffs Sandstone, and the Mesaverde Group. Until the 1970s, most of the gas produced in the basin came from conventional wells completed in the Dakota Sandstone, Mesaverde Group, and Pictured Cliffs Sandstone, which includes the Fruitland Sand. These formations typically yield wet gas with small quantities of produced water and associated hydrocarbon liquids. Production from conventional wells in the Ignacio-Blanco field peaked in the 1990s, although there is still potential for limited development.

Coalbed methane (CBM) is currently the primary focus of natural gas development in the County. Production from CBM reservoirs in the San Juan Basin, primarily the coals of the Fruitland Formation, began in the late 1970s and accelerated in the 1980s up to the present time. The San Juan Basin has become the most productive coalbed methane basin in North America (EPA 2004). In 2012, La Plata County was the nation's tenth largest natural gas producing county (DOLA 2015). CBM development in La Plata County is expected to continue in the future.

CBM wells are considered non-conventional wells since they must be dewatered by pumping water from the well. The decrease in water pressure allows methane to desorb from coal in the formation and flow as a gas up the well to the surface. Therefore, gas production increases over time instead of decreasing. The volume of water produced from most CBM wells is high compared to conventional natural gas wells. As a by-product of oil and gas development,

produced water must be disposed. In La Plata County, produced water is typically treated and reused in drilling operations or injected back into an unproductive formation through an injection well.

The most common formations targeted for injection in La Plata County are the Mesaverde Formation, at an average depth of 5,000 feet below the ground surface, and the Entrada Formation, at an average depth of approximately 7,500 feet below the ground surface. The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) issues Class II Underground Injection Control permits on non-tribal lands, while the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates injection wells on tribal lands. There are currently 39 wells in La Plata County permitted under the Underground Injection Control program, although not all are actively injecting (Table 8-1). Twenty-two of these wells are located on private surface. The location of the injection wells in the County is shown on Map 8-1.

Another component of oil and gas development is the associated infrastructure needed to transport and process the oil and gas once it has been pumped from the ground. A network of pipelines leads from individual well pads to larger gathering lines that feed into processing facilities. Transmission pipelines transport processed natural gas and hydrocarbon liquids over long distances to customers and distribution facilities. Compressor stations are needed along natural gas pipelines depending on the distance and terrain to help move the gas through the pipeline. Pipelines for the transport of produced water to injection facilities are also common throughout the County.

The number of oil and gas related facilities permitted through the COGCC, and within La Plata County, is shown in Table 8-1.

Impacts

In 2002, a La Plata County Impact Report was prepared in response to proposed infill development within the County. The report assessed the potential impacts that result from and appropriate mitigation measures for CBM development. The County has already implemented a majority of the recommendations made in the report through changes to the La Plata County Land Use Code (LPLUC) Chapter 90 regulations.

The establishment of oil and gas facilities can have various impacts to the surrounding environment and local residents. The most noticeable impact is visual disturbances from the clearing of vegetation and the introduction of equipment on the natural landscape (as with any development activity). Noise during construction and operation, is also similar to other types of development activity, and considered a noticeable impact. Other land use impacts could potentially include the loss of otherwise usable land for other forms of active development or uses, and the potential convergence of residential and oil and gas development over time. Development in rural areas of the County might create an impact on sensitive wildlife habitat. Oil and gas development contributes to traffic volumes on public and private roads in the County. Heavy truck traffic associated with oil and gas activities increases the costs of road maintenance for the County. Construction and traffic associated with oil and gas also contributes to an increased potential for

noxious weeds to become established along roadways.

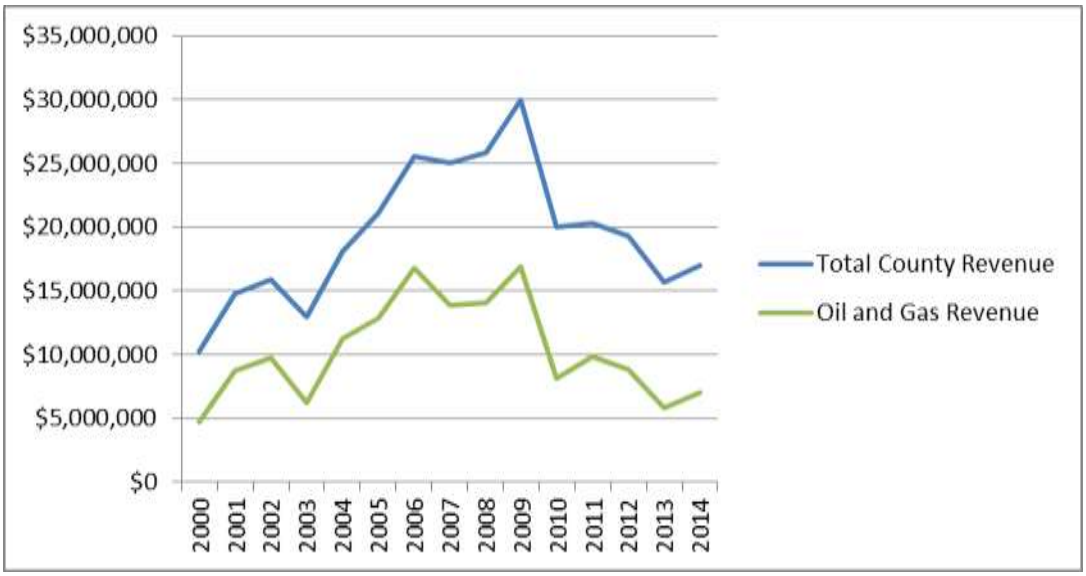
Oil & gas development also must find a balance to other impacts such as health and safety within the community. These efforts usually surround ensuring quality of proximate surface water quality from surface disturbances, and potential erosion or sedimentation from surface run-off. Concerns regarding impacts to the water quality in water wells have been expressed by the general public. In 2000, the COGCC began requiring routine domestic water well sampling for operators drilling new CBM wells in the San Juan Basin. A data analysis report in 2011 identified 71 water wells out of 2,038 containing thermogenic (originating from the earth rather than biologic sources) methane, although a trend was not identified that directly related the occurrence of methane to oil and gas development activities (*San Juan Basin Water Quality Analysis Project, AMEC Geomatrix Inc.*). Methane, nitrous oxides, and volatile organic compound emissions from wells and associated equipment have the potential to impact air quality. Preventative measures for public safety risks are typically focused toward the presence of large equipment on well pads during construction or operation, as well as, the potential for explosions due to the presence of volatile gases.

The presence of the oil and gas industry has facilitated rural development in many areas of the County through the construction and maintenance of roads, as well as, the extension of power lines to electrify well equipment. The La Plata Energy Council (LPEC) and local operators maintain approximately 165 miles of private roads within the County through cost sharing.

Oil and gas development represents a significant source of revenue for the County and community. In fact almost half of the County's tax base (Table 8-1) is derived from the oil and gas industry. The County also receives revenue from state severance taxes and federal mineral lease payments paid to the State. Severance tax is imposed on non-renewable natural resources that are removed from the earth in the State of Colorado. Federal mineral lease payments are the portion of the revenue from leasing federal minerals that is paid to each state under the Mineral Lands Leasing Act of 1920. The State of Colorado distributes a portion of these revenues to local governments. Chart 10-2 shows the severance tax and federal mineral lease distributions received by the County from 2009 through 2014. The municipalities of Durango, Bayfield, and Ignacio also receive severance tax and federal mineral lease distributions. The Durango, Bayfield, and Ignacio school districts benefit from property tax revenue and federal mineral lease distribution payments as well. Many residents also receive royalty payments for their mineral interests. Revenues to local governments, special districts, and royalty owners are based on commodity price and production rate and can fluctuate widely (Chart 10-1).

8 EXTRACTIVE RESOURCES & RENEWABLE ENERGY

Chart 8-1
Total La Plata County and Oil and Gas Property Tax Revenue: 2000 - 2014



Source: La Plata County Assessor's Office

The oil and gas industry directly accounts for approximately 1.6% of the jobs in the County (DOLA). Mineral and energy production constitutes an important base industry, which in turn produces indirect and induced jobs within La Plata County.

Regulation

Surface and mineral ownership within La Plata County includes private, federal, tribal, and state interests. The regulatory agencies involved with permitting and overseeing an individual well depends on the surface ownership and the ownership of the minerals being developed. Often, there is a difference in ownership between the surface land and the sub-surface minerals, a situation known as split-estate. In the case of directional wells, the minerals being developed may not be the minerals directly under the surface location. In such situations, there is an overlap in regulatory jurisdiction and multiple agencies may be involved in the permitting and oversight of a well.

In 1988, the County added oil and gas regulations to its land use system. The County derives the authority to regulate land use pertaining to oil and gas development under the Local Government Land Use Control Enabling Act (C.R.S. 29-20-101 et seq.). Specific requirements for oil and gas facilities in La Plata County are provided in Chapter 90 of the LPLUC. The Chapter 90 regulations have been revised multiple times since 1988 to address new issues and remain consistent with COGCC regulations. Chapter 90 regulations apply to oil and gas related surface development on private lands within the unincorporated area of the County. The County does not regulate any down-hole actions involved with the drilling, production, nor plugging of a well. The County has also agreed through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe to refrain from regulating tribal-owned facilities on non-Indian fee lands within the boundaries of the Southern Ute Reservation.

8 EXTRACTIVE RESOURCES & RENEWABLE ENERGY

The main regulatory agency for oil and gas development in Colorado is the COGCC. The COGCC has developed rules for the oversight of the various aspects of oil and gas development within the State. The COGCC also has a Local Government Designee (LGD) program to promote communication and coordination between the COGCC and local county or municipal governments. La Plata County is an active participant in this program.

Federal and tribal trust minerals are administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The COGCC has a MOU with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe in which they have agreed to refrain from regulating tribal trust lands, minerals or the Southern Ute Indian Tribe within the boundaries of the reservation. Although the BLM has the primary regulatory authority for down-hole actions in tribal wells, their authority regarding surface disturbance is limited on private lands. In situations where a well is located on private surface and developing tribal minerals, unless the operator represents the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the County is the main regulatory authority over surface disturbance.

The Office of Pipeline Safety under the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, which is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, oversees interstate pipelines. In Colorado, intrastate pipelines are regulated by the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Gas Pipeline Safety Section. The PUC is charged with overseeing the safety of gathering, transmission, and distribution pipelines. COGCC pipeline jurisdiction generally pertains to flowlines (before entering the gathering system) along with regulating the reporting of spills, releases or leaks from flowlines and gathering lines. The La Plata County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is also notified of any leaks or spills. The LPLUC requires an individual minor facility permit for any pipeline over 1,320 feet long. Major facility permits are required from the County for transmission lines.

In addition to the main regulatory agencies for oil and gas, operators are also required to obtain permits with several other agencies. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Water Quality Control Division issues stormwater permits for the construction of well pads greater than 1 acre. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issues permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for any activities that will result in the release of dredged or fill materials into Waters of the U.S., including jurisdictional wetlands. Projects that require an individual Clean Water Act-Section 404 permit will also require Clean Water Act-Section 401 certification by the CDPHE Water Quality Control Division. Section 401 certification is under the jurisdiction of the EPA on Southern Ute Tribe lands and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, on Ute Mountain Ute lands. As a result of the Colorado Supreme Court ruling in Vance vs. Wolfe, 205 P.3d 1165 (Colo. Sup. Ct. 2009), all CBM wells that produce groundwater are required to obtain a well permit from the Colorado Division of Water Resources. Air emissions are regulated by the CDPHE Air Pollution Control Division. The Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Tribes administer their own air quality programs for major sources within reservation boundaries, while the EPA regulates minor sources on tribal lands.

8 EXTRACTIVE RESOURCES & RENEWABLE ENERGY

SOLID MINERALS

Coal

The Durango-Pagosa Springs coal field occurs along the northern margin of the San Juan Basin. Coal may be extracted by surface, subsurface, or in situ mining methods. Coal has been mined in La Plata County since the early 1880s. La Plata County's early coal mines were located around Durango and expanded to Wildcat Canyon, Hesperus, Hay Gulch and Bayfield in later years. The domestic market for coal provided a steady demand, which was later supplemented by the industrial needs of smelters and the railroads associated with hardrock mining in La Plata Canyon and Silverton. The smelters' demand for coal lasted until 1930. Small mines providing coal for domestic use operated in the Hay Gulch and Hesperus areas into the 1970s. These mines have largely been abandoned.

One large scale coal mine, the King Coal Mine, opened in Hay Gulch in 1936. Operations at the original mine ceased in 2009 and those portals have been sealed. The King Coal II Mine surface facilities were constructed in 2008 and are still active. The King Coal II Mine is a subsurface mine that develops federal minerals. The location of the lease is shown on the *DRMS Permitted Mines in La Plata County Map* (2015, *Appendix 21*). Coal is hauled from the site by truck, generally to a rail head located in Gallup, NM. The mine primarily supplies cement companies, but maintains a link to the past as the supplier for the Durango & Silverton and the Cumbres & Toltec railroads. Coal production in the County is expected to continue, although the distance to rail lines for the transport of materials may limit the potential for significant expansion.

Sand and Gravel

Sand, gravel, and stone are used for building materials, aggregate, bulk fill, riprap, road surfacing, decoration, and landscaping. Deposits of common variety mineral materials occur everywhere in the County, although common sites for natural concentrations include canyon walls, stream channels, talus slopes, landslides, ancient river terraces, glacial moraines, and floodplains. Sand and gravel are typically mined using open pit or quarrying methods.

There are a total of 40 active sand and gravel pits permitted by the Division of Reclamation Mining and Safety (DRMS) in La Plata County. Two of the pits are owned and operated by La Plata County for road construction projects, the Crader Pit and Marvel Pit. The *DRMS Permitted Mines in La Plata County Map* (2015, *Appendix 21*) shows the location of active sand and gravel mining permits in the County. Due to the consistent need for sand, gravel, and stone in building and construction, the presence of pits and quarries is expected to continue in the County. The location of these pits will likely change as resources are exhausted and new pits are developed.

Hardrock Mining

Historically, La Plata Canyon has been the location of primary interest for placer activity and hardrock mining. Mining of placer gold began along the La Plata River in 1873. Miners quickly graduated from panning for gold to hard rock mining for silver. The early 1900s and the 1930s saw the greatest production in the La Plata Mining District as output switched from silver to gold. The La Platas produced mostly gold, but the ores also contained silver, lead, and copper. When

the federal government suspended gold mining in 1942 and called for mining only the minerals needed by the war effort, the La Plata production came to an end. Other historic mining districts in La Plata County never accounted for much mineral production.

There are currently four active gold mines in La Plata County (*DRMS Permitted Mines in La Plata County Map*; 2015, *Appendix 21*). Two of those mines are also permitted for silver mining. The high price of gold and other precious metals may motivate new small claims in the area of La Plata Canyon, but major mining operations are not expected to develop in the County. Minor recreational gold placer activity occurs in the Animas and La Plata rivers and major tributaries.

Limestone, valuable for certain chemical and industrial uses, occurs along the Animas River Valley. Currently, there is no active mining of limestone in the County, although the potential for future interest may exist. Historic proposals to mine in the area led to the withdrawal of deposits by the federal government to protect scenic values along the U.S. Highway 550 corridor.

Impacts

Generally, ground disturbance involved with surface mining, open pits, and quarries creates the potential for visual impacts, habitat loss, and exposed surface soils. The exposure of soils may result in erosion, dust, and sedimentation in surface water. Invasive species may be a concern in areas of disturbed and stockpiled soils and compacted areas. Mine subsidence can occur with subsurface mining, whereby the ground level lowers as a result of materials having been mined beneath. Mining operations also have the potential to cause air quality impacts through emissions from vehicles, large construction equipment, and generators used on a regular basis; particulates from blasting activities or crushing operations; possible releases of methane, hydrogen sulfide, and coal dust through the venting of underground coal mines; or fugitive dust from exposed soil surfaces. Noise impacts can also occur with the use of large equipment and blasting.

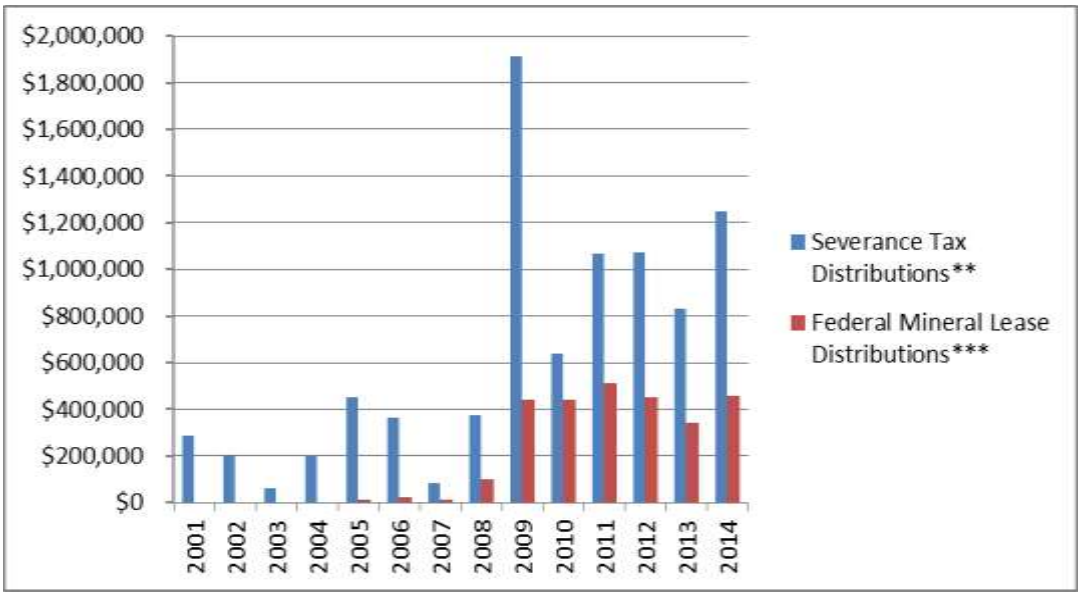
Mining alters the landscape and its natural hydrologic system. This can create a need to redirect surface water drainages. Acid mine drainage is caused when water flows over or through sulfur-bearing materials, exposed by mining activities, forming solutions of net acidity and can be an environmental challenge for some mines. Acidic runoff is not considered to be a problem at sand and gravel mining operations since the materials being mined do not have high concentrations of heavy metals. Some mining activity has the potential to affect the quantity and quality of groundwater supplies by cutting into aquifers. Blasting operations or subsidence may break up impermeable layers of rock underground, allowing or diverting the flow of groundwater. Aggregate and stone mines must use water to wash some materials on site and control dust, creating potential impacts to local water resource supplies. The most recognized health issues associated with surface mining involve airborne particulate emissions.

Subsurface mining poses different risks than surface mining, such as possible oxygen deficiency, potentially explosive gases, hydrogen sulfide, coal dust, collapse of walls or roofs in the mine, or the flooding of a mine if an aquifer is breached. There exists the potential for fires to erupt and burn in coal seams. Large volumes of mining waste could be generated because of the high waste-to-product ratios associated with producing most ores. Waste material may contain naturally

occurring materials such as lead and mercury. Increases in heavy vehicle traffic on local roadways may occur during the transportation of the materials being mined. Road impacts could create several issues, including the potential to increase the cost of maintaining roads.

Positive economic impacts to the County result from severance tax distributions for coal and metal mining and federal mineral lease distributions for the leasing of federal coal minerals. The severance tax and federal mineral lease distributions shown in Chart 8-2 also include payments received by La Plata County for coal and metal mining in the County. These industries are also a significant source of jobs for County residents.

Chart 8-2
La Plata County Severance Tax and
Federal Mineral Lease Distributions Received: 2001 – 2014*



**Direct distribution data prior to 2009 was calculated differently than later data due to legislative changes (HB07-1139, HB08-1083, SB08-218)*
***Includes amounts from coal, metal, and oil and gas severance taxes*
****Includes coal and oil and gas federal mineral leases*
Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs

Regulation

Within the DRMS, a division under the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, the Office of Mined Land Reclamation administers rules and regulations for mining and reclamation through the Coal Regulatory Program and the Minerals Regulatory Program. The Coal Program issues permits for coal mining and reclamation, and approves notices of intent to conduct exploration. The Minerals Program does not grant permission to mine. Instead, the program issues four different types of reclamation permits based on the type of operation and characterization of the material being mined. The Mined Land Reclamation Board, a multi-interest citizen board, establishes and enforces the regulations, standards, and policies that guide the DRMS.

The Mined Land Reclamation Board and the DRMS issue and enforce permits for all mines in Colorado on state, federal, and private lands. The La Plata County Public Works Department Environmental Specialist acts as a commenting agency on reclamation approval by DRMS. The federal Office of Surface Mining regulates mining for environmental and public impacts on tribal lands. The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) regulates all mining activities for the safety of mine workers. The BLM is responsible for the leasing of coal interests owned by the federal government. Recreational, small scale gold panning does not require a permit on state or federal lands.

The La Plata County Planning Department requires a Class II land use permit for all commercial mining operations on lands under the jurisdiction of the County. Mining operations in Colorado must also obtain industrial stormwater permits from the CDPHE Water Quality Control Division and report air emissions to the CDPHE Air Pollution Control Division. Clean Water Act-Section 404 permits must be obtained from the USACE if Waters of the U.S. will be impacted. Clean Water Act-Section 401 certification from the CDPHE Water Quality Control Division is required for any projects that require Section 404 permitting, but do not qualify for a nationwide permit. Gravel pits that expose groundwater must obtain permits from the Colorado Division of Water Resources. On tribal lands, stormwater permits are administered by the EPA or Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. Air quality is regulated by the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes' Air Quality Programs for major sources and the EPA for minor sources.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

There are prospects for small scale residential development of renewable energy throughout the County. La Plata Electric Association, Inc. (LPEA), a rural cooperative, provides electric to all of La Plata County. LPEA and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. (Tri-State) have a long-term wholesale power purchase agreement in which LPEA has agreed to purchase no less than 95 percent of its electric service needs from Tri-State until December 31, 2050. This leaves 5 percent that can be purchased by LPEA from local sources. As of 2012, LPEA purchased approximately 4 percent of its power from local sources, leaving 1 percent open for additional local renewable energy projects. The potential for utility scale development of renewable energy may be constrained by the purchase agreement between LPEA and Tri-State.

In 2012, LPEA developed a Long-term Alternative Energy Outlook with the goal of supplying 20 percent of the electricity from local sources by 2020. Options to achieve this goal within the constraints of the wholesale power purchase agreement include the direct purchase of renewable energy by Tri-State, as in the Vallecito Hydroelectric facility (referenced below), or small scale facilities that provide their own electricity, such as solar photovoltaic (PV) installations. Renewable energy produced locally and purchased by Tri-State may also help the company to meet renewable energy standards mandated by the State of Colorado. As of October 2013, approximately eight percent of energy consumed by LPEA members was produced locally.

Sources of renewable energy in La Plata County include hydroelectric generation facilities, waste heat recovery, methane capture, and solar. There are three hydroelectric facilities in the County. Xcel Energy operates the Tacoma Hydro Generating Station, originally built in 1906, along the

Animas River between Durango and Silverton. The Tacoma facility is connected to LPEA's transmission system. The Vallecito Hydroelectric system at Vallecito Reservoir began producing power in 1989. The facility is connected to the LPEA transmission system and the power it generates is purchased directly by Tri-State. The third hydroelectric system, located at Lemon Reservoir, is connected to LPEA's distribution grid.

LPEA purchases electricity from a waste heat recovery facility located between Durango and Ignacio. Electrical energy that would otherwise be lost is captured at a natural gas treatment facility from turbine exhaust waste heat boilers, coupled with steam turbine generators. The City of Durango Wastewater Treatment Plant installed a Digester Gas Burning Micro Turbine in 2009 to capture methane gas. This methane capture cogeneration system offsets about 19 percent of the annual energy usage at the location.

A capstone micro turbine was installed in the Pine River Valley for the purposes of capturing fugitive methane gas emissions from specific locations along the Fruitland outcrop. The COGCC funded this project to evaluate the viability of combining mitigation of the gas seepage with the use of the potentially valuable resource. This system became operational in 2009 and provides energy to the local grid.

LPEA has offered interconnection and net metering to members since 2003. Customers who generate their own electricity, mostly through solar PV systems, are connected to the LPEA system and a bi-directional meter measures the amount of electricity produced and used by the consumer, offsetting their total cost. In 2012, local energy generation from net metered systems reduced LPEA's total energy purchase by about 0.28 percent. According to LPEA, there is also potential for micro hydro and small hydro systems to be installed in irrigation ditches throughout the County (LPEA Long-term Alternative Energy Outlook, 2013).

LPEA has contractual agreements with three subscriber organizations for purchasing electricity from community solar gardens. Solar gardens are large solar arrays from which community members can buy or lease shares. The energy produced by their share is then attributed to the electric meter at their home or business through virtual net metering. Four community solar gardens were built in La Plata County in 2014. Three already have full member capacity. The Armadillo Community Solar Garden is located on the roof of the Armadillo Storage facility on Highway 3. Living Solar runs the Sun Mesa Solar Garden in Durango. Shaw Solar has built two solar gardens, one in Ignacio and one on the roof of the Boys and Girls Club of La Plata County in Durango.

Biomass is a renewable fuel that is developed from organic materials, including forest debris, scrap lumber, mill residuals, certain crops, manure, and municipal solid wastes. In biomass power plants, wood waste or other waste is burned to produce steam that runs a turbine to make electricity, or that provides heat to industries and homes. Fuels reduction projects around the County could provide a material source for the development of biomass as a new local source of energy, although the potential for commercial development is limited.

Despite the presence of Trimble Hot Springs, there is not high potential for the development of geothermal as a renewable energy resource. High temperature geothermal resources are required for electricity generation. The geothermal resources that occur in the County are of low or medium temperature and are therefore not a viable option for large scale electricity generation at this time. Ground source geothermal energy (using the earth's heat to heat water in underground pipes) may be a possibility for small scale residential heating.

Good wind resources for energy production have an average wind speed of at least 9 miles per hour for small wind electric turbines and 13 miles per hour for utility scale wind power plants. Primary locations in the West include exposed ridges and mountain summits, although icing is a concern at higher elevations. In some areas of the County there is potential for wind energy generation on a smaller, residential scale; but there is little prospect for utility scale development.

Impacts

Depending on the design of the facility, potential impacts associated with hydroelectric facilities include noise, altered hydrologic systems, and habitat loss and/or degradation for aquatic species. Sources of noise generally associated with a hydroelectric facility include powerhouse equipment (turbines, generators, transformers) and flowing water. The construction of intake structures, dams, or weirs to provide a water supply to a hydroelectric facility could affect a river ecosystem. The diversion of water from a natural stream has the potential to reduce the in-stream flows of the stream, potentially leaving aquatic species stressed. The presence of a dam or weir can also be a physical barrier to fish migration. River modifications could result in visual impacts from structures placed in or across the river or the creation of an impoundment.

Solar energy development projects, depending on the proposed number of panels and location, potentially have other environmental impacts. Solar installations are highly visible in rural or natural landscapes. Commercial solar arrays or community solar gardens may impact land use due to the possible loss of agricultural lands or wildlife habitat for the placement of solar panels that may consume vast land area values. The area under solar panels does not receive direct sunlight, making it difficult to establish and maintain vegetation and stabilize the exposed soils. These areas are subject to possible weed infestation, soil erosion, and subsequent sedimentation of nearby water bodies.

Solar panels may contain small amounts of hazardous materials such as lead, cadmium, selenium, and arsenic. There are several different types of PV cells that vary in the individual components. Toxic elements in end of life or broken PV panels may leach into groundwater if disposed of in landfills. The solar industry is developing programs for recycling solar panels, although not all suppliers have such programs. There is currently one known facility accepting solar panels for recycling in La Plata County. Current solar modules have an expected lifespan of approximately 20 to 30 years, so most have not yet reached the end of their useful lives. The need for a method to dispose of solar panels will become more important as solar installations age. Solar PV systems are subject to electrical faults like any other electrical installation.

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Burning biomass to produce electricity can potentially impact air quality, local water resources, and the fuel source habitat. The level of air emissions associated with biomass power plants varies depending on the organic material used and combustion technology, but the most common pollutants include nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulfur dioxide (SO2), carbon monoxide, and particulate matter. Biomass power plants require water for cooling, but actual water withdrawal and consumption depends on the facility's cooling technology. Cooling water is returned to its source much warmer than when it was withdrawn, which can have a negative impact on plant and animal life. Using agriculture and forest wastes for biomass power, could potentially lead to land or habitat degradation.

Impacts associated with transmission and distribution lines that connect renewable energy sources to the electrical grid include the potential for visual, static noise, habitat loss and fragmentation, and possible electrocution of birds.

The most apparent benefit of renewable energy is the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Electricity generated at or near its area of use, as opposed to large central facilities, is considered by some to be more sustainable, efficient, and of greater benefit to a community. Locally-produced energy can reduce system-line losses, or electricity lost in transit. Producing electricity locally also can provide support to the local economy and reduce monies leaving the region.

Regulation

Utility scale commercial renewable energy facilities would currently be required to obtain a Class II Land Use Permit from the County. The La Plata County Building Department is preparing to adopt standards for smaller scale residential solar installation safety listed in the 2015 International Residential Code when a new county building code is adopted (anticipated in 2016). Residential solar installations will then be verified for compliance with building code standards at the time of building inspection. The residential use of boilers that burn biomass also require inspections by the Building Department. The agency regulating electric utilities in Colorado is the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), under the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA). In December 2005, the PUC adopted standards for net metering and interconnection. Project interconnection approval requires inspection by an electrical inspector with the DORA Division of Professions and Occupations.

Stormwater permits are required from the CDPHE Water Quality Control Division for any renewable energy facility that disturbs more than one acre (construction permit) or generates electricity through the use of steam (industrial permit). An Air Pollutant Emission Notice or air permit may be required from the CDPHE Air Pollution Control Division for air emissions, depending on the volume and type of emissions. If a renewable energy facility will be located in or near a natural waterway or wetland, a USACE permit, under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, may be required for the removal or deposition of any materials in the waterway. Any actions that require a federal permit, license, or approval that result in a discharge into waters of the State require Clean Water Act-Section 401 certification by the CDPHE Water Quality Control Division. Projects located on federal land are subject to the specific permitting requirements of the federal land management agency, including the removal of tree matter from U.S. Forest Service lands for

biomass projects.

Hydropower projects typically require a license or exemption from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) or the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). The FERC is the primary federal authority for permitting hydropower projects. For hydropower development on BOR facilities where hydropower development is explicitly mentioned in the authorizing legislation, permitting is handled by the BOR. For any individual project, determination whether FERC or the BOR is the relevant federal permitting authority is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding between FERC and BOR. A water right must also be obtained to divert water from a stream for generating hydroelectric power in Colorado. Water rights are obtained by applying to the water court and are allocated by the Colorado Division of Water Resources.

EXTRACTIVE RESOURCES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY GOALS

OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT

Goal 8.1: Promote responsible oil and gas development while minimizing potential impacts to the environment and local residents.

Objective 8.1.A: To maintain and enhance cooperation with Local, State and Federal agencies, the oil and gas industry, and property owners with regard to regulating activity and mitigating impacts.

Policy 8.1.A1: The County should maintain an active participant role in the COGCC LGD program.

Policy 8.1.A2: The County could consider developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the COGCC in order to ensure a mutual understanding regarding areas of potential for overlapping jurisdiction.

Policy 8.1.A3: The County could pursue more comprehensive regulation of areas with little regulatory oversight, such as flowlines between well meters and transmission line tie-ins.

Policy 8.1.A4: The County should continue to encourage communication with operators regarding future development plans in order to identify land use conflicts early.

Policy 8.1.A5: The County should continue to act as a facilitator for communication between the oil and gas industry and local residents.

Policy 8.1.A6: The County should continue to promote public understanding and awareness of oil and gas development activities through education

and by making general development information accessible to the general population.

Objective 8.1.B: To protect the public health, safety and welfare of citizens while coordinating with fluid mineral extraction projects, within the limitations of local government powers and resources.

Policy 8.1.B1: The County should continue to pursue the appropriate use of instruments and methods which ensure operators contribute proportionately and concurrently with proposed projects.

Policy 8.1.B2: The County could review long-term results of water well testing and air quality impacts to assist with identifying any potential need for additional protective measures to local residents.

SOLID MINERALS

Goal 8.2: Promote responsible mineral development while minimizing potential impacts to the environment and local residents.

Objective 8.2.A: To maintain and enhance cooperation with Local, State and Federal agencies, the mineral extraction industry, and property owners with regard to regulating activity and mitigating impacts.

Policy 8.2.A1: The County should continue to coordinate with lead regulatory agencies to assist with the mitigation and reclamation of projects.

Policy 8.2.A2: The County could explore the development of *1041 Powers* for known mineral resource areas.

Objective 8.2.B: To protect the public health, safety and welfare of citizens while coordinating with mineral development projects, within the limitations of local government powers and resources.

Policy 8.2.B1: The County should continue to pursue appropriate use of instruments and methods which ensure development contributes proportionately and concurrently with proposed projects.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Goal 8.3: Promote responsible development of renewable energy while minimizing potential impacts to the environment and local residents.

Objective 8.3.A: To maintain and enhance cooperation with Local, State and Federal agencies, the renewable energy industry, and property owners with regard to regulating activity and mitigating impacts.

Policy 8.3.A1: The County should develop a permitting program that addresses potential impacts of utility scale production to promote renewable energy development.

Policy 8.3.A2: The County should explore the development of *1041 Powers* to accommodate renewable energy systems.

Policy 8.3.A3: The County should encourage efforts consistent with LPEA's Long-term Alternative Energy Outlook goal of 20% electricity produced locally by 2020.

Objective 8.3.B: To protect the public health, safety and welfare of citizens while coordinating with renewable energy development projects; within the limitations of local government powers and resources.

Policy 8.3.B1: The County should encourage the recycling of solar panels and promote the development of recycling options within the County.

Policy 8.3.B2: The County should continue to pursue appropriate use of instruments and methods which ensure development contributes proportionately and concurrently with proposed projects.

Extractive Resources and Renewable Energy Maps can be found in Appendix 20

9 RECREATION & TOURISM

Overview and Background

The Parks, Recreation, and Trails Element of the County comprehensive plan focuses on recreational programming and facility needs in the County–something which La Plata County government has historically played only a limited role in providing. The plan element overviews existing conditions, programs and plans; the need for partnerships and intergovernmental coordination; the identification of potential funding sources; and plan recommendations.

In recent years, La Plata County has become a hot bed for new residents and tourists. Much of this interest is the result of the County's immense scenic beauty, public lands and recreational opportunities. With over 40 percent of the land in the County held by public land management agencies, back country recreational opportunities such as camping, hiking, biking, and horseback riding abound. However, as the County population continues to increase, so does the demand for more traditional recreational facilities such as ball fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, and picnic grounds.

Key Point: Active recreation refers to land that is managed for high levels of public use, with the purpose of providing a variety of opportunities to the public. This includes such facilities as ball fields, golf courses, playgrounds and picnic grounds.

While it has traditionally been the communities of Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio that have provided such amenities, shifting demographics would indicate that it may have become more of a County-wide issue in recent years. The 2000 Census indicates that of the approximately 44,000 residents of the County, nearly 28,000 of those residents, or approximately 57 percent, live in the unincorporated County, outside the communities that provide the recreational amenities. In fact, it is the unincorporated County residents who make up the majority of the users of the recreational programs provided by Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio. In 1998, Ignacio reported that more than 80 percent of the participants in its three recreation programs were non-town residents. Bayfield also reported such figures. In 1999, the Town's estimated population was 1,607, while its recreation program had 1,400 participants. Over 50 percent of the participants were reported to be non-town residents. Durango, which presides over the County's largest parks and recreation program, also reported such figures, with non-city residents accounting for over 57 percent of the participation in its youth sports programs.

Key Point: While it has traditionally been the communities of Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio that have provided recreational amenities, shifting demographics would indicate that it may have become more of a County-wide issue in recent years.

Recreational facilities in the unincorporated County are somewhat limited. The municipal recreation programs often partner with the 9-R School District to utilize school site facilities. Other than school facilities and those found on State and federal lands, recreational facilities in the outlying County are limited to those provided within private developments.

9 RECREATION & TOURISM

Parks, Recreation &Trails Goal

Goal 11.1: To Ensure That the Recreational Program and Facility Needs of County Residents Are Met as the County Grows.

Existing County Recreational Activities

While La Plata County government, itself, does not have a formal parks and recreation function, it has been involved in a number of recreational issues, and on occasion has even provides financial assistance for recreational activities and facilities. These efforts have included:

1) Fairgrounds – The County fairgrounds has been the historic center for County sponsored recreational activities over the years with equestrian activities, public use buildings, and acreage for fairs and carnivals. A recent master planning effort has set the stage for an overhaul of the physical layout and probable future uses of the facility.

2) Gold Rush Gym – While no longer in existence, the County had partnered with this private gymnastics group by offering subsidized rent of a County-owned building located at the north end of the fairgrounds. The City has since taken over the gym's activities.

3) City of Durango Recreation Center – The County partnered with the City by leasing County-owned land for the recreation center at the north end of the fairgrounds.

4) Trail Issues – The County has been involved with a number of trail issues in recent years including providing funding for the development of a County-wide trails plan; cosponsoring a Great Outdoors Colorado grant for a trail feasibility study; taking an easement on a trail through the Horse Gulch/Ewing Mesa area; and assisting in finding resolution to the Colorado Trail extension into the City of Durango issue.

5) Equestrian Center – The County has been active in trying to find a new site for an equestrian center that was displaced as a result of the changes occurring at the fairgrounds.

6) Joint Sales Tax – The County and the City of Durango utilize joint sales tax revenue to partner with the 9-R School District to improve and/or maintain recreation facilities around the County. This is an annually reviewed partnership.

7) Park Requirements – As part of Durango Mountain Resort's development plans, a district park is envisioned, with maintenance of the facility taken over by the Lake Purgatory Metro District.

Key Point: While La Plata County government, itself, does not have a formal parks and recreation function, it does get involved in recreation issues, and on occasion provides financial assistance to recreation-oriented activities.

Existing County Regulations and Plans

Continued growth in the County will add to the demand for municipal recreation facilities. It will likely lead to residents requesting additional park and recreational facilities for the unincorporated County. Areas of the County experiencing the most growth, such as Florida Mesa, possess the least public open lands or passive recreation areas. As a result, residents in the most-populated and fastest-growing areas of the County have

limited access to recreational facilities near their homes.

The County's land use system does address this issue in a limited fashion. The land use code and several of the district land use plans contain generalized requirements and/or objectives regarding park development and recreational use of public lands. The following is an overview of the treatment of recreational facilities in the County's existing codes and plans:

La Plata Land Use Code

The land use code contains limited references to recreation facilities within developments. The code is more notable for its omissions than its inclusions. It does not require development of parks within developments, with the exception of some minimal standards for small playgrounds within multi-family developments and mobile home parks. The code also does not require the payment of park development fees, or land dedications, in conjunction with developments.

Key Point: The County land use code does not require the payment of park development fees, or land dedications, in conjunction with developments.

District Land Use Plans

Four of the district plans contain limited references to park and recreation issues:

- West Durango: Establish a multi-purpose community center building that fosters a sense of community, e.g. meeting room, day care, fire station, etc.
- Junction Creek, West Durango, Florida Road: Management of recreational use; trail access; and trail head parking on public land.
- North County: Identify potential locations and pursue funding for the development of local parks, playgrounds, garbage collection, a post office and, possibly, a community center to serve area residents. Encourage development to provide public benefits, including recreation areas, trail systems and needed public facilities.

Key Point: The district land use plans provide a foundation for determining appropriate locations for recreational facilities in the County.

La Plata County Trails Plan

The County Trails Plan was adopted as an element of the County Comprehensive Plan in June 2000. The mission of the plan is to promote the ongoing development and maintenance of a strategic, well designed network of trails that provide safe, convenient and enjoyable recreation and transportation experiences for all trail users. The plan addresses recreation in a number of ways including improving access to public lands, and ensuring connectivity between neighborhoods.

Key Point: The mission of the County Trails Plan is to promote the ongoing development and maintenance of a strategic, well designed network of trails that provide safe, convenient and enjoyable recreation and transportation experiences for all trail users.

Partnerships and Intergovernmental Coordination

Providing quality recreational opportunities for all residents of the County will require a number of creative approaches. Establishing partnerships and intergovernmental coordination may help to ensure the efficient allocation of resources and a minimization of redundancies.

Local Communities

The City of Durango has taken a number of significant steps in recent years to ensure that the recreation needs of area residents are met. This has included the development of the City of Durango Parks, Open Space, and Trails Plan; the construction of a community recreation center; continued work towards Completing the Animas River Trail; and the establishment of an open space acquisition program. Bayfield and Ignacio have also been active in ensuring that recreational programming is available in their communities. These activities have largely been possible because of political support, and more importantly, funding. Funding for these activities comes from sales tax revenues and matching state and federal grants.

Key Point: Funding for recreational programming and facilities comes predominantly from sales tax revenues generated from the sale of goods and services in the local communities.

The City of Durango has recognized for quite some time that a majority of the revenue used for community improvements is generated by residents of the unincorporated County and by tourists. It is partially for this reason that the City has not differentiated between City and non-City residents when assessing program user's fees, and has not made a significant issue of the fact that the majority of program uses are non-City residents. As the area's population continues to grow and the percentage of non-city residents using city programs and facilities also continues to grow, so will the pressure to upgrade facilities and programs. This may require more resources than the City alone may be willing to provide for. It is therefore critical that La Plata County government begin to evaluate potential funding sources that will allow it to further assist with the provision recreational facilities and programs.

Key Point: As the County and the local communities within it grow, the pressure to upgrade and maintain park and recreational facilities and programs may require formal governmental partnerships in order to meet the needs of the community.

Key Point: It is critical that La Plata County government begin to evaluate potential funding sources that will allow it to further assist with the provision recreational facilities and programs.

School Districts

School districts in the County have typically made their facilities available to the local communities. This type of partnership is essential for ensuring that recreational activities continue to be available in areas other than within the confines of each community. Additionally, as school sites are developed and remodeled, local communities should be consulted to determine whether there are any recreational partnership opportunities available.

Key Point: The use of school site recreational facilities such as ball fields and playgrounds should continue in order to minimize the need to develop additional recreational facilities.

Land Management Agencies

The Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the Colorado State Lands Board, and to a somewhat lesser extent, the State Division of Wildlife, all have the capability of allowing some degree of passive and active recreational activities to occur on the land they manage. The feasibility of strengthening partnerships to provide active recreation facilities on these properties should be evaluated.

Key Point: The feasibility of establishing partnerships with Land Management Agencies to provide active recreation facilities on properties they manage should be evaluated.

Land Trusts/Private Entities

While currently narrow in their scope and numbers, land trusts working in La Plata County may at some point in the future provide opportunities for adding recreational amenities. Private land holders and/or corporations in the community may also have interest in forming partnerships that would provide long term land leases or funding assistance.

Key Point: Land Trusts and private entities should not be overlooked when evaluating potential partnerships for recreational amenities.

Additional Potential Actions and Funding Alternatives

Additional Potential Actions

The County could take additional action in relation to providing recreational amenities for County residents. It could expand upon its incentive-based public benefit criteria system within its district plans to provide density bonuses for providing active recreational facilities within developments. Active recreational facilities could include such things as tennis and basketball courts, golf courses, playground equipment, community centers, etc.

Key Point: The County could expand upon its incentive-based public benefit criteria within its district plans to provide density bonuses for providing active recreational facilities within developments.

Potential Funding Sources

Sales Tax: As discussed previously in this chapter, local municipalities typically fund recreational programs and facilities through their general fund which is predominantly based on sales tax revenue. La Plata County, as a statutory County, does not have the same taxing authority as its local municipalities, and, as such, takes in far less sale tax revenue as a percentage of its total budget. In fact, the County already collects what it can under State law, 2 percent, and cannot increase beyond that amount. Additionally, budgetary constraints limit the County's ability to make discretionary expenditures beyond commitments it already has.

Key Point: Budgetary constraints limit the County's ability to make discretionary expenditures for things such as recreational programs or facilities.

Mill Levy: While raising the historically low mill levy for County property tax payers is a viable alternative for increasing revenues; this option has historically not received much political support.

Key Point: While raising the historically low mill levy for County property tax payers is a viable alternative for increasing revenues; this option has historically not received much political support

Capital Expansion Fees: La Plata County does not require the payment of park development fees or land dedication in conjunction with new development. This type of capital expansion fees is quite common in many communities. Like any capital expansion fee, however, such fees are typically passed on to the

consumer via higher lot costs.

Key Point: Capital expansion fees are typically passed on to the consumer.

Use Tax: Another alternative is a use tax. A use tax is, essentially, a sales tax collected on certain goods purchased outside the County, purchases that can be tracked through auto registrations or building permits.

Key Point: A use tax is a sales tax collected on certain goods purchased outside the County, purchases that can be tracked through auto registrations or building permits.

The issue of establishing a use tax in La Plata County received significant discussion in 2001. Local automobile dealers wanted a use tax instituted in La Plata County to level the playing field, so to speak, with auto dealers outside the County who are, theoretically, at a competitive advantage to local dealers because the sales tax is lower in the community where they operate. By instituting a use tax, the purchaser of the auto would be required to pay the "differential" tax at the time that they register the auto in La Plata County. The same could apply to building material at the time of building permit application.

Key Point: By instituting a use tax, the purchaser of an auto outside the County would be required to pay a "differential" tax at the time that they register the auto in La Plata County.

Because the institution of a use tax would require approval of the voters, earmarking the proceeds for a particular use that is supported by the community is the most likely way to get the tax approved. The 2001 ballot initiative revolved around a proposal to direct use tax revenue towards open space acquisition and affordable housing. The measure failed by a 3 to 1 margin in the November 2001 election.

Key Point: The institution of a use tax requires approval of the voters

Recreation District: Another revenue generating option is the establishment of a special "recreation district" which would have the ability to levy taxes for recreational facilities and/or programming. A recreation district would, essentially, have autonomy over how it utilized the funds it rose. This option would not require County involvement once the district was formed. There have been attempts to form special recreation districts in the unincorporated County in recent years. Residents of North County discussed the possibility purchasing a parcel of land on which a community center and a playing field could be built. In the Bayfield area, residents proposed a ballot measure to create a special recreation district encompassing the Town of Bayfield and surrounding areas. The Bayfield ballot measure was defeated in December 1999.

Key Point: A recreation district would not require County involvement once the district was formed.

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Funding: GOCO is good source for funding specific planning, development, and acquisition projects. However, GOCO funds are intended as supplemental funds leveraged by other funding sources and as such would not alone sustain an ongoing parks and recreation effort.

Key Point: GOCO funds are intended as supplemental funds, leveraged by other funding sources.

Summary of Goals, Key Points and Plan Recommendations

Goal

Goal 11.1: To Ensure That the Recreational Program and Facility Needs of County Residents Are Met as the County Grows.

Key Points

The following Key Points were presented.

- ✓ While it has traditionally been the communities of Bayfield, Durango and Ignacio that have provided recreational amenities, shifting demographics would indicate that it may have become more of a County- wide issue in recent years.
- ✓ While La Plata County government, itself, does not have a formal parks and recreation function, it does get involved in recreation issues, and on occasion provides financial assistance with recreation-oriented activities.
- ✓ The County land use code does not require the payment of park development fees, or the dedication of land, in conjunction with developments.
- ✓ The district land use plans provide a foundation for the determining appropriate locations for recreational facilities in the County.
- ✓ The mission of the County Trails Plan is to promote the ongoing development and maintenance of a strategic, well designed network of trails that provide safe, convenient and enjoyable recreation and transportation experiences for all trail users.
- ✓ Funding for recreational programming and facilities comes primarily from sales tax revenues generated from the sale of goods and services in the local communities.
- ✓ As the County and the local communities within it grow, the pressure to upgrade and maintain park and recreational facilities and programs may require formal governmental partnerships in order to meet the needs of the community.
- ✓ It is critical that La Plata County government begin to evaluate additional funding sources that will allow it to further assist local communities with the provision recreational facilities and programs.
- ✓ The use of school site recreational facilities such as ball field and playgrounds should continue in order to minimize the need to develop additional recreational facilities.
- ✓ The feasibility of establishing partnerships with land management agencies to provide active recreation facilities on properties they manage should be evaluated.
- ✓ Land trusts and private entities should not be overlooked when evaluating potential partnerships for recreational amenities.
- ✓ Budgetary constraints limit the County's ability to make discretionary expenditures for things such as recreational programs or facilities.

- ✓ The County could expand upon its incentive-based public benefit criteria within its district plans to provide density bonuses for providing active recreational facilities within developments.
- ✓ While raising the historically low mill levy for County property tax payers is a viable alternative for increasing revenues, this option has historically not received much political support.
- ✓ Capital expansion fees are typically passed on to the consumer.
- ✓ A use tax is a sales tax collected on certain goods purchased outside the County, purchases that can be tracked through auto registrations or building permits.
- ✓ By instituting a use tax, the purchaser of an auto outside the County would be required to pay a
- ✓ "differential" tax at the time that they register the auto in La Plata County.
- ✓ The institution of a use tax would require approval of the voters.
- ✓ A recreation district would not require County involvement once the district was formed.
- ✓ GOCO funds are intended as supplemental funds, leveraged by other funding sources.

Plan Recommendations

A number of alternatives and recommendations have been presented in this plan element. Implementation should be achieved through the prioritization and initiation of action items. The Action Items (AI) identified below are incorporated into an Action Item Prioritization Table included in Chapter 12: Implementation.

AI11.1: Establish discussions with local municipalities to assess likely future impact of County-wide use of municipal recreation programs.

AI11.2: Identify a viable long-term revenue source for future funding of: 1) park facility development and maintenance in the unincorporated County; and 2) existing municipal recreation programs.

AI11.3: Evaluate the merits of establishing requirements for the development of private parks within larger developments, and/or park fees-in-lieu of land dedication.

AI11.4: Revise district plans to include reference to the County Trails Plan as part of public benefit criteria process.

AI11.5: Continue to establish and/or enhance partnerships with local municipalities, land management agencies, and others to assist in the provision of recreation programs and facilities.

AI11.6: Evaluate merits of expanding district plan public benefit criteria to include active recreational facilities.

* * * * *

10 HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW

The various Elements of the La Plata County Comprehensive Plan provide a foundation for guiding development within the County. The purpose of the *Implementation* section of the Plan is to set forth a framework that ensures the Goals outlined in the plan are met via realization of the objectives and fulfillment of the various Policies. Included in this section, is a recommended approach for Plan review and monitoring and a summary of generalized actions/tasks the County can use in establishing an ongoing work program.

Plan Review and Monitoring

The La Plata County Comprehensive Plan outlines a number of strategies for achieving the Goals established in the Plan. In order to determine whether the strategies are effective, a program for plan monitoring and review must be established. The monitoring program will help the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners understand both progress and challenges while achieving the plan's Goals. It will also help staff and decision-makers determine the effectiveness of various strategies, as well as help identify appropriate revisions.

On an annual basis, staff should report to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners on the previous year's progress towards implementing identified actions/tasks listed in *Table 11-1*. Prior to the budget cycle of each year, staff and/or the Planning Commission should determine whether there are any priority items for recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners; or changes to the Table.

It is recommended that District Land Use Plans be put into an annual rotating review schedule. This will help to ensure that the plans remain relevant, consistent with the Plan and dynamic. It is also recommended that there be a bi-annual *plan amendment process* allowing for project-specific Plan changes.

The Goals of the Comprehensive Plan should be revisited every 5-years to determine whether they are still relevant to the County's needs and interests.

Action Items/Tasks

The Action Items/Tasks identified in *Table 11-1* are an initial list of actions/tasks which the County should undertake to help ensure that the Goals of the Comprehensive Plan are met. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive. The County may pursue different strategies and adjust priorities based on changing opportunities, interests and conditions. These action items/tasks are categorized by Element from within the Plan's Objectives and Policies.

Table 11-1
Implementation Table

Element	Objective/ Policy	Page #	Action Item/Task
Infrastructure/Transportation	2.1.A	2.3	Identify County roadway network: Map
Infrastructure/Transportation	2.1.A1	2.3	Map/Capacity Needs/LOS
Infrastructure/Transportation	2.1.B2	2.3	Incorporate Airport Plans/ Plan Appendix
Infrastructure/Water	2.2.A1	2.4	Identify potable distribution systems/anticipated capacity: Map/Chart
Infrastructure/Water	2.2.B1	2.4	Create incentives for water conservation
Infrastructure/Sewer - SW	2.3.A1	2.4	Identify sewer facilities/anticipated capacity: Map/Chart
Infrastructure/Sewer-SW	2.3.A3 2.3.B3	2.4 2.5	Site appropriate locations – waste disposal/treatment (solid waste)
Infrastructure/Sewer-SW	2.3.B1	2.5	Identify solid waste facilities/anticipated capacity: Map/Chart
Infrastructure/Utility	2.4.A1	2.5	Identify major utilities/capacity: Map/Chart
Infrastructure/Utility	2.4.A3	2.5	Create incentives for areas needing service
Infrastructure/Telecom	2.5.A1	2.6	Identify telecom facilities/service areas: Map
Infrastructure/Telecom	2.5.A3	2.6	Create incentives for areas needing service
Infrastructure/Telecom	2.5.A4	2.6	Explore various funding sources
Agriculture	5.1.A1	5.5	Explore ways to promote diverse business opportunities for agricultural operations
Agriculture	5.1.A2	5.5	Investigate resource protection programs/regulations
Agriculture	5.1.A3	5.5	Identify irrigable/ag lands: Map
Agriculture	5.1.A4	5.5	Develop alternative process for ag land subdivision
Agriculture	5.1.A5	5.5	Develop Site Planning standards to protect ag
Agriculture	5.1.B3	5.6	Consider ag tax revenues for ag needs
Agriculture	5.1.B5	5.6	Explore opportunities for local ag business education
Agriculture	5.1.B6	5.6	Explore alternatives to MES subdivisions for ag lands/expanded ag land retention
Extractive Res/Renew Engy	8.1.A2	8.14	Consider MOU with COGCC/overlapping jurisdiction
Extractive Res/Renew Engy	8.1.A3	8.14	Pursue regs/areas limited oversight
Extractive Res/Renew Engy	8.1.A6	8.14 8.15	Explore opportunities for education of public/provide information sources
Extractive Res/Renew Engy	8.1.B1	8.15	Consider review of water wells and air quality
Extractive Res/Renew Engy	8.2.A2 8.3.A2	8.15 8.16	Explore 1041 Powers (mineral resources & accommodate renewable energy)
Extractive Res/Renew Engy	8.3.A1	8.16	Explore permitting utility scale production promoting renewable energy
Extractive Res/Renew Engy	8.3.B1	8.16	Explore promotion of recycling options

APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Colorado Revised Statute Enabling Legislation
Appendix 2	Adopting Resolutions
Appendix 3	Animas Valley Plan
Appendix 4	Bayfield District Plan
Appendix 5	Durango District Plan
Appendix 6	Florida Mesa District Plan
Appendix 7	Florida Road District Plan
Appendix 8	Ft. Lewis Mesa District Plan
Appendix 9	Junction Creek District Plan
Appendix 10	La Posta Road Area District Plan
Appendix 11	North County District Plan
Appendix 12	Vallecito District Plan
Appendix 13	West Durango District Plan
Appendix 14	2030 TRIP, Transportation Integration Plan, Res. 2006-3
Appendix 15	La Plata Trails Plan, 2000
Appendix 16	Airport Master Plan, (reserved)
Appendix 17	Implementation Table, (reserved)
Appendix 18	Colorado Water Plan, XX, 2015 (reserved)
Appendix 19	Maps of Existing Infrastructure
Appendix 20	Maps of Extractive Resources

APPENDIX 1

TITLE 30. GOVERNMENT - COUNTY
COUNTY PLANNING AND BUILDING CODES
ARTICLE 28.COUNTY PLANNING AND BUILDING CODES
PART 1. COUNTY PLANNING

C.R.S. 30-28-106 (2015)

30-28-106. Adoption of master plan - contents

(1) It is the duty of a county planning commission to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory of the county. When a county planning commission decides to adopt a master plan, the commission shall conduct public hearings, after notice of such public hearings has been published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in a manner sufficient to notify the public of the time, place, and nature of the public hearing, prior to final adoption of a master plan in order to encourage public participation in and awareness of the development of such plan and shall accept and consider oral and written public comments throughout the process of developing the plan.

(2) (a) It is the duty of a regional planning commission to make and adopt a regional plan for the physical development of the territory within the boundaries of the region, but no such plan shall be effective within the boundaries of any incorporated municipality within the region unless such plan is adopted by the governing body of the municipality for the development of its territorial limits and under the terms of paragraph (b) of this subsection (2). When a regional planning commission decides to adopt a master plan, the commission shall conduct public hearings, after notice of such public hearings has been published in a newspaper of general circulation in the region in a manner sufficient to notify the public of the time, place, and nature of the public hearing, prior to final adoption of a master plan in order to encourage public participation in and awareness of the development of such plan and shall accept and consider oral and written public comments throughout the process of developing the plan.

(b) Any plan adopted by a regional planning commission shall not be deemed an official advisory plan of any municipality or county unless adopted by the planning commission of such municipality or county.

(3) (a) The master plan of a county or region, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive and explanatory matter, shall show the county or regional planning commission's recommendations for the development of the territory covered by the plan. The master plan of a county or region shall be an advisory document to guide land development decisions; however, the plan or any part thereof may be made binding by inclusion in the county's or region's adopted subdivision, zoning, platting, planned unit development, or other similar land development regulations after satisfying notice, due process, and hearing requirements for legislative or quasi-judicial processes as appropriate. After consideration of each of the following, where applicable or appropriate, the master plan may include:

(I) The general location, character, and extent of existing, proposed, or projected streets or roads, rights-

of-way, viaducts, bridges, waterways, waterfronts, parkways, highways, mass transit routes and corridors, and any transportation plan prepared by any metropolitan planning organization that covers all or a portion of the county or region and that the county or region has received notification of or, if the county or region is not located in an area covered by a metropolitan planning organization, any transportation plan prepared by the department of transportation that the county or region has received notification of and that applies to the county or region;

(II) The general location of public places or facilities, including public schools, culturally, historically, or archaeologically significant buildings, sites, and objects, playgrounds, forests, reservations, squares, parks, airports, aviation fields, military installations, and other public ways, grounds, open spaces, trails, and designated federal, state, and local wildlife areas. For purposes of this section, "military installation" shall have the same meaning as specified in section 29-20-105.6 (2) (b), C.R.S.

(III) The general location and extent of public utilities, terminals, capital facilities, and transfer facilities, whether publicly or privately owned, for water, light, power, sanitation, transportation, communication, heat, and other purposes, and any proposed or projected needs for capital facilities and utilities, including the priorities, anticipated costs, and funding proposals for such facilities and utilities;

(IV) The general location and extent of an adequate and suitable supply of water. If the master plan includes a water supply element, the planning commission shall consult with the entities that supply water for use within the county or region to ensure coordination on water supply and facility planning, and the water supply element shall identify water supplies and facilities sufficient to meet the needs of the public and private infrastructure reasonably anticipated or identified in the planning process. Nothing in this subparagraph (IV) shall be construed to supersede, abrogate, or otherwise impair the allocation of water pursuant to the state constitution or laws, the right to beneficially use water pursuant to decrees, contracts, or other water use agreements, or the operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, or use of any water facility.

(V) The acceptance, widening, removal, extension, relocation, narrowing, vacation, abandonment, modification, or change of use of any of the public ways, rights-of-way, including the coordination of such rights-of-way with the rights-of-way of other counties, regions, or municipalities, grounds, open spaces, buildings, properties, utilities, or terminals, referred to in subparagraphs (I) to (IV) of this paragraph (a);

(VI) Methods for assuring access to appropriate conditions for solar, wind, or other alternative energy sources;

(VII) The general character, location, and extent of community centers, townsites, housing developments, whether public or private, the existing, proposed, or projected location of residential neighborhoods and sufficient land for future housing development for the existing and projected economic and other needs of all current and anticipated residents of the county or region, and urban conservation or redevelopment areas. If a county or region has entered into a regional planning

agreement, such agreement may be incorporated by reference into the master plan.

(VIII) The general location and extent of forests, agricultural areas, flood control areas, and open development areas for purposes of conservation, food and water supply, sanitary and drainage facilities, flood control, or the protection of urban development;

(IX) A land classification and utilization program;

(X) Projections of population growth and housing needs to accommodate the projected population for specified increments of time. The county or region may base these projections upon data from the department of local affairs and upon the county's or region's local objectives.

(XI) The location of areas containing steep slopes, geological hazards, endangered or threatened species, wetlands, floodplains, floodways, and flood risk zones, highly erodible land or unstable soils, and wildfire hazards. For purposes of determining the location of such areas, the planning commission should consider the following sources for guidance:

(A) The Colorado geological survey for defining and mapping geological hazards;

(B) The United States fish and wildlife service of the United States department of the interior and the parks and wildlife commission created in section 33-9-101, C.R.S., for locating areas inhabited by endangered or threatened species;

(C) The United States Army corps of engineers and the United States fish and wildlife service national wetlands inventory for defining and mapping wetlands;

(D) The federal emergency management agency for defining and mapping floodplains, floodways, and flood risk zones;

(E) The natural resources conservation service of the United States department of agriculture for defining and mapping unstable soils and highly erodible land; and

(F) The Colorado state forest service for locating wildfire hazard areas.

(b) Any master plan of a county or region which includes mass transportation shall be coordinated with that of any adjacent county, region, or other political subdivision, as the case may be, to eliminate conflicts or inconsistencies and to assure the compatibility of such plans and their implementation pursuant to this section and sections 30-11-101, 30-25-202, and 30-26-301.

(c) The master plan of a county or region shall also include a master plan for the extraction of commercial mineral deposits pursuant to section 34-1-304, C.R.S.

(d) The master plan of a county or region may also include plans for the development of drainage basins in all or portions of the county or region. When county subdivision regulations require the payment of drainage fees, as provided in section 30-28-133 (11), the master plan shall include the plan for the development of drainage basins.

(e) In creating the master plan of a county or region, the county or regional planning commission may take into consideration the availability of affordable housing within the county or region. Counties are encouraged to examine any regulatory impediments to the development of affordable housing.

(f) (Deleted by amendment, L. 2007, p. 612, § 1, effective August 3, 2007.)

(g) The master plan of a county or region may include designated utility corridors to facilitate the provision of utilities to all developments in the county or region.

(4) (a) Each county that has not already adopted a master plan and that meets one of the following descriptions shall adopt a master plan within two years after January 8, 2002:

(I) Each county or city and county that has a population equal to or greater than ten thousand and the population of which has demonstrated an increase of either:

(A) Ten percent or more during the calendar years 1994 to 1999; or

(B) Ten percent or more during any five-year period ending in 2000 or any subsequent year;

(II) Each county or city and county that has a population of one hundred thousand or more.

(b) To the extent the county does not meet a description specified in subparagraph (I) or (II) of paragraph (a) of this subsection (4), the counties of Clear Creek, Gilpin, Morgan, and Pitkin shall adopt a master plan within two years after January 8, 2002.

(c) The department of local affairs shall annually determine, based on the population statistics maintained by said department, whether a county is subject to the requirements of this subsection (4), and shall notify any county that is newly identified as being subject to said requirements. Any such county shall have two years following receipt of notification from the department to adopt a master plan.

(d) Once a county is identified as being subject to the requirements of this subsection (4), the county shall at all times thereafter remain subject to the requirements of this subsection (4), regardless of whether it continues to meet any of the descriptions in paragraph (a) of this subsection (4).

(5) A master plan adopted in accordance with the requirements of subsection (4) of this section shall contain a recreational and tourism uses element pursuant to which the county shall indicate how it

intends to provide for the recreational and tourism needs of residents of the county and visitors to the county through delineated areas dedicated to, without limitation, hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, skiing, cross country skiing, rafting, fishing, boating, hunting, shooting, or any other form of sports or other recreational activity, as applicable, and commercial facilities supporting such uses.

(6) The master plan of any county adopted or amended in accordance with the requirements of this section on and after August 8, 2005, shall satisfy the requirements of section 29-20-105.6, C.R.S., as applicable.

(7) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, no master plan originally adopted or amended in accordance with the requirements of this section shall conflict with a master plan for the extraction of commercial mineral deposits adopted by the county pursuant to section 34-1-304, C.R.S.

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-02PC

A RESOLUTION OF THE LA PLATA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION ADOPTING THE 2015 AMENDED AND RESTATED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the La Plata County Planning Commission ("Planning Commission") has been appointed by the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners ("Board") pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-103;

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-106(1), in 2001 the Planning Commission adopted the La Plata County Comprehensive Community Plan ("2001 Comprehensive Plan") to serve as the master plan for the physical development of the unincorporated territory of the County;

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission updated and revised the 2001 Comprehensive Plan in a document dated November 5, 2015 ("2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan");

WHEREAS, in making the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission considered the appropriate matters set forth in C.R.S. § 30-28-106(3) and made careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and probable future growth of the unincorporated territory of the County pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-107;

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-107, the Planning Commission made the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan for the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the County which, in accordance with present and future needs and resources, will best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, or general welfare of the inhabitants, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development, including such distribution of population and of the uses of land for urbanization, trade, industry, habitation, recreation, agriculture, forestry, and other purposes as will tend to create conditions favorable to health, safety, energy conservation, transportation, prosperity, civic activities, and recreational, educational, and cultural opportunities; will tend to reduce the wastes of physical, financial, or human resources which result from either excessive congestion or excessive scattering of population; and will tend toward an efficient and economic utilization, conservation, and production of the supply of food and water and of drainage, sanitary, and other facilities and resources;

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-106(1), the Planning Commission conducted public hearings, after notice of such public hearings was published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in a manner sufficient to notify the public of the time, place, and nature of the public hearings, prior to final adoption of the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan in order to encourage public participation in and awareness of the development of such plan, and accepted and considered oral and written public comments throughout the process of developing the plan;

WHEREAS, Colorado Department of Local Affairs advised the Planning Commission that it need not submit the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan to the DOLA Division of Planning for advice and recommendations under C.R.S. § 30-28-122, as the DOLA Division of Planning no longer exists;

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-106(3)(a), the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan shows the Planning Commission's recommendations for the development of unincorporated territory of the County;

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-108, the Planning Commission is to adopt the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan by resolution carried by the affirmative votes of not less than a majority of its entire membership, said resolution shall refer expressly to the maps and descriptive matter intended by the Planning Commission to form said plan, and the action taken shall be recorded on the map and descriptive matter by the identifying signature of the secretary of the Planning Commission;

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-109, the Planning Commission is to certify a copy of the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan to the Board, and to the planning commissions of all municipalities within the county; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-106(3)(a), the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan shall be an advisory document to guide land development decisions for the County.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LA PLATA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION:

1. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-106(3)(a), the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan shows the Planning Commission's recommendations for the development of unincorporated territory of La Plata County.

2. The Planning Commission hereby adopts the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan by the affirmative votes of not less than a majority of its entire membership, and directs the Chairperson and Secretary to sign said 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-108.

3. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-109, the Planning Commission directs its Chairperson to certify copies of the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan to the Board and to the planning commissions of all municipalities within La Plata County by delivery of the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan and this Resolution to each.

4. Pursuant to C.R.S. § 30-28-106(3)(a), the 2015 Amended and Restated Comprehensive Plan shall be an advisory document to guide land development decisions for La Plata County.

DONE AND ADOPTED IN DURANGO, LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO, THIS 5th DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2015.

LA PLATA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

(SEAL)

ATTEST:

_____ _____

Clerk to the Commission _____, Chair

_____

_____, Secretary

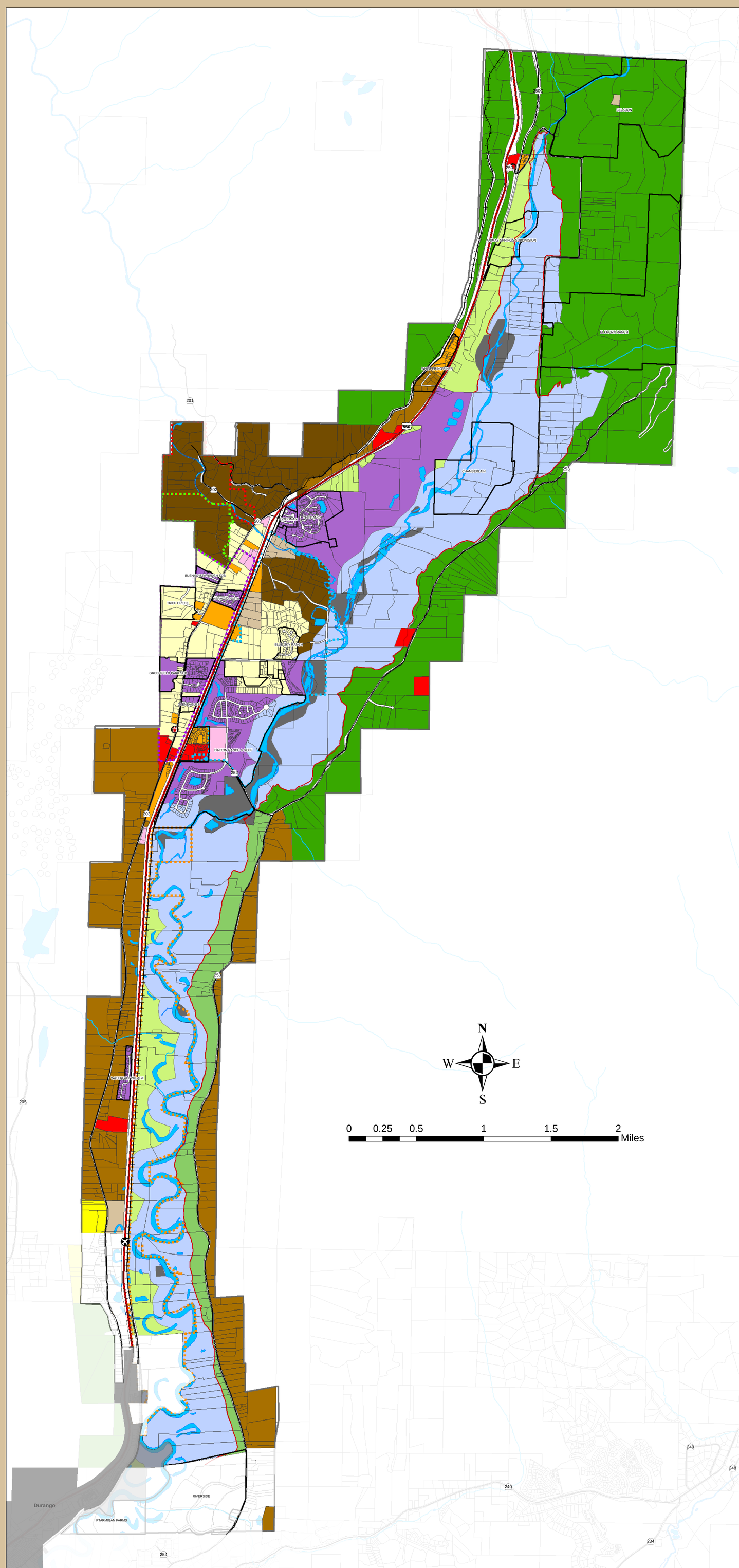
ANIMAS VALLEY DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 3)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

https://www.municode.com/library/co/la_plata_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CO_CH106ZO

Animas Valley Land Use Plan Map



Legend

Land Use Zoning Districts

- 15 Acre Single Family
- 10 Acre Single Family
- 5 Acre Single Family
- 3 Acre Single Family Residential Restricted
- 3 Acre Single Family
- 2 Acre Single Family
- Multi Family Residential
- 1 Acre Single Family Residential Restricted
- 1 Acre Single Family Residential
- High Density Single Family/PUD
- Neighborhood Commercial
- General Commercial
- River Corridor
- Industrial

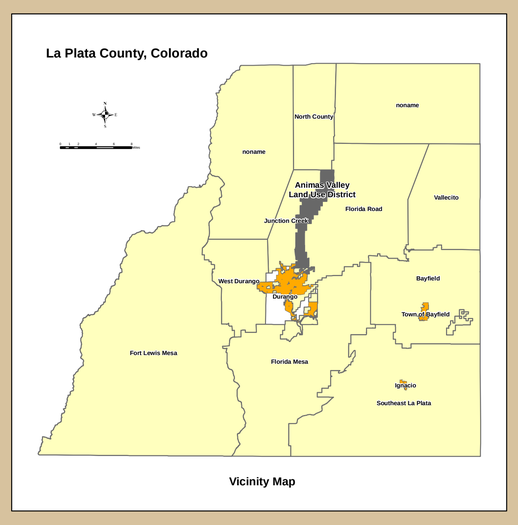
Neighborhood Zoning Districts

- Bruce Lane Zoning District
- Central Animas Valley Zoning District
- Hermosa Creek Zoning District
- Hermosa West Zoning District
- Hermosa/Animas Valley Zoning District
- Parcels
- Lakes and Rivers
- Streams
- Partial 100 year Flood

Roads

- US
- State
- County

- Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad
- Animas Fire - Trimble Station
- Gliderport



Vicinity Map

Date:	Resolution:
February 23, 2005	Resolution 2005-14 903363
September 21, 2006	Resolution 2006-030 942509
June 20, 2008	Resolution 2008-17 978933
March 28, 2011	Resolution 2011-08 1028584

Note: 100 Year Flood Plain as shown on this map has been digitized from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) having an effective date of December 15, 1981.

Note: All geologic hazards may not be shown in the "Critical Lands" land use classification. See La Plata County's Geologic Hazard and Constraint Maps and its accompanying explanatory text for more information.

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It should only be used for general planning purposes.

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

T:\Overfield\rj2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\AV_Zoning — Date: 10/28/15
For: Planning Department — By: RO

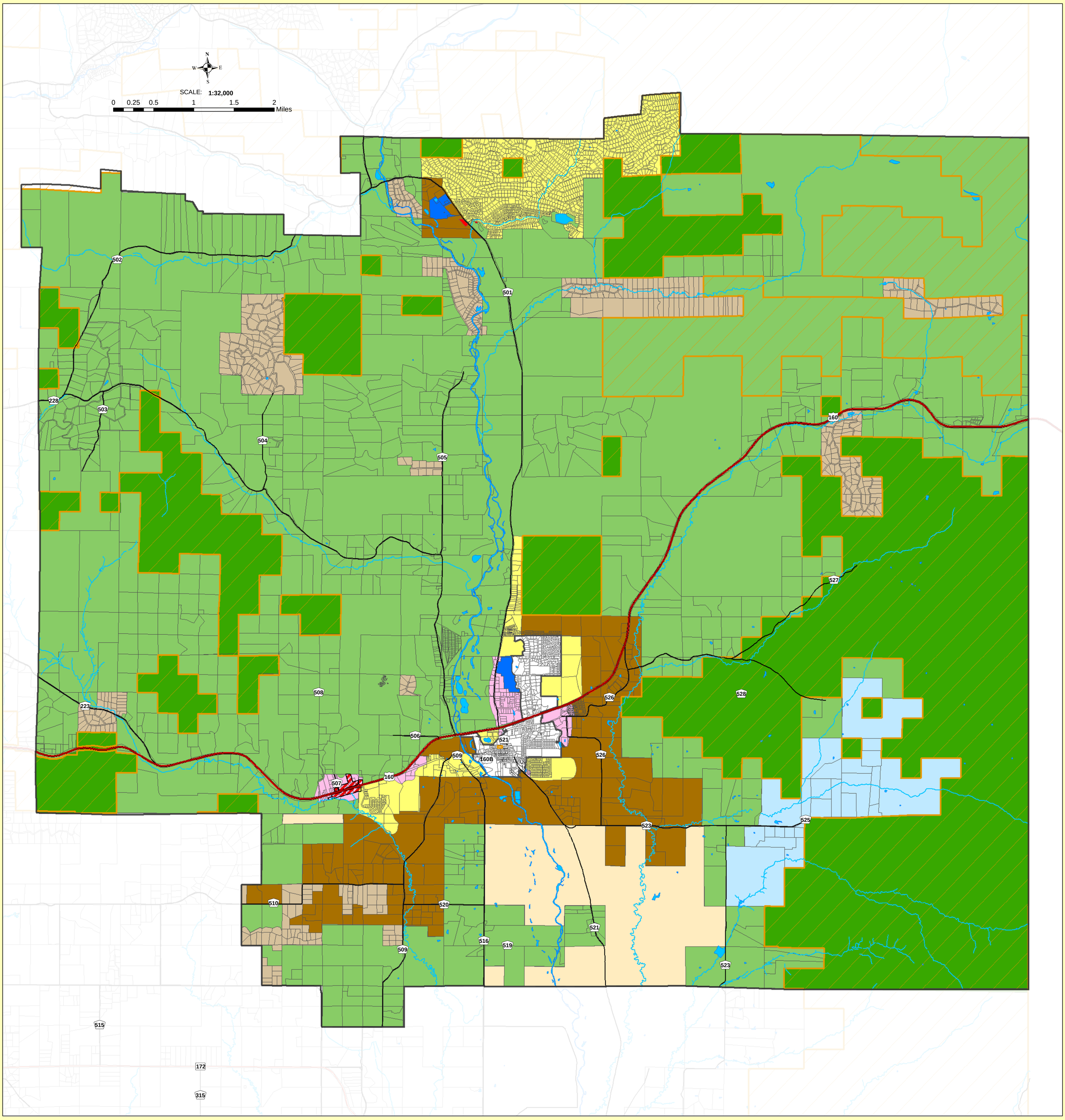
BAYFIELD DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 4)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

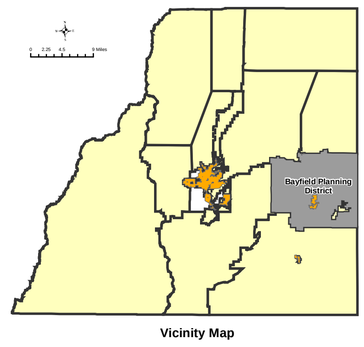
Bayfield Planning District
Land Use Classification Map



Legend

- US
- State
- County
- Streams
- Public Lands
- Lakes and Rivers
- 100 Year Flood Plain
- Gem Village Business Overlay
- Parcels
- Ag/Timber/Recreation
- Ag/Rural Residential
- Perimeter Residential
- Large Lot Residential
- Suburban Density Residential
- Tribal
- Local Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Crowbar Creek Neighborhood Planning Area
- Public and Community Facility
- Bayfield Town Limits

La Plata County, Colorado



Vicinity Map

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Note: All geologic hazards may not be shown in the 'Critical Lands' land use classification. See La Plata County's Geologic Hazard and Constraint Maps and its accompanying explanatory text for more information.

Note: 100 Year Flood Plain as shown on this map has been digitized from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) having an effective date of December 15, 1981.

DONE AND ADOPTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CORRESPONDING BAYFIELD DISTRICT LAND USE PLAN IN DURANGO, LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO this 15th day of July, 1997.

Date: Resolution:

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

T:\Overfield\j2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\Bayfield Date: 10/28/15
For: Planning Department By: RO

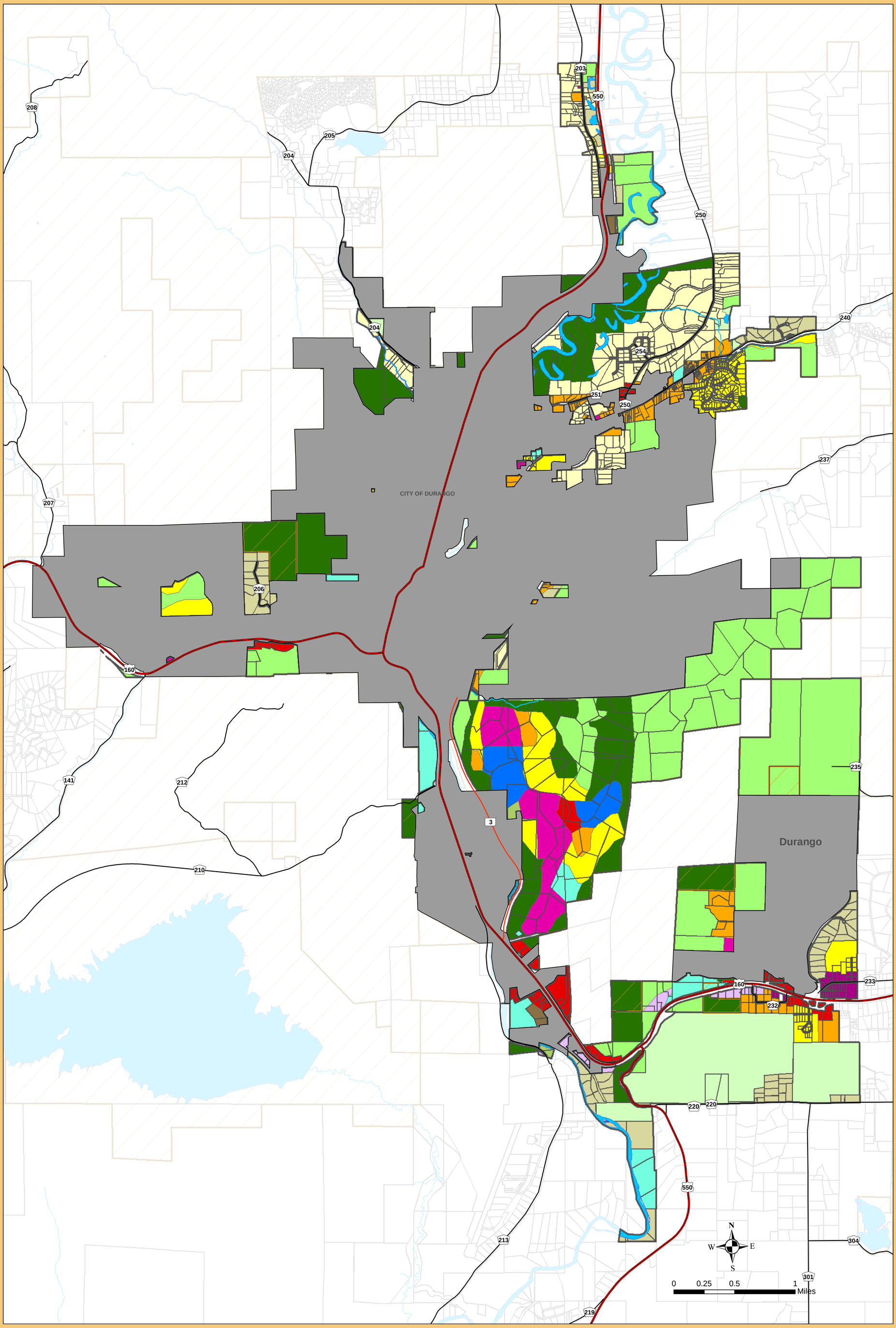
DURANGO DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 5)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

Durango District Plan
Land Use Classification Map

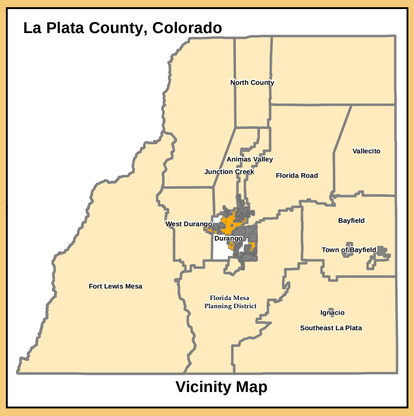


Legend

Roads
- US
- State
- County
- durangodisterase
- Lakes and Rivers
- Streams
- Parcels
- Public Lands

Future Land Use
- Business Park
- CB Mixed Use (Up to 24 DUs/Acre)
- Commercial
- Conservation Open Space
- High Density Residential (12 - 24 DUs/Acre)
- Industrial
- Large Lot Residential (1 to 3 Acres)
- Low Density Residential (1 to 4.99 DUs/Acre)
- Medium Density Residential (5 to 11.99 DUs/Acre)
- Mixed Commercial/Industrial
- Mixed Use (Up to 24 DUs/Acre)
- Multiple Use
- Park and Recreation
- Public/Quasi Public
- Rural (1 DU per 35 Acres,Minimum)
- Rural Estates (1 DU per 10 Acres, Minimum)
- Rural Residential (1 DU per 3 Acres, Minimum)

La Plata County, Colorado



Vicinity Map

Date:	Resolution:

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LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

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For: Planning Department — By: RO

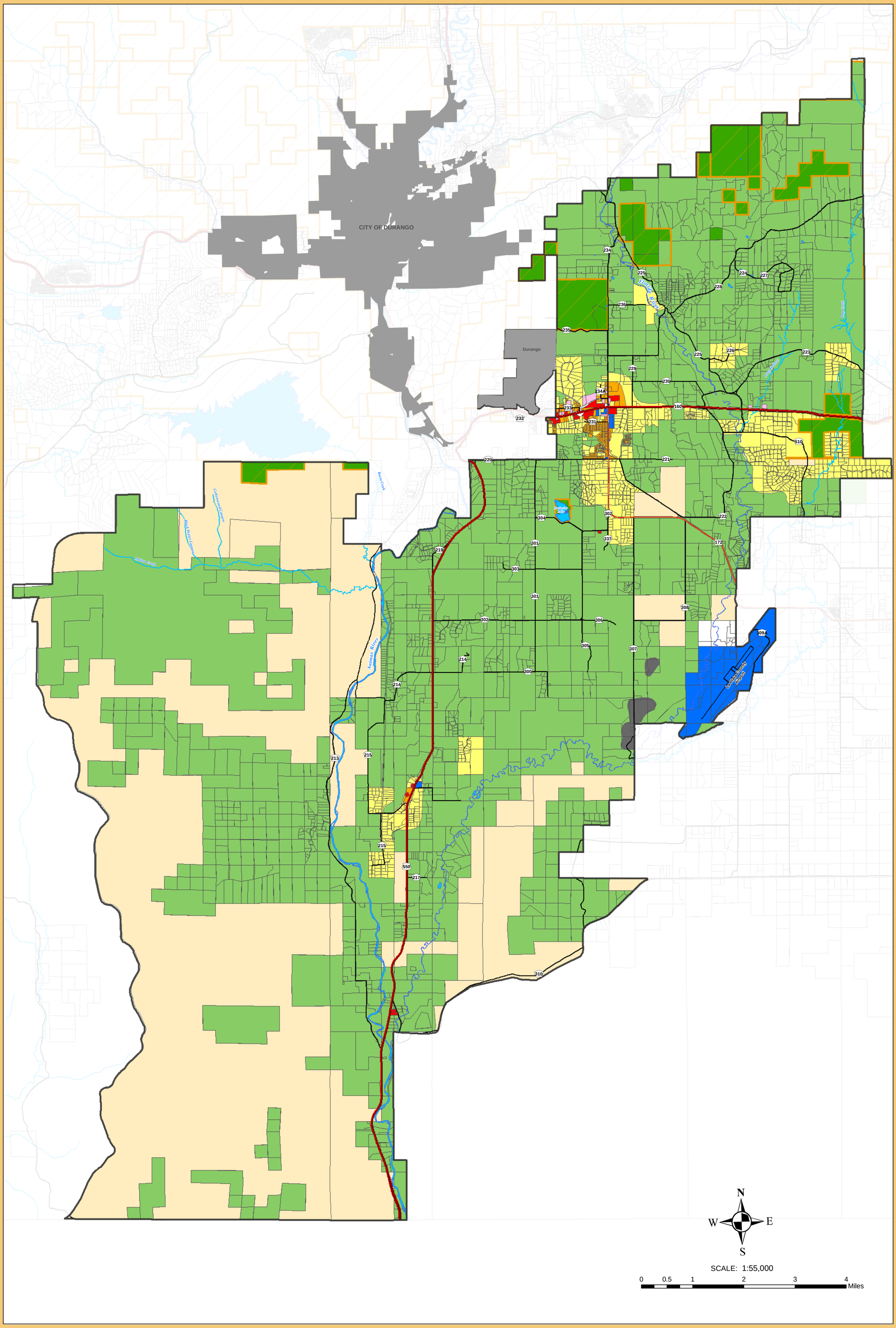
FLORIDA MESA DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 6)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

Florida Mesa Planning District
Land Use Classification Map

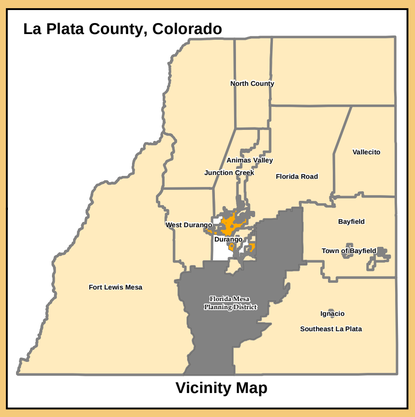


Legend

- Ag/Timber/Recreation
- Ag/Rural Residential
- Suburban Density Residential
- Medium Density
- Tribal
- Local Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Office/Light Industrial
- Public and Community Facility
- Parcels
- Public Lands
- Lakes and Rivers
- Streams

Roads

- US
- State
- County



Vicinity Map

Date:	Resolution:

Note: Some source data provided by Harrison DATASETS, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Note: All geologic hazards may not be shown in the "Critical Lands" land use classification. See La Plata County's Geologic Hazard and Constraint Maps and its accompanying explanatory text for more information.

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It should only be used for general planning purposes.

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS
T:\Overfield\rj\2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\Florida Mesa — Date: 10/28/15
For: Planning Department — By: RO

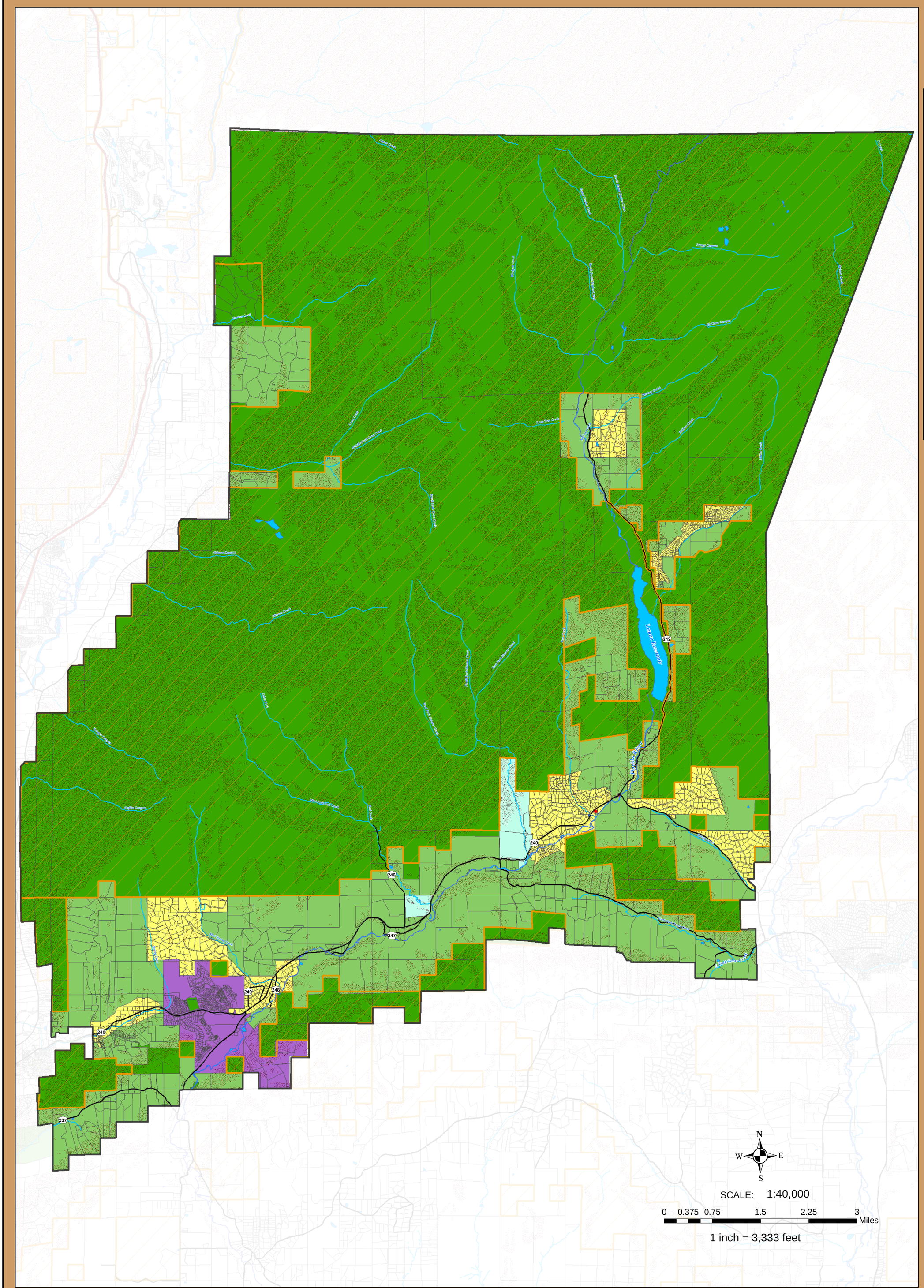
FLORIDA ROAD DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 7)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

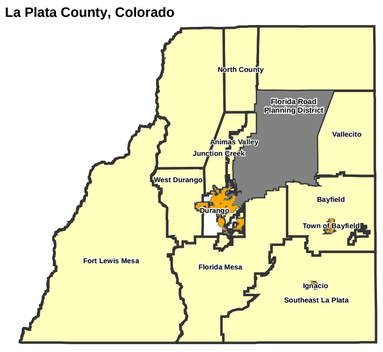
Florida Road Planning District
Land Use Classification Map



Legend

Roads
- US
- State
- County
- Lakes and Rivers
- Public Lands
- Parcels
- Streams
- Critical Lands
- Ag/Timber/Recreation
- Ag/Rural Residential
- Suburban Density Residential
- Local Commercial
- PUD-Edgemont Ranch
- Public and Community Facility
- Tourist/Agriculture/Dude Ranch

La Plata County, Colorado



Vicinity Map

DONE AND ADOPTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CORRESPONDING FLORIDA ROAD DISTRICT LAND USE PLAN IN DURANGO, LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO this 2nd day of October, 1996.

Date:	Resolution:

Note: All geologic hazards may not be shown in the 'Critical Lands' land use classification. See La Plata County's Geologic Hazard and Constraint Maps and its accompanying explanatory text for more information.

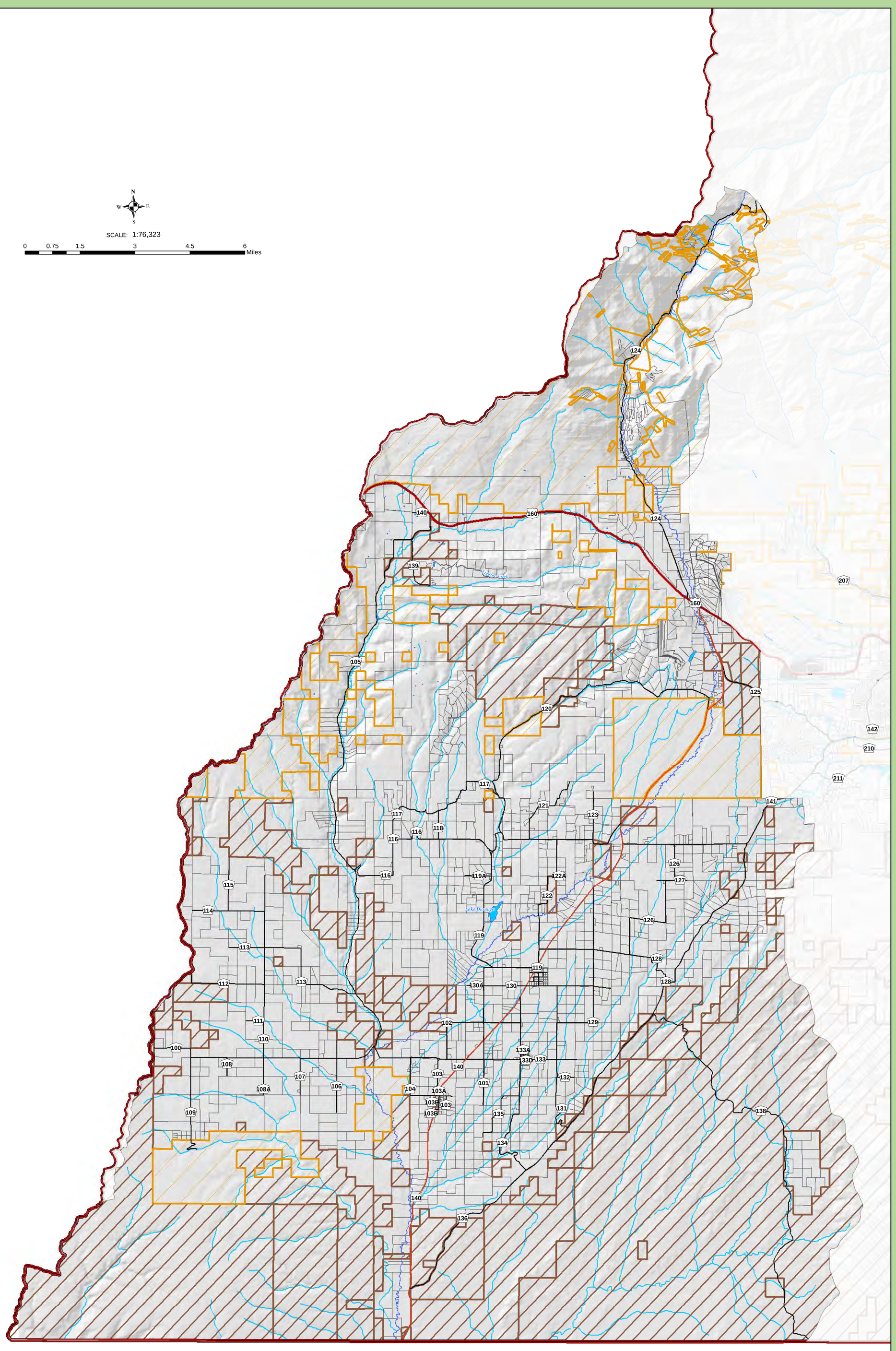
No warranties, expressed or implied, are made as to the fitness and accuracy of this data. It should only be used for general planning purposes.

FORT LEWIS MESA DISTRICT PLAN
(Appendix 8)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

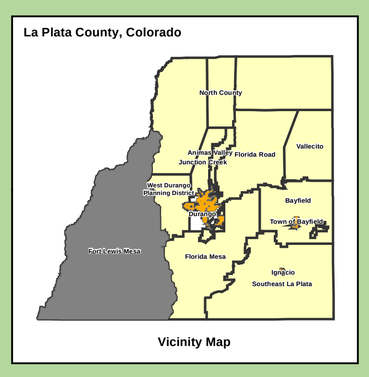
Fort Lewis Mesa Planning District
Land Use Classification Map



Legend

Roads

- US
- State
- County
- County Boundary
- Public Lands
- Tribal Lands
- Lakes and Rivers
- Parcels
- Streams



Date: Resolution:

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It should only be used for general planning purposes.

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS
T:\Overfield\2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\Fort Lewis Mesa Date: 10/28/15
For: Planning Department By: RO

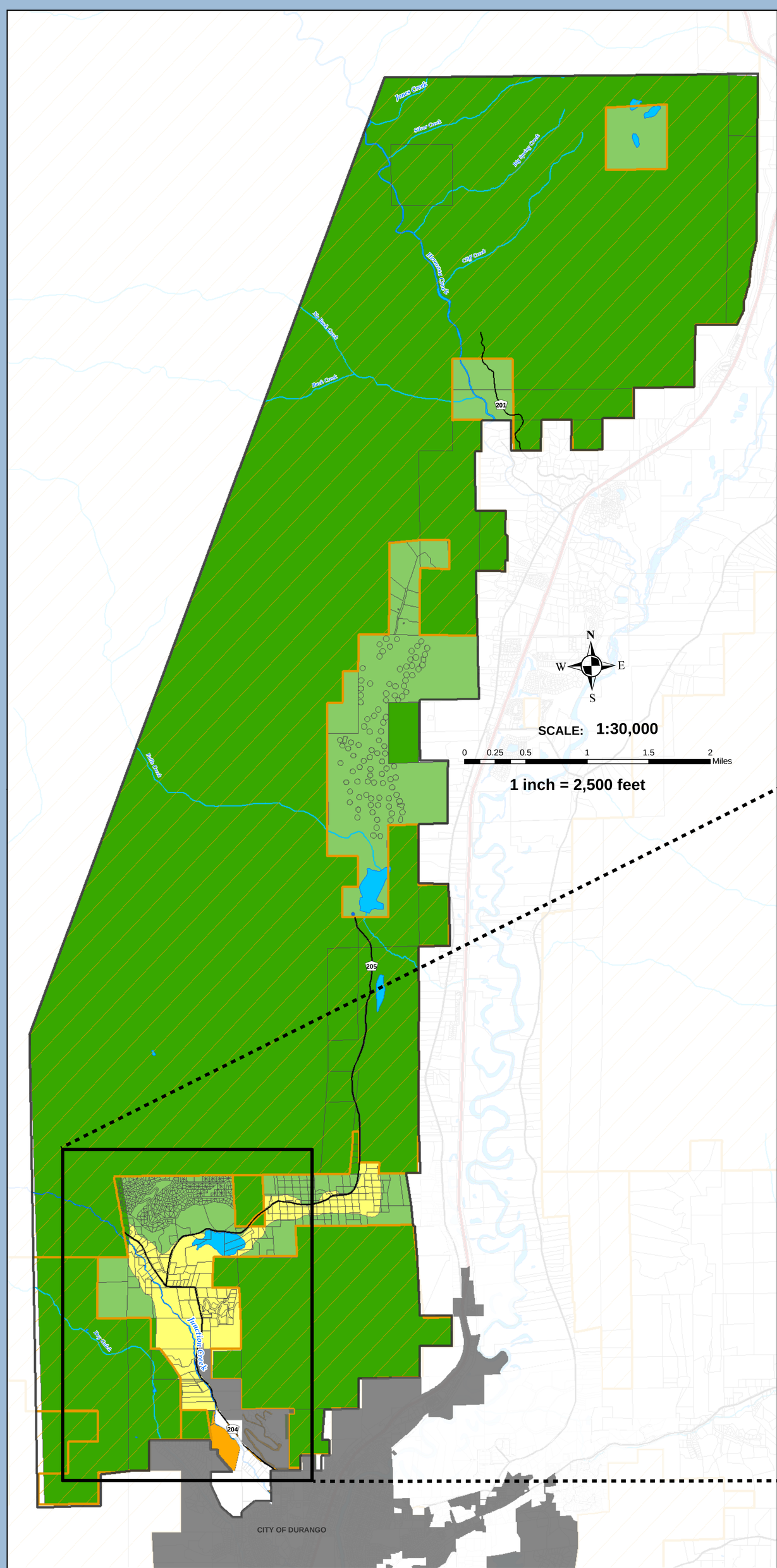
JUNCTION CREEK DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 9)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

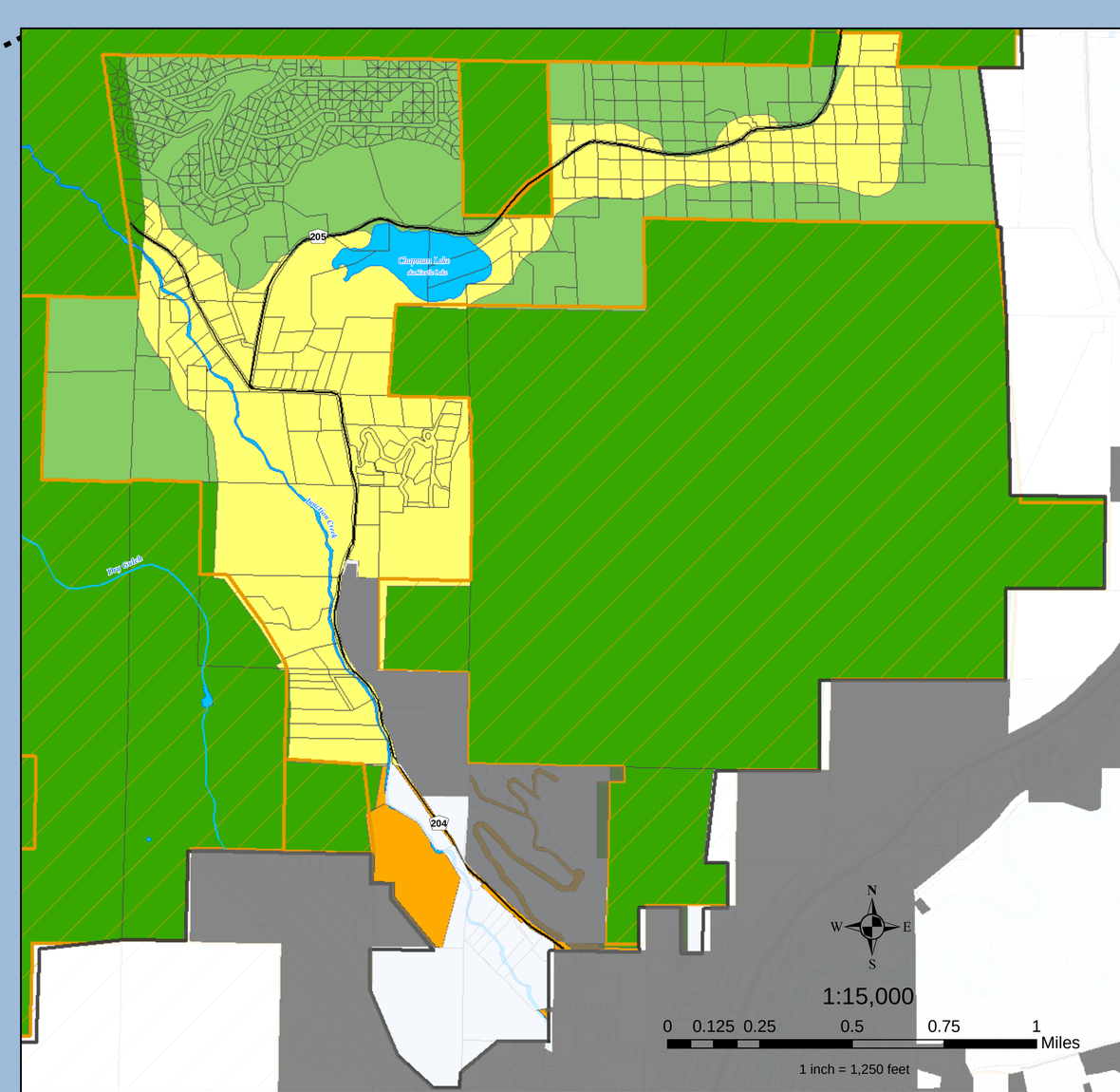
Junction Creek Planning District
Land Use Classification Map



Inset: The Junction Creek Planning District

Legend

Roads
- US
- State
- County
- Public Lands
- Parcels
- Lakes and Rivers
- Streams
- Ag/Timber/Recreation
- Ag/Rural Residential
- City Adjacent Residential
- Residential 3-6 acres
- Public and Community Facility



Inset: Southern Portion of the Junction Creek Planning District

DISCLAIMER:

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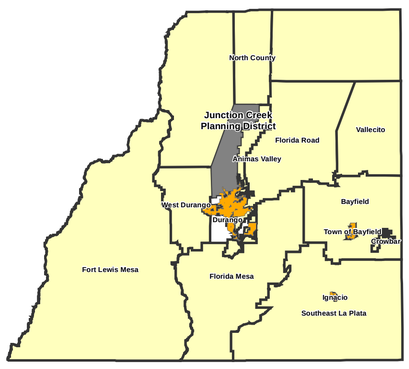
It should only be used for general planning purposes.

Note: All geologic hazards may not be shown in the 'Critical Lands' land use classification. See La Plata County's Geologic Hazard and Constraint Maps and its accompanying explanatory text for more information.

Note: 100 Year Flood Plain as shown on this map has been digitized from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) having an effective date of December 15, 1981.

La Plata County, Colorado



Vicinity Map

DONE AND ADOPTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CORRESPONDING JUNCTION CREEK DISTRICT LAND USE PLAN IN DURANGO LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO this 12th day of June, 1997.

Date:	Resolution:

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

T:\Overfield\rj\2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\Junction Creek — Date: 10/28/15
For: Planning Department — By: RO

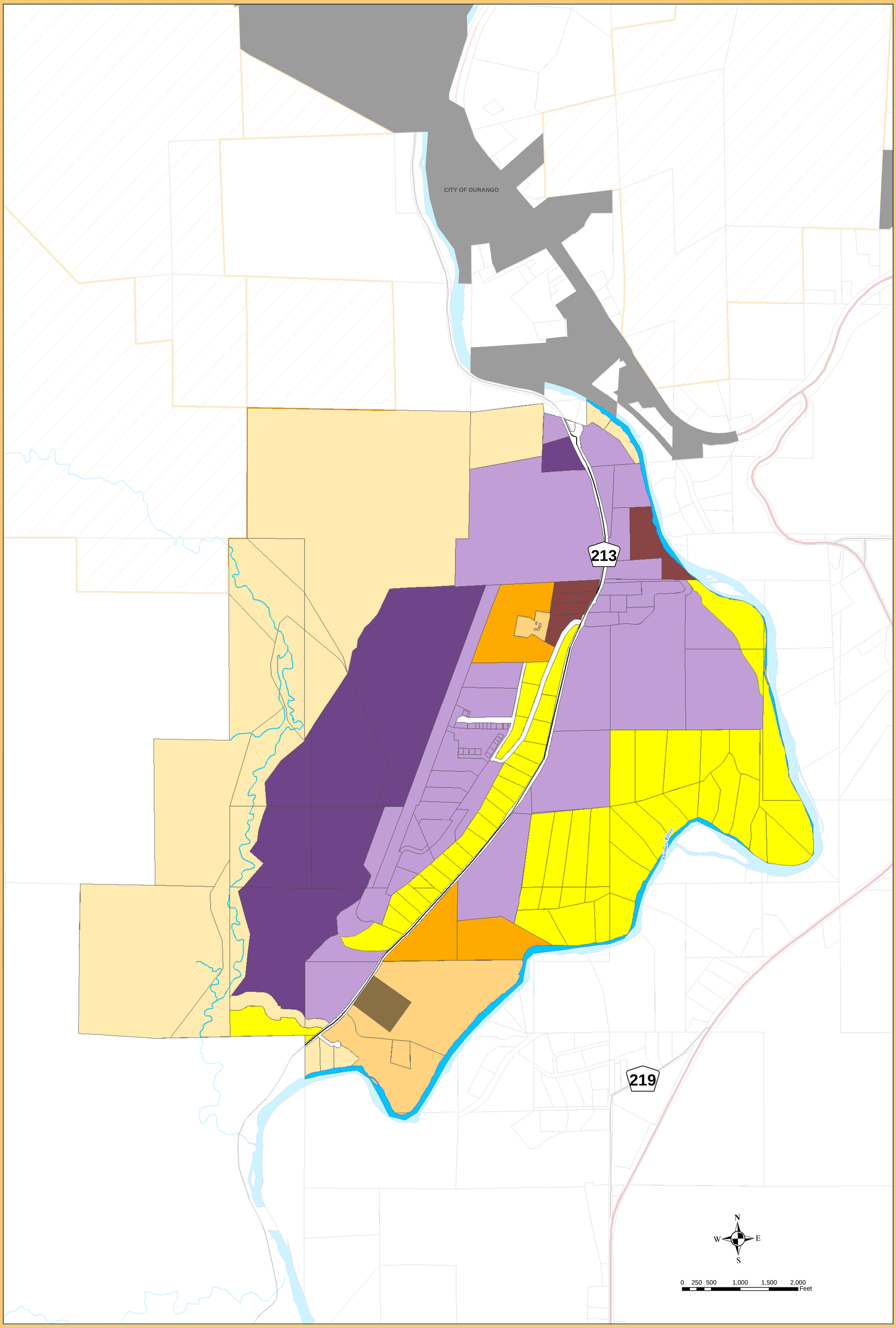
LA POSTA ROAD AREA DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 10)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

La Posta Road Area DIstrict Plan
Land Use Classification Map

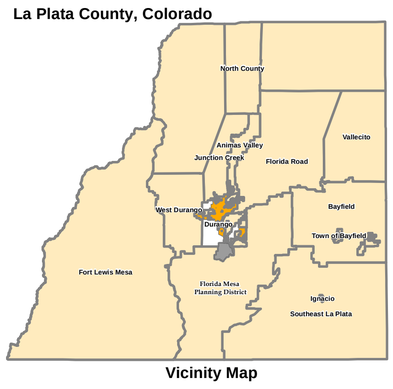


Legend

Roads

- US
- State
- County
- Lakes and Rivers
- Streams
- Public Lands
- Parcels
- High Density Residential
- Industrial
- Large Lot Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Mixed Commercial/Light Industrial
- Mixed/Multiple Use
- Rural
- Rural Residential

La Plata County, Colorado



Vicinity Map

Date:	Resolution:

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It should only be used for general planning purposes.

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

T:\Overfield\rj\2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\La Posta — Date: 10/28/15
For: Planning Department — By: RO

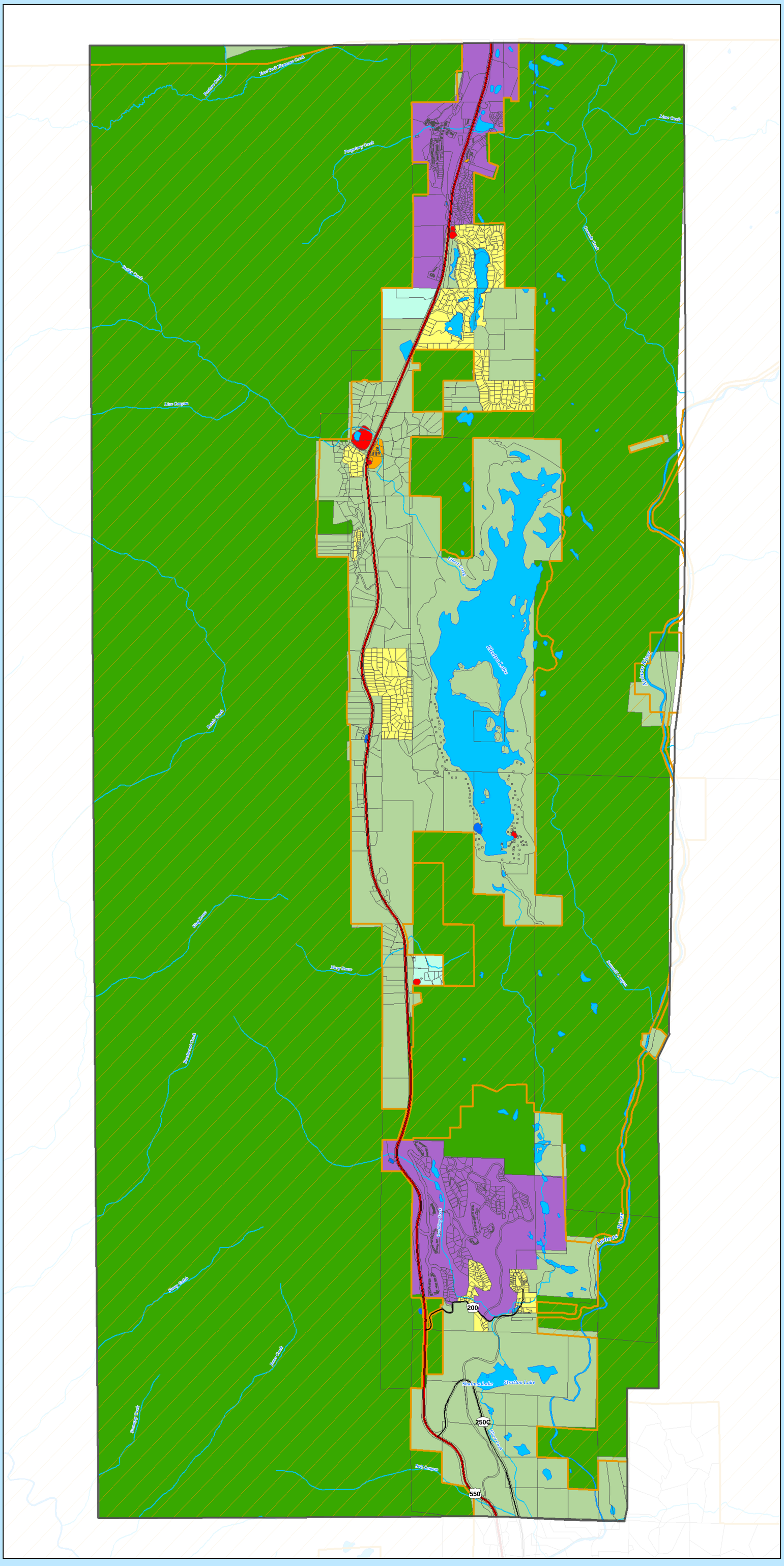
NORTH COUNTY DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 11)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

North County Planning District
Land Use Classification Map



Legend

- Ag/Timber/Public Recreation
- Large Lot Residential
- Suburban Density Residential
- High Density
- Local Commercial
- Resort
- Public and Community Facility
- Lake
- Country Tourist/Dude Ranch
- Parcels
- Public Lands
- Lakes and Rivers
- Streams

Roads

- US
- State
- County

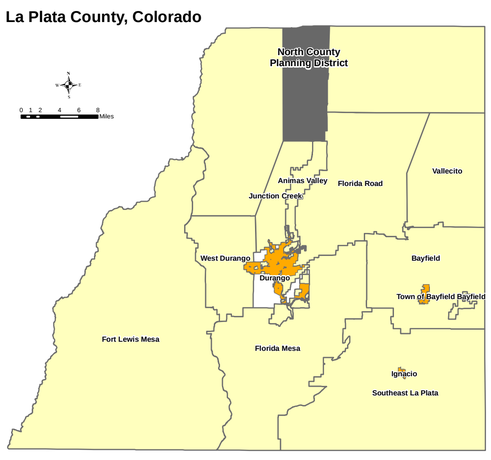
N
W E
S

SCALE: 1:24,000

0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

1 inch = 2,000 feet

La Plata County, Colorado



Vicinity Map

Done and adopted in conjunction with the corresponding north county district land use plan. In Durango, La Plata County, Colorado this 8th day of October 1996.

Date:	Resolution:

Note: Some source data provided by Harrison Datasets, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Note: All geologic hazards may not be shown in the "Critical Lands" land use classification. See La Plata County's Geologic Hazard and Constraint Maps and its accompanying explanatory text for more information.

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

T:\Overfield\rj\2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\North County — Date: 10/28/15
For: Planning Department — By: RO

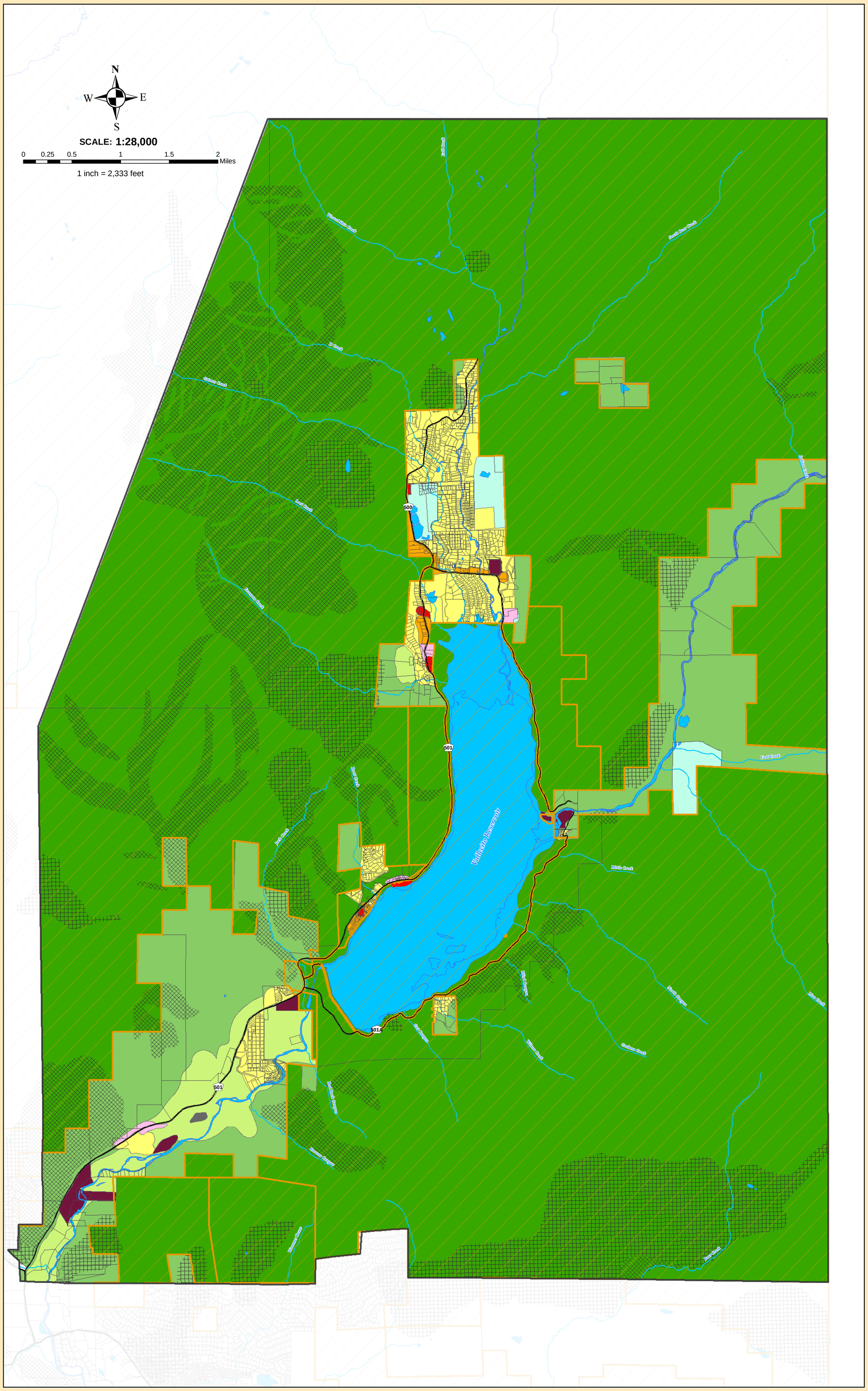
VALLECITO DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 12)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

Vallecito Planning District
Land Use Classification Map



Legend

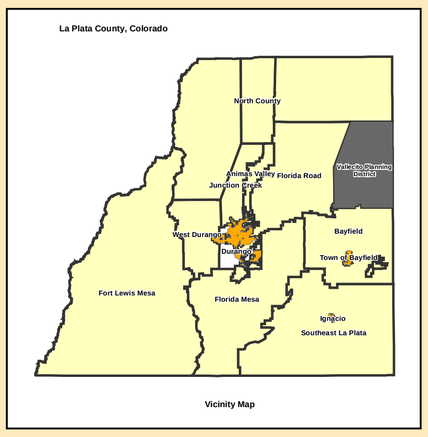
- Ag/Timber/Recreation
- Ag/Rural Residential
- Large Lot Residential
- Suburban Density Residential
- Mixed Residential/Accommodations
- Mixed Use
- Local Commercial
- Industrial
- Campground/Accommodations
- Public and Community Facility
- lake
- Tourist/Agriculture/Dude Ranch
- Public Lands
- Parcels

Geohazards

- Landslides
- Unstable Slopes
- Lakes and Rivers
- Streams

Roads

- US
- State
- County



Vicinity Map

DONE AND ADOPTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CORRESPONDING VALLECITO DISTRICT LAND USE PLAN IN DURANGO, LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO this 16th day of October, 1996.

Date: Resolution:

DISCLAIMER:

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It should only be used for general planning purposes.

Note: All geologic hazards may not be shown in the 'Critical Lands' land use classification. See La Plata County's Geologic Hazard and Constraint Maps and its accompanying explanatory text for more information.

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

T:\Overfield\rj\2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\Vallecito Date: 10/28/15
For: Planning Department By: RO

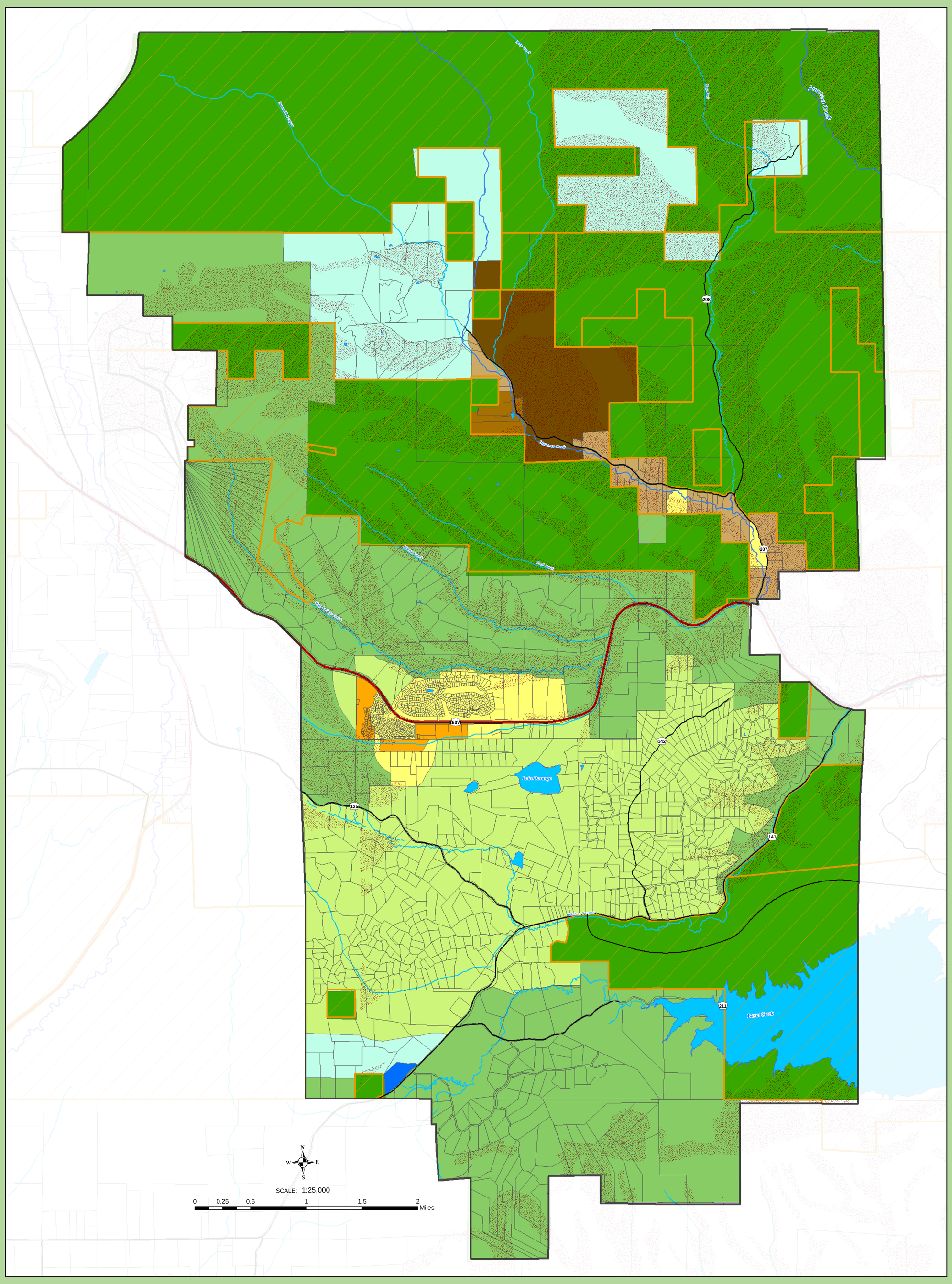
WEST DURANGO DISTRICT PLAN

(Appendix 13)

The entire Plan, this appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/departments_officials/planning/district_maps

West Durango Planning District
Land Use Classification Map

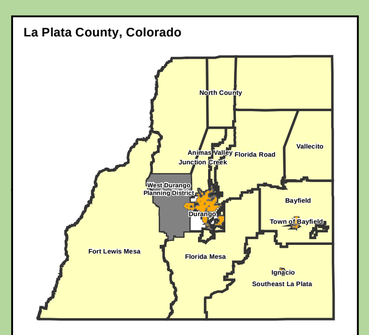


Legend

- Ag/Timber/Recreation
- Ag/Rural Residential
- Large Lot Residential
- Ag/Residential 35
- Residential 10
- Residential 3
- Medium Density
- Suburban Density Residential
- Tourist/Agriculture/Dude Ranch
- Public and Community Facility
- Parcels
- Public Lands
- Critical Lands
- Lakes and Rivers
- Streams

Roads

- US
- State
- County



Vicinity Map

DONE AND ADOPTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CORRESPONDING WEST DURANGO DISTRICT LAND USE PLAN IN DURANGO LA PLATA COUNTY, COLORADO this 1st day of July, 1997.

Date:	Resolution:

DISCLAIMER:

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It should only be used for general planning purposes.

Note: All geologic hazards may not be shown in the 'Critical Lands' land use classification. See La Plata County's Geologic Hazard and Constraint Maps and its accompanying explanatory text for more information.

LA PLATA COUNTY
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

T:\Overfield\rj\2015 Projects\Planning\updated district plan pdf\West_Durango — Date: 10/28/15
For: Planningt Department — By: RO

2030 TRIP

(Appendix 14)

This appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://co.laplata.co.us/publications/2011/05/2030_trip_transportation_integrated_plan

La Plata County and the City of Durango

2030 Transportation Integrated Plan

2030 TRIP

TRansportation Integrated Plan

June 2, 2006

LSA

LA PLATA TRAILS PLAN, 2000

(Appendix 15)

This appendix item of the *La Plata County Comprehensive Plan*, may be found at the following link:

http://www.co.laplata.co.us/departments_elected_officials/planning/codes_plans_maps_1

LA PLATA COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

2000

PLANNING holton ASSOCIATES

AIRPORT MASTER PLAN

(Appendix 16)

Reserved pending completion in 2016

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

(Appendix 17)

Reserved Pending Completion of Updates to Plan

COLORADO WATER PLAN

(Appendix 18)

Reserved pending completion

MAPS OF EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

(Appendix 19)

La Plata County, Colorado Vacant Parcels Over One Mile From Utility Gas Service

Legend

- Gas Transmission Lines
- Atmos Service Area
- SourceGas Distribution Lines
- Vacant Parcels Over One Mile From Gas Service
- Municipalities
- United States Highways
- Colorado State Highways

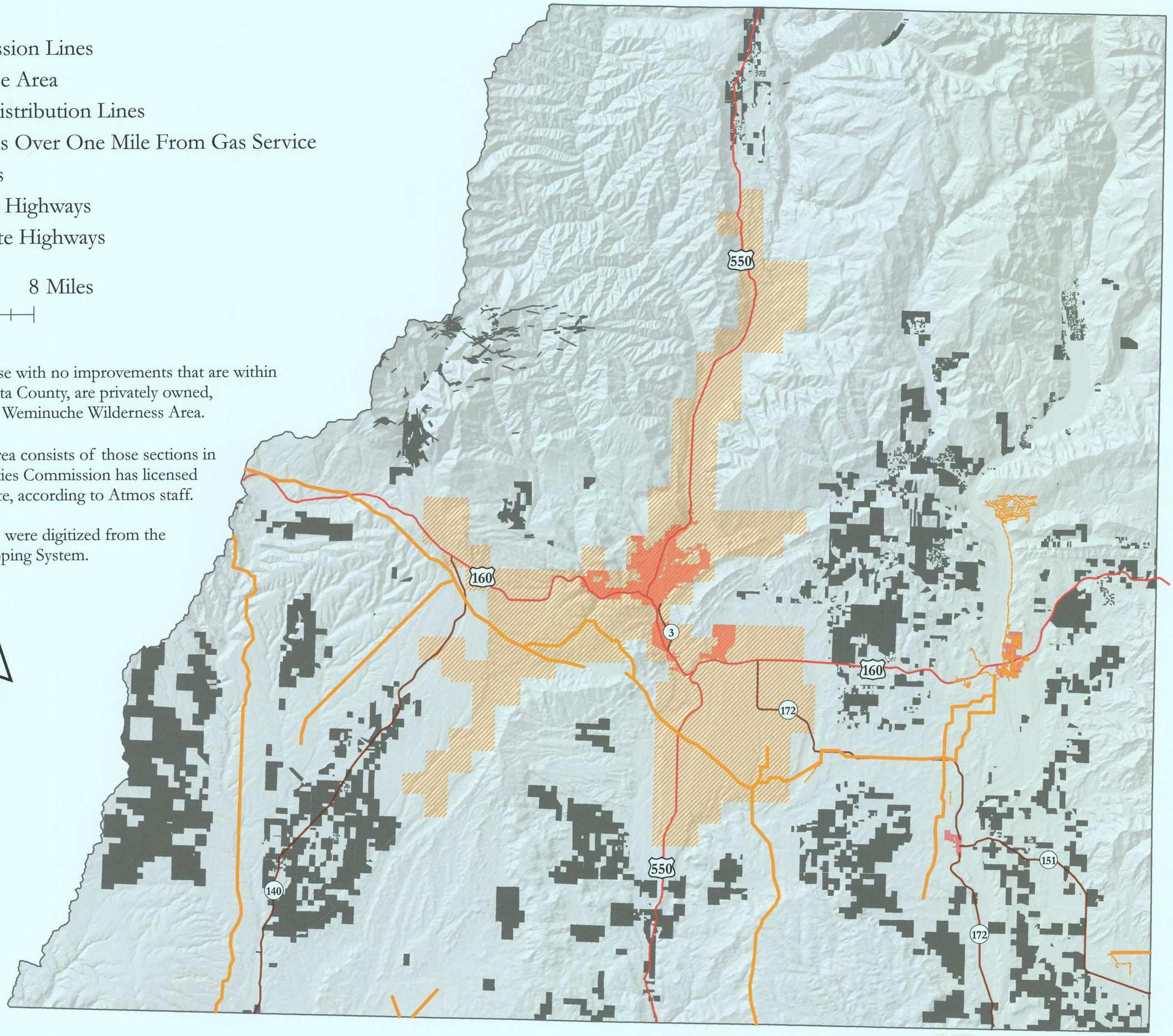
0 2 4 8 Miles

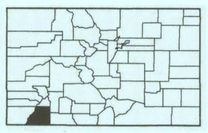
Vacant parcels are those with no improvements that are within unincorporated La Plata County, are privately owned, and are not within the Weminuche Wilderness Area.

The Atmos Service Area consists of those sections in which the Public Utilities Commission has licensed the company to operate, according to Atmos staff.

Gas transmission lines were digitized from the National Pipeline Mapping System.

N





Colorado

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La Plata County Colorado

Planning Department

January 21, 2015

La Plata County, Colorado

Utility Gas Service Areas and Vacant Parcels

Legend

- Gas Transmission Lines
- Atmos Service Area
- SourceGas Distribution Lines
- Vacant Parcels
- Municipalities
- 550 United States Highways
- 140 Colorado State Highways

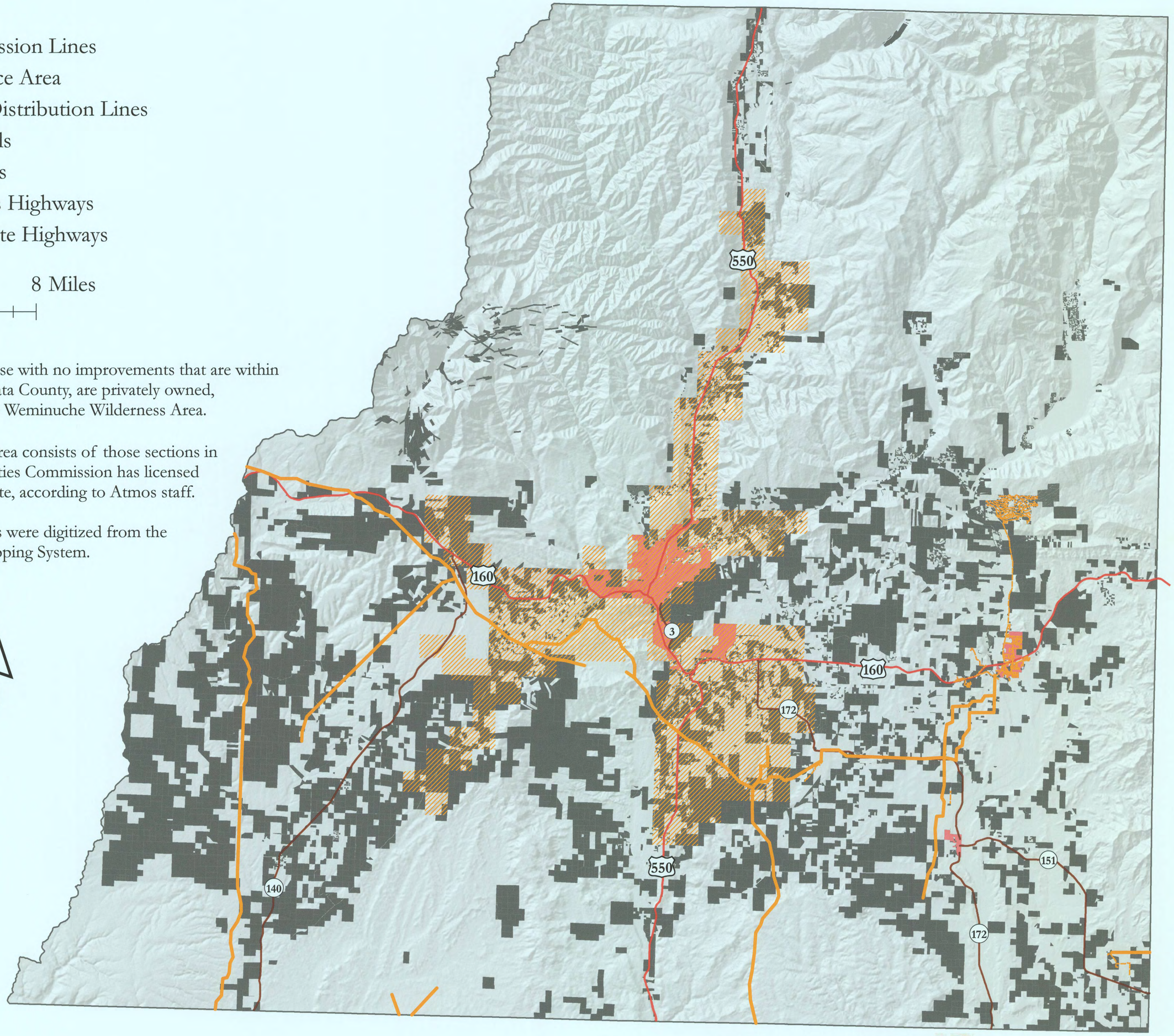
0 2 4 8 Miles

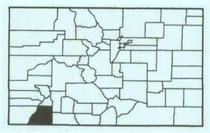
Vacant parcels are those with no improvements that are within unincorporated La Plata County, are privately owned, and are not within the Weminuche Wilderness Area.

The Atmos Service Area consists of those sections in which the Public Utilities Commission has licensed the company to operate, according to Atmos staff.

Gas transmission lines were digitized from the National Pipeline Mapping System.

N





Colorado

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La Plata County Colorado

Planning Department

January 21, 2015

La Plata County, Colorado

Telecommunications Facilities

Legend

- Land Mobile Radio Antennae, Private
- Microwave Antennae
- Analog (NTSC) TV Antennae
- Land Mobile Radio Antenne, Commercial
- Land Mobile Radio Antennae, Broadcast (Four Corners Radio)
- FM Antennae
- Paging Antenna
- Mapped Telecommunication Towers
- City and Town Limits
- San Juan National Forest

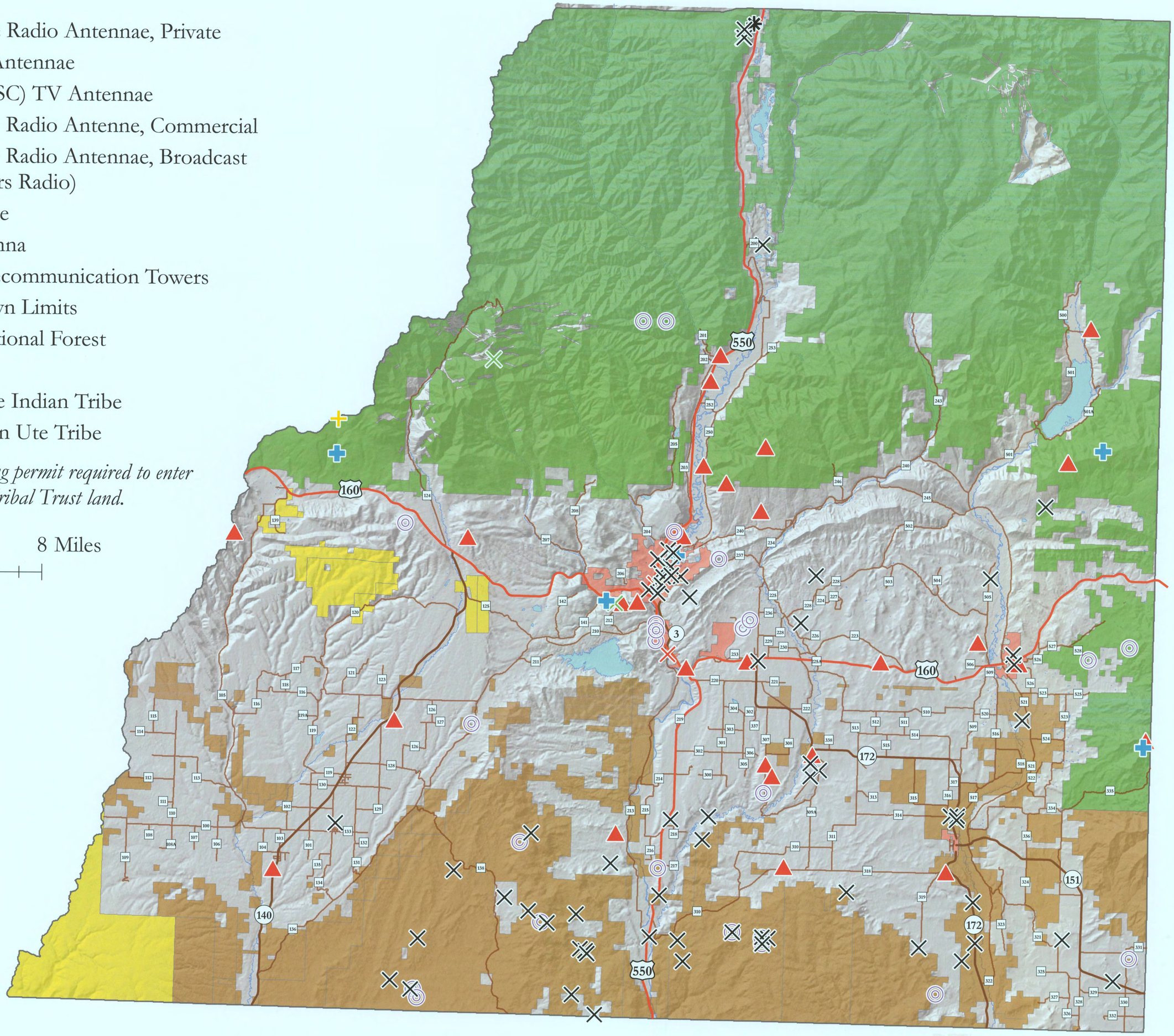
Tribal Lands

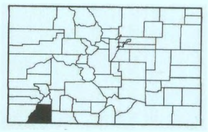
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

Tribal lands crossing permit required to enter onto or cross over Tribal Trust land.

0 2 4 8 Miles

N





Colorado

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La Plata County Colorado

Planning Department

February 23, 2015

La Plata County, Colorado

Sanitation Facilities

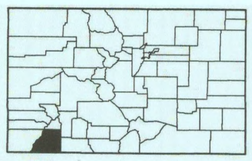
Legend

- Sewer Lines
- Sanitation Districts
- Major Lakes and Rivers
- Municipal Boundaries

0 2 4 8 Miles

N

Purgatory Metro
Elbert Creek Water & San. (Not Currently Operating)
Electra Lake
Tamarron Metro
Hermosa Creek
Animas River
Florida River
Vallecito Creek
Upper Valley San.
Sierra Verde San.
Hermosa San.
Lightner Creek
Junction Creek
Lemon Reservoir
Vallecito Reservoir
Durango
Edgemont Ranch Metro
Forest Lakes Metro
South Dgo. San.
Durango West
La Plata River
Lake Nighthorse
Loma Linda San.
Bayfield
Pastorius
Durango La Plata Cty. Airport
Ignacio
Los Pinos River
160
550
3
172
151
140



Colorado

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La Plata County Colorado

Planning Department

December 19, 2014

La Plata County, Colorado

Road Map with Public and Tribal Lands

Legend

- United States Highways
- Colorado State Highways
- County Roads
- City, Town, & Subdivision Roads
- Forest Service Roads
- City and Town Limits
- Landmarks

Tribal Lands

- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

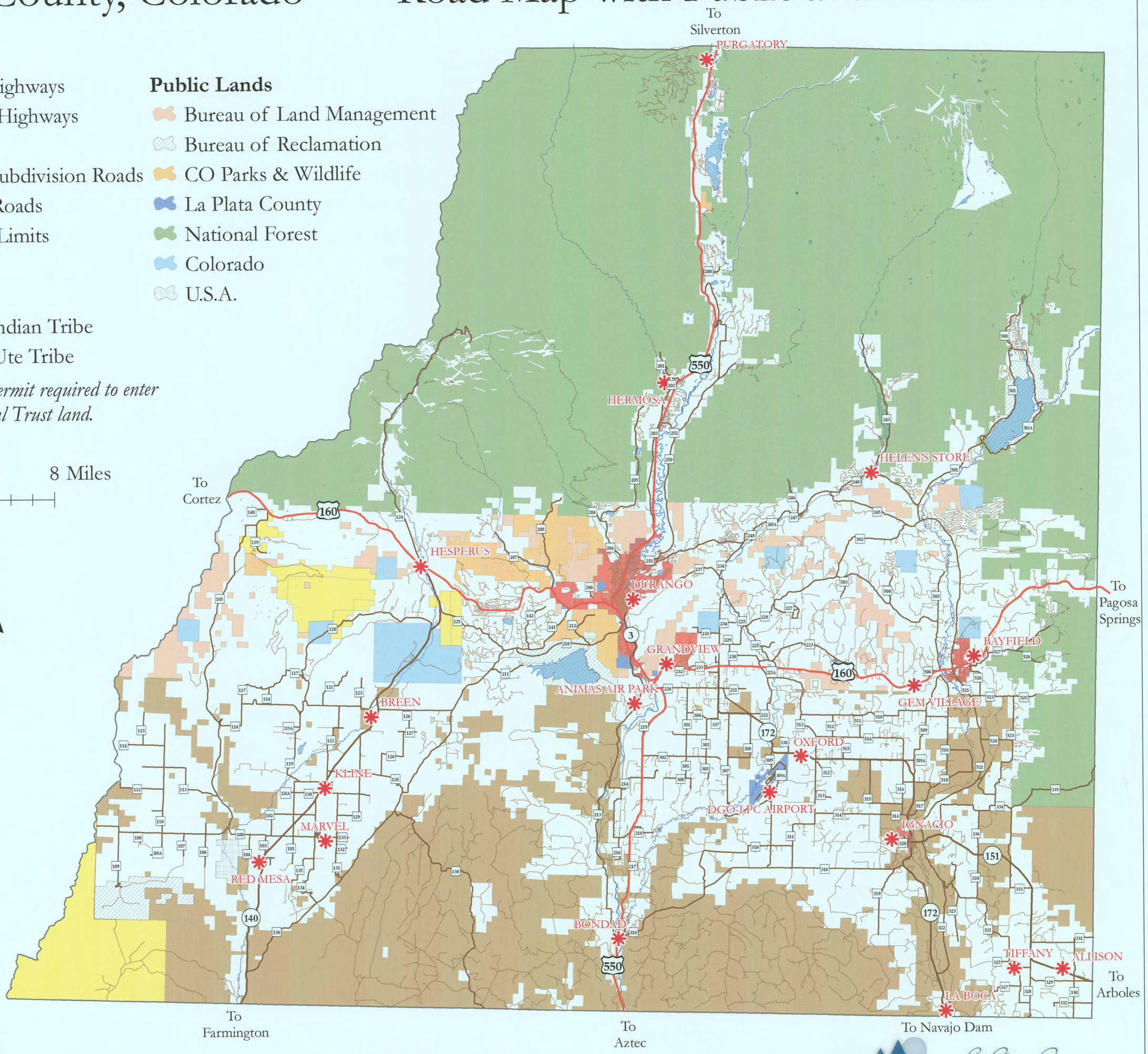
Tribal lands crossing permit required to enter onto or cross over Tribal Trust land.

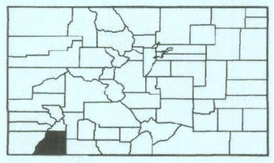
Public Lands

- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- CO Parks & Wildlife
- La Plata County
- National Forest
- Colorado
- U.S.A.

0 2 4 8 Miles

N





Colorado

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La Plata County Colorado

Planning Department

January 6, 2015

La Plata County, Colorado

Drainage Sub-Basins

Legend

- Major Lakes and Rivers
- Municipal Boundaries

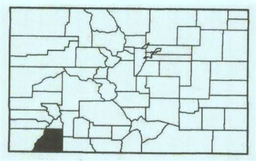
Drainage Sub-Basins

- Animas
- Middle San Juan
- Upper San Juan

0 2 4 8 Miles

N

Electra Lake
Hermosa Creek
Animas River
Vallecito Creek
Los Pinos River
550
Lightner Creek
Junction Creek
Lemon Reservoir
Vallecito Reservoir
Animas
Florida River
160
3
Upper San Juan
La Plata River
Lake Nighthorse
Pastorius
Middle San Juan
172
Animas River
Los Pinos River
151
140
550
172



Colorado

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La Plata County Colorado

Planning Department

December 18, 2014

La Plata County, Colorado

Community Water Systems Map

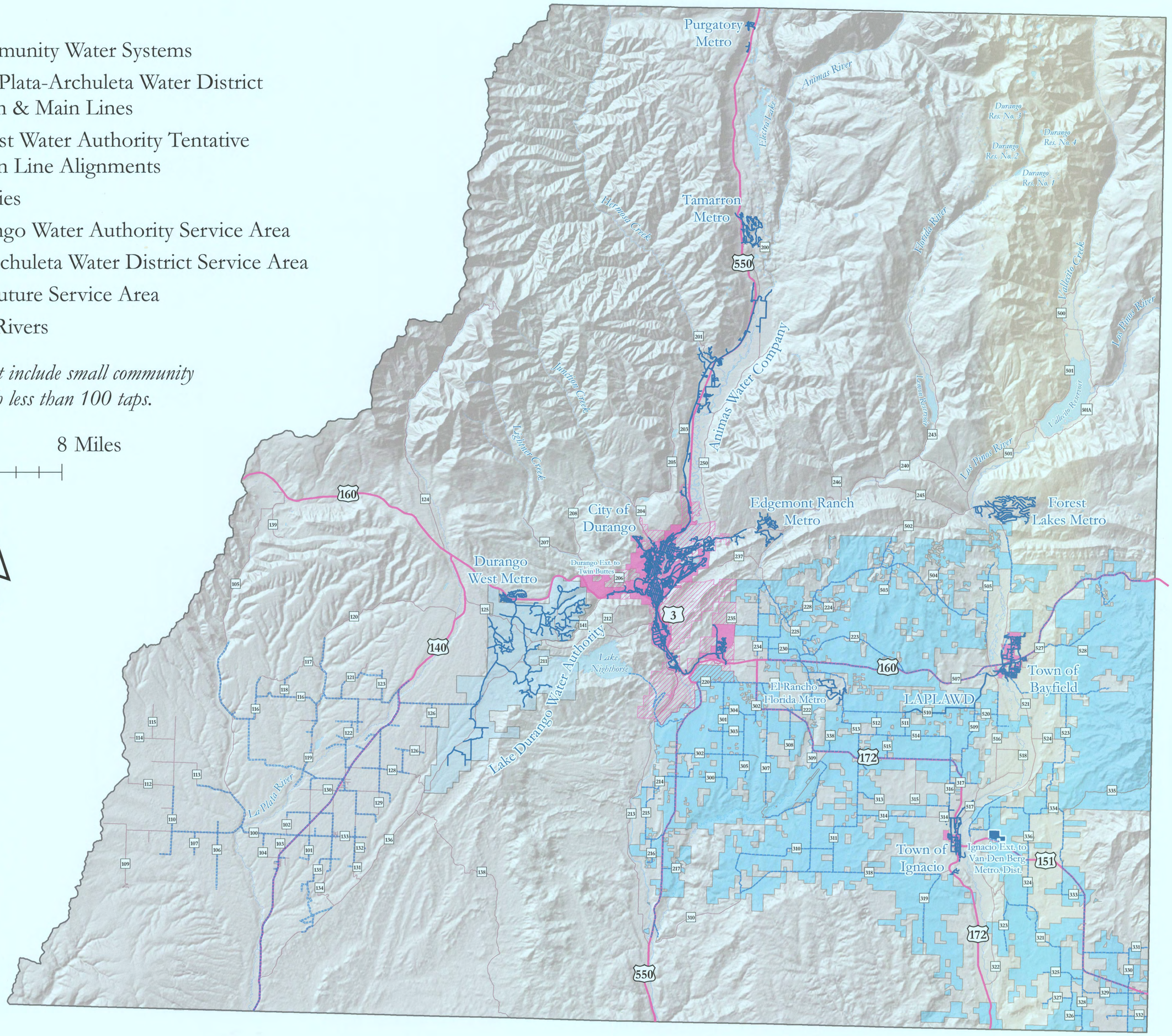
Legend

- Large Community Water Systems
- Planned LaPlata-Archuleta Water District Distribution & Main Lines
- LaPlata West Water Authority Tentative Distribution Line Alignments
- Municipalities
- Lake Durango Water Authority Service Area
- La Plata-Archuleta Water District Service Area
- Durango Future Service Area
- Lakes and Rivers

This map does not include small community water systems with less than 100 taps.

0 2 4 8 Miles

N



Colorado

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La Plata County Colorado

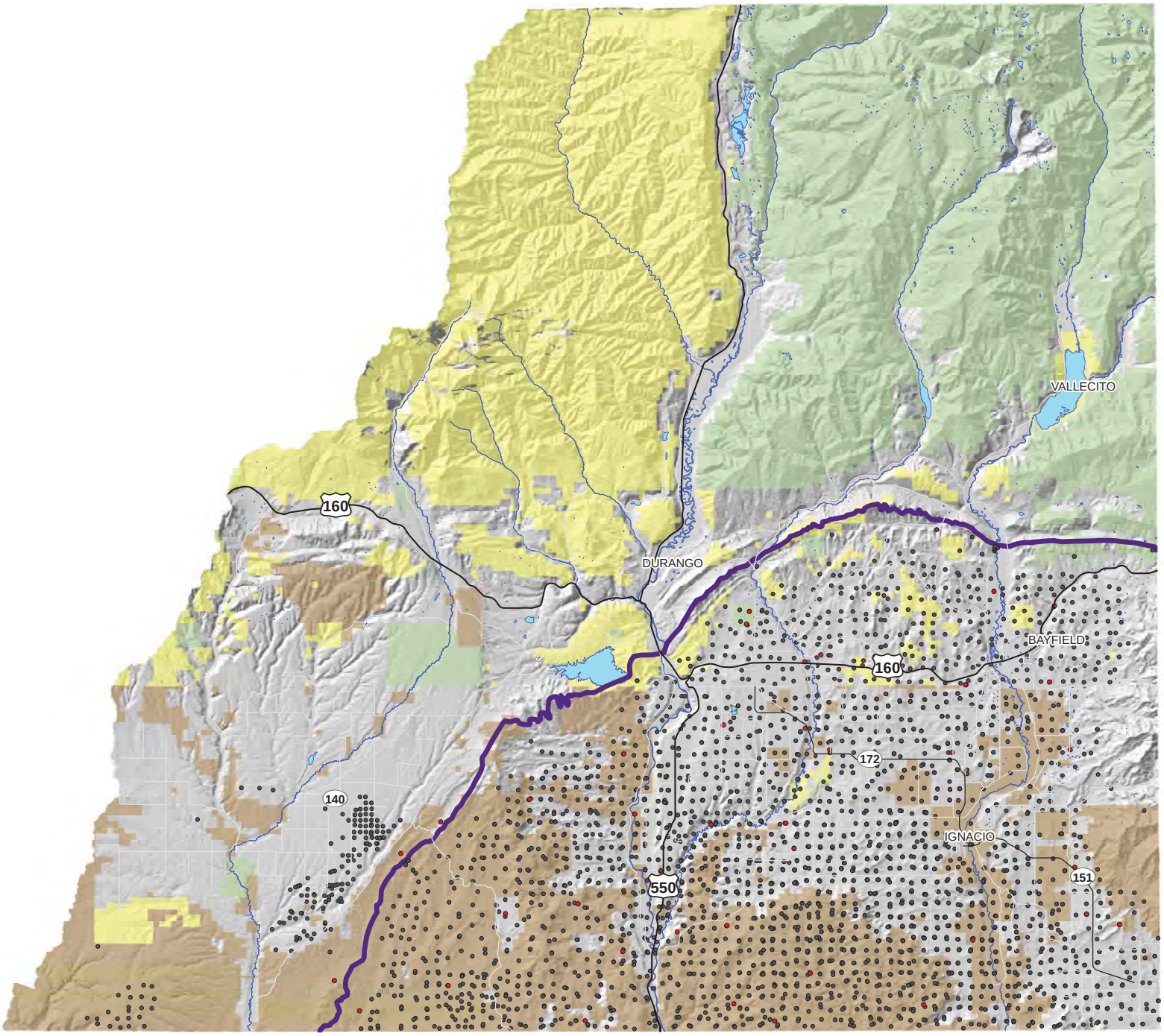
Planning Department

March 3, 2015

MAPS OF EXTRACTIVE RESOURCES

(Appendix 20)

Map 8-1



La Plata County Oil and Gas Development 2015

Active Oil & Gas Wells

Active Injection Wells

San Juan Basin

Federal Lands

State Lands

Tribal Lands

Private Lands

N

0 1.25 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

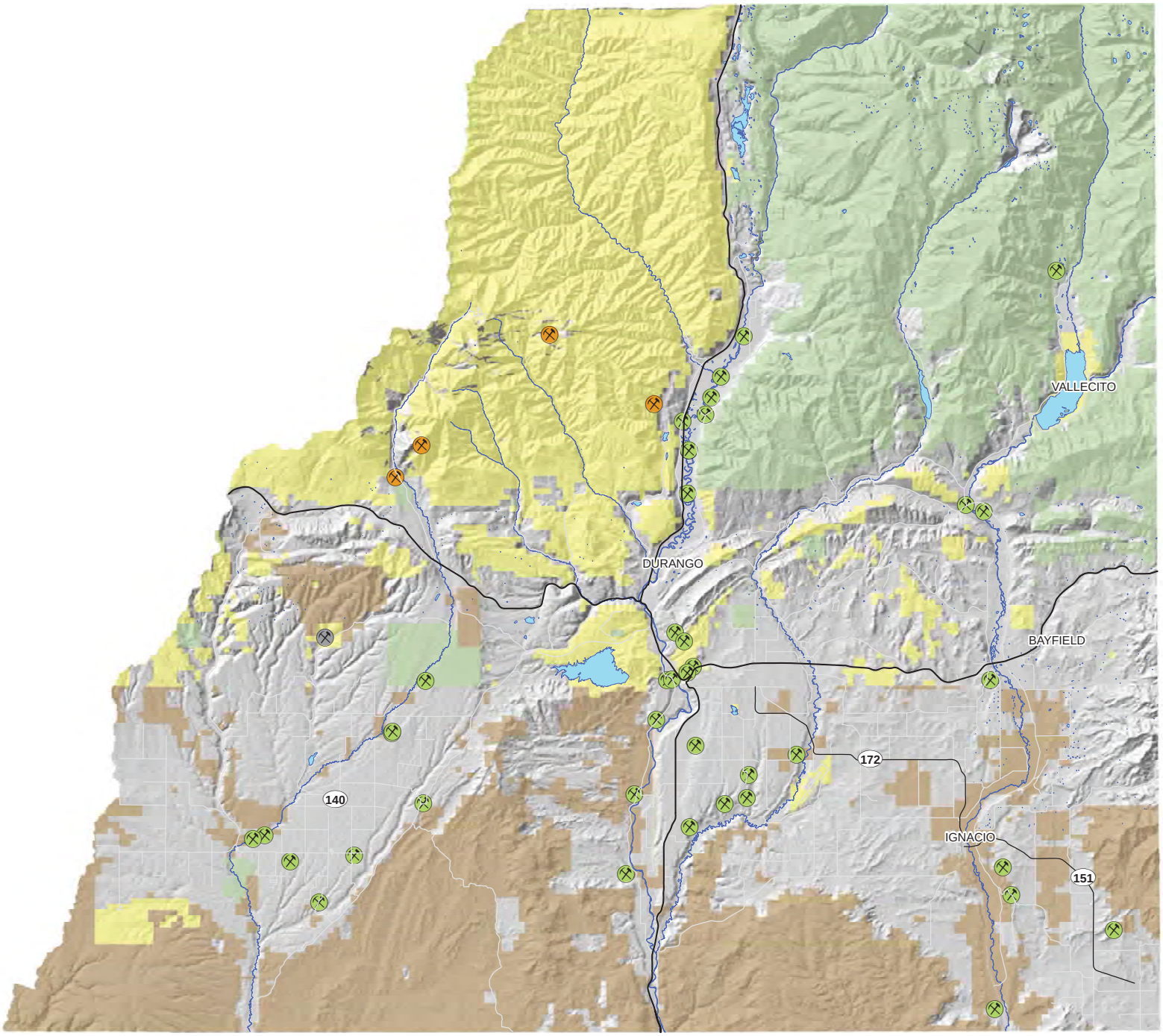
La Plata County Colorado

Data Sources: La Plata County, USGS, COGCC

Disclaimer: The locations of features on this map are approximate and do not represent a survey.

Drawn By: Jerome Bernard 8/28/2015

Map 8-2



DRMS Permitted Mines in La Plata County 2015

Coal (1) Gold & Silver (4) Sand & Gravel (40)

Federal Lands State Lands

Tribal Lands Private Lands

N

0 1.25 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

La Plata County Colorado

Data Sources: La Plata County, USGS, DRMS
Disclaimer: The locations of features on this map are approximate and do not represent a survey.

Drawn By Jerome Bernard 8/28/2015